

## Self Sabotage and How to Befriend your Inner Saboteur

It is my belief that we are much more capable, creative and expressive than we allow ourselves to be. Helping people embrace their more expressed self is my passion. And it is always a journey. Whenever we step outside our comfort zone, our inner saboteur is ready for action. This is not because we want to trip ourselves up; rather it has to do with our hardwiring for safety and survival of the species. Anything that feels new or strange will subconsciously be experienced as a threat.

If we can understand how our inner saboteur works we can learn to work with it. Here are some things I have learned about self-sabotage:

‘Our subconscious mind processes 20 million environmental stimuli per second. Our conscious mind just 40.’ (‘Relax and grow Rich’, by Michael Hutcheson and Claire Wadey<sup>1</sup>.) We respond to stimuli, whether they are conscious or subconscious. This means that we often respond without either knowing it or without knowing why we respond in a certain way.

Another way of putting it is: approximately 5% of us is conscious and 95% of us is subconscious.

Our inner saboteur springs from our subconscious. It is the job of the subconscious to protect us from harm. Our subconscious does not differentiate between a physical, emotional, mental or spiritual threat. The response will be the same: protect! Also the subconscious doesn’t differentiate between the past and the present or future. The physiological responses are the same.

If you look at our evolution, we started with a reptilian or primitive brain which has all the hardware for our survival. It is hardwired for the survival of the species. It’s from our primitive brain that our fight, flight or freeze response is triggered. It’s from here that we know when we’re hungry or cold. As we evolved, so have different parts of our brain, creating different layers on top of the primitive brain.

Even though we have come a very long way in learning how the brain functions, we still don’t know which areas actually contain the conscious mind, other than the neo-cortex; the thin layer of brain tissue behind the forehead.

You could picture a stimulus reaching the brain from the bottom up, first the primitive brain, then the other parts of the brain and finally the neo-cortex. Experiments have shown that the neo-cortex can be the last neural area to know when a decision is made: the other, more primitive areas of the brain, may have already dealt with the issue.

For us to communicate with our subconscious more effectively we need to use the right language. The language of the subconscious includes images, smells, sounds, associations and body sensations.

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<sup>1</sup> Wadey, C. & Hutcheson, M. (2010). *Relax and grow rich: How to live a successful, satisfying and sustaining life*. Auckland: HarperCollins. [ISBN: 978-1-86950-6]

Dr Bruce Lipton<sup>2</sup>, a cell biologist, has written about his research and how this has completely changed his view of life. His book, “The Biology of Belief” is well worth a read. He says that during the second half of the pregnancy and the first six years of life our brains are functioning at theta level, which means we are basically in a hypnotic trance. This means that everything that we experience during that time just goes into our brain, without any discernment.

Later in life we continue to make decisions and choices based on this early input, which is primarily stored in our subconscious. The result is that, subconsciously, our six year old self can end up making crucial life decisions.

It is essential - in my mind - to uncover the core beliefs and work with them. We can't work with that which is out of consciousness so we need to find ways to make the subconscious conscious.

EFT is the perfect tool for this, and is also one of the few techniques that have an impact on our hard wiring.

It is also important to know a bit more about our emotions. Our emotional response is many times faster than our thinking response. That makes sense when you remember about the stimuli processed by our subconscious. We have on average of 40- 50 emotions per hour.

The physiology of emotions is well explained by Dr Candace Pert in her book “Molecules of Emotion”<sup>3</sup>. We can use our emotions as our individualised and sensitive guidance system, as they provide us with acute internal and external feedback. If the emotion is intense it will be very difficult to engage our logical thinking concurrently.

## **How can we befriend our inner saboteur?**

Our inner saboteur is by nature outside our awareness. Therefore we need to gather more information by doing some detective work. We can increase our awareness and catch our inner dialogue. What are we telling ourselves? Do we repeatedly say the same (negative) thing to ourselves, without previously noticing?

We all have limiting beliefs. They too can be out of our awareness. Notice your judgements of others, as they often are expressions of a limiting belief we hold. See if you can spot incongruences between what you verbalise and what you feel. Ask yourself probing questions or complete these statements to get more insight into your subconscious process:

I will be successful when....

I will be happy when....

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<sup>2</sup> Lipton, B. (2005). *Biology of belief: Unleashing the power of consciousness, matter and miracles*. (13<sup>th</sup> ed.) Alexandria NSW: Hay House. [ISBN: 978-1401923129]

<sup>3</sup> Pert, C. (1999). *Molecules of emotion: The science between mind-body medicine*. New York: Simon & Schuster. [ISBN: 978-068486347]

The only way for me to achieve what I want is....  
The reason why I'm not there yet is....  
The downside of being successful/healthy/happy is....

Instead of getting frustrated with ourselves when we self-sabotage, we can view self-sabotaging behaviour as a clue indicating that we are stepping outside our comfort zone; trying something new. For instance, in weight loss it is very common for people to have a certain weight that they just can't get below. As soon as they get to this weight they put more weight back on. They have reached the edge of their comfort zone. Realising this is the first positive step to overcoming the problem. If you address this comfort zone problem, you'll make it possible to create a new, more desirable comfort zone. In the process you might uncover some subconscious experiences related to your weight which are keeping you stuck in that comfort zone. This is a great opportunity for you to address those and overcome them as well.

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