



## **Lesson 13: Strategies to Stop Self-Sabotage**

Hey everybody. This is day 13 of the Healthy Mindset Masterclass. Welcome. Tomorrow's lesson will be my wrap-up, but today, as I promised, I'm going to talk about the second half of the self-sabotage discussion. Now I probably should have prefaced with, this is a topic we could do for weeks. There's not a huge amount of content with it, but there are so many bigger things to keep digging into. You're going to find that as you get started with this, it's like peeling an onion and you will keep getting to new layers. So keep working on this, keep working on the skills and strategies and creating more awareness for yourself about why you self-sabotage. If you remember from yesterday, one of the important pieces I tried to convey is not to get down on yourself for self-sabotaging. It's a normal behavior. We all do it.

Our goal is to start catching it before it happens so that it doesn't get in our way. So let's talk a little bit about what we can do about our self-sabotage behaviors. Really think about what happens during self-sabotage. And if you remember early on, I showed you my graphic of our thoughts and beliefs lead to our feelings, which then lead to our behavior choices, which leads to the results and that that cycle keeps going. Very similar here with self-sabotage. Our thoughts lead to feelings, which inform our decisions and our behaviors, which lead to consequences. Thoughts are just words that we put together with meaning, they're like sentences. And yet what we do is we give thoughts the value of being truths or facts. And the reality is they're not. We might have a fact go through our minds like my evaluation meeting is tomorrow at work. That is a fact.

But I'm going to do poorly in my evaluation tomorrow and we'll get a low rating. That's a belief. That's a way of making sense of information and putting it together in words in your mind. The more we can stop looking at a lot of our thoughts as truths and facts versus they are just thoughts. They are just ways of putting some ideas together. That doesn't necessarily give them meaning or credibility. If we can learn to start to question them, is this true? Is this real? We create our thoughts and therefore they can be changed. And one way we can do this is to distance ourselves from them just a little bit. Rather than saying, "I'm not going to be able to lose this weight that I'm working on losing." Maybe to say, "I'm having a thought that I won't be able to lose this weight."

I know that sounds very strange, but what happens is you put some words in between you and the thought and you are helping to differentiate this isn't fact, this is just a thought I'm having, "Fasting is too difficult for me." Now you can work on building that into a better thought that we've worked on earlier in this masterclass. But you also could say something

to distance yourself even more. I'm noticing that I'm having a thought that fasting is too difficult for me. If I were to write this on paper and actually look at it, the part where I say fasting is too difficult for me is very far away from me now. So it's really a way of kind of tangibly setting up some distance between you and that thought, that collection of words. Take away some of the power of it. We tend to give our thoughts too much power.

We overthink things. A lot of our self-sabotaging thoughts are so habitual that we don't even realize we're thinking them. They happen so often, our brain has stopped paying attention to them. Now this doesn't mean it has stopped acting on them. It stops noticing them because they're so prevalent. The more common that thought is just played over and over more likely we are to continue thinking it and act on it. Let's talk about some other steps we can take to interfere with our self-sabotage behaviors. One thing we can do is we can work on deactivating them, taking some of the power away. An event happens, we have thoughts that create feelings, lead to our behaviors and that we keep going through with this. What I would encourage you to do, some people refer to this as a thought record, but write down what happened, what your thoughts about it were, what did it trigger thought wise for you?

What feelings came from that and what behavior or decision did that lead you to, and then kind of keep looking at that. Because then you can take a look at, "Wow, my family was eating. I thought about how unfair it is that I can't eat with them. I feel irritated and I feel disconnected. And then this leads to my behavior of joining them and eating." So I can go back and look at that and see how much strength did I give that thought. Some people would have you rate the power of how much you believe that thought, have you rate the intensity of that feeling and keep track of when these thoughts are happening, you might notice certain patterns that can help you start to interrupt them once you see what your patterns are.

So identifying what's the event? What are my thoughts? What are my feelings? And what behavior does this lead to? Start making them more, something that you look at and observe because that's how you'll be able to change them. Another thing you can do with these thoughts that you're having is to look at them a little more closely and see if you can think of some alternative explanations or meanings or options regarding what to do. So for example, "My stomach is rumbling, I think it means I need to eat." Let's look at some other options, "What else could it mean? It could mean that my stomach is empty right now and I could put some sparkling water in there and cause it to settle down. It could mean that this is the chance for my body to go in and start burning body fat if I don't feed it so I'm going to go with that option. It could mean that I'm bored. I don't have anything to do right now and my body, my mind is used to me having a meal at this time. So I could go do something."

So looking at it and just challenging rather than just thinking that thought has to lead to this result, what are some other options? What are some other ways to think about it? To use a "yes, but..." comment, I know for many of us is going to sound a little complicated at first if

you raised kids, you probably had to refute that quite a bit from them. When you do something like you eat off plan, maybe you have a rough weekend and you eat things that aren't on your plan for healthy eating, or you plan some fasts this week and don't make it through them or don't fast at all. It's easy for us all to fall into that all or nothing, black or white thinking, "I already blew it, I might as well keep going. Here I go I failed again", and just go down all of those negative paths in our mind.

