

OVERCOMING SELF-SABOTAGE TO BULLETPROOF YOUR CAREER

Too often, the biggest speed bump that slows momentum in your career is self-sabotage. What is self-sabotage? It is when we work against our own best interests.

Self-sabotage can happen to anyone. It is not a flaw; it is something your subconscious does to keep you safe and in your comfort zone.

After coaching hundreds of clients, I believe there is something that contributes to a higher incidence of self-sabotage after landing when you have had a gap in your career. I call it **PJSD – Prior Job Stress Disorder!**

Even in the best of situations, it is virtually impossible to devote years to a role and a company and not have the departure from that company have an impact. But when the departure comes as a complete surprise, is sudden, is preceded by the difficult situation of working for a poor leader at best, and at worse, an outright bully, some level of PJSD is virtually inevitable.

PJSD can make you come to the worst possible conclusions, cause you to overreact, and it can cause flashbacks to consequences that you incurred in your last role that can impact your behavior in your next role.

Let's look at a couple off examples of this.

- If you outperformed and over delivered in your last role and still found yourself on the outside looking in, PJSD can cause you to overreact to a 90-day review that is 99% positive and mentions one small area for improvement.
 - That overreaction shakes your confidence. It causes you to flashback and leads to negative self-talk such as “here it goes again.” This fear that your best is just never going to be good enough can quickly lead to self-sabotage. Worst of all, your failure to acknowledge and celebrate the 99% that was excellent depletes your energy and diminishes your accomplishments —and your future performance.

- In your last role, no matter how many late hours you put into a presentation — no matter how perfect it was — no matter how well it hit the mark — your manager always found a way to poke holes in it. It was never good enough.
 - When it is time to prepare your first presentation in your new role, you find a million other things to do first, procrastinate for days, and then tackle the presentation at the last minute. Why? Because your PJSD makes you fear another berating by your new manager, even though there is ample evidence that you have your manager's full support, and he/she would never criticize you in public. You freeze up and can't create a slide without second-guessing yourself.

The common theme here is fear. Fear of success, fear of failure, and fear of leaving your comfort zone. This quote by Matt Luigi sums it up:

"We self-sabotage ourselves in fear that the best version of ourselves are not good enough. We fear that even at our best value we will fall short on our personal scale of success."

This fear often leads to adjusting your behavior and leaving your authentic self behind. But your authentic self isn't fearful. It is when you go into a new role behaving in a way that you think others want you to behave that you sabotage yourself and lose your power. **Your authentic self is the most powerful version of you.**

WHAT DO YOU DO ABOUT IT?

First, remember, you cannot change anything until you face it. You must pay attention to your behavior and look for the patterns that are symptoms that lead to sabotage. Watch for the following patterns:

- Procrastination
- Overthinking that paralyzes you
- Feeling like an imposter
- Avoiding responsibilities
- Blaming situations that are out of your control
- Not following through on commitments
- Breaking promises to yourself or others
- Lack of preparation or over-preparation
- Misalignment between your desires and actions
- Showing up late to important appointments or meetings
- Giving up (listen for self-talk such as “what’s the use.”)

Next, commit to journaling. Journaling will allow you to get your fear out of your head and down on paper where you can examine it, process it, and look at your fear through reason rather than through emotion. Your authentic self will not allow you to beat yourself up!

These articles will help you understand why journaling will help:

<https://medium.com/the-ascent/the-power-of-journaling-d8654060c7a7>
<https://thestrive.co/benefits-of-journaling/>



HERE ARE SOME OTHER SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU DEFEAT PJSD AND SELF-SABOTAGE:

- **Change the way you think.** Realize that this isn’t actually “sabotage” but rather it is your subconscious doing its job of trying to keep you safe and in your comfort zone. When you stop seeing self-sabotage as a flaw, you can begin to take action.
- **Start with small changes.** By now, you know that I am a big fan of the book “Atomic Habits” by James Clear. Old habits are not easily left behind and are seldom overcome by making sweeping changes. Start with replacing one negative mantra with a positive one until your new thought is your default thought. For example, change “I don’t want to blow it this time” to “I want to make the most of this opportunity.”

- **Find someone to hold you accountable.** Once you have awareness you will begin to catch yourself, but if you have someone who commits to helping you flip your thinking, you will be able to stop yourself before you dive off the deep end. Identify a partner (perhaps someone else who is committed to rising above PJSD and self-sabotage) and agree to hold each other accountable. While you may not yet be able to give yourself the grace that you should, someone else can help you see things more clearly.
- **Ask yourself better questions.** This is another form of “flipping” your thinking and it is one that helps make your brain work for you rather than against you. When you change questions like “why bother?” to “Is there any evidence that my new boss is likely to attack my presentation?” your brain will give you an answer that will serve you much better and your procrastination will turn to forward motion.

Overcoming self-sabotage is an essential component of fundamentally changing your relationship to your career. And that change is an essential step in Bulletproofing Your Career . . .for LIFE. So, please give yourself some grace, recognize that Past Job Stress Disorder (PJSD) may be a root cause, and commit to rebuilding your confidence and taking charge of your destiny. And remember, small changes will lead to big results.

NOTE: Self-sabotage is tied to our thinking and there are many ways our thinking can mislead us. If you want to dive deeper into this topic, I recommend that you read this article on cognitive distortions. <https://positivepsychology.com/cognitive-distortions/>