Instead to say, "Yes, I broke my fast early, but I can start right now on my next fast", or, "Yes, I broke my fast early, I'm going to move my longer fast until a later day in this week and I will have another meal today to complete today as an eating day." So we can make this adjustment of what happened rather than chastising ourselves and getting down that negative thought path. I think the caution here is that we don't use "yes, but..." as a way to justify or to become permissive, "Well, I know I ate that donut, but you know, it's been a really hard day so", no, "Yes, I ate the donut and now I'm going to watch my next meal as a really healthy meal and get back on my fasting", or, "Yes, I ate more than I had planned for this meal, but I am ready to start my fast tomorrow morning since I ate today and had a good big meal."

Just changing that up how we talk to ourselves about it rather than getting negative and doing that all or nothing thinking to make it an okay thing that we need to adjust our schedule. Giving ourselves some grace, giving ourselves some flexibility without becoming permissive. Big challenge there so please, that's a big one to practice. This one might sound a little strange to some of you, but for some, it will probably fit. I would encourage you to think of the thought or the feeling that is interfering for you right now and it's almost like imagining it outside of you and giving it a form. Is it a ball? Is it a block? Is it play-doh or clay? And then can you do something with that shape? Can you remold it? Can you minimize it, make it smaller. Making it less powerful, less of a barrier for you, even picturing that you crumple it up into this tiny little thing that you can just toss in the trash. Taking away its power by tangibly, making it smaller, getting it outside of you.

Another one that you can do that has a similar effect is you could write the thought and feeling down on a note card and put it away. That way you've acknowledged it, but you're not going to do anything with it for 24 hours. This can help teach you to delay your response, to not respond to something that feels big in that moment, but to acknowledge it and let it be for a little bit. 24 hours later, you will probably have a different response. So this is a nice way to postpone the immediate response that you want to give it. You also could call someone. I know many of us aren't used to making a lot of phone calls anymore, but this is a great time. Call someone who knows you and thinks positively of you and let them know what you're thinking, "I'm thinking I can't do this, I'm thinking I can't succeed in my goal." Share that because they probably have a different perspective of you and they can help you shift to this right now, rather than waiting and just sitting with it in your mind.

A lot of self-sabotage behavior happens because we keep the thoughts quiet in our mind, rather than expressing them or working on them with someone else. Take the opposite action of what that thought or feeling is telling us to do. So let's say for example, you want to do something, but you're getting that messaging that you're afraid. So you're having a fear response. Let's say, for example, it's going into a particular social setting. Rather than giving into that fear and staying home, instead opposite action would be you do the opposite. You go to the event, you go in, you embrace it fully. Not only does this interrupt that thought right now, but it helps build in a different change for future times so that you don't keep playing out that same thought. So you could think about this with fasting. It's maybe hour 22, and you're going for a 24 or 36, and you're tempted to eat.

You could do the opposite, you could put the food away, you could leave the kitchen, you could leave a place where there's food involved and do something else. So do the opposite, rather than giving into the power of that thought or feeling that you're having. Now some people when they talk about self-sabotage, they talk about it a little like the authors that I talked about the other day in looking at bingeing and other behaviors. So similar thought process here in self-sabotage. And one of them encourages actually to think of it as this kind of person that's inside of you. Again, I know this sounds like I'm talking about split personalities or something and I'm not. But to give this persona a name, identify who it is. Now, it might be a name that you know, it might be someone else, but you know, who is this name? Who is this voice? And acknowledging it. And she actually goes through an analogy in her book that this voice inside, she refers to it as Saby the saboteur.

But this voice inside is like a boxer. And what boxers do is that they observe each other's fighting style. They watch video of the other fighter prior to their match so they know, when that person gets a left hook, how do they respond? What's their comeback move? How do they deal with this? When do they do this in their match? What patterns can I learn from them? So this author suggests that you start paying attention to whatever name you call that. If you remember the other day, we were talking you about that being kind of the animal brain, the lower brain, the beast, the pig, Bernice, whoever that is. And recognizing that, that part of your brain really does not want you to succeed at your goals. I know some authors don't like us thinking of it this way, because they don't want to set up this kind of fight within. But I think the analogy can be helpful for some of us to think this particular part of my brain does not want me to succeed here because succeeding means change, it means risk, it means doing things differently.

This boxer inside of you, this Saby the saboteur, whatever you call it really doesn't want you to succeed. It wants you to break your fast. It wants you to use fasting aids or training wheels more often. It wants you to give into the cravings and eat things for comfort. All of the things that you're really working on, cognitively changing, behaviorally changing, it wants you to do. It's going to say things to you that are illogical, but it's going to sound tricky. It's going to say to you things like, "You always fail at this, you never do what you say you're going to do." Using those kinds of terms, never, always, those are almost never

correct because they're over exaggerations. So if that voice says, "Well, you never do these things, you make all these plans and you never complete them."

You can say, "Actually, that's not true. I did this and completed it. I did this and completed it." Now again, this is where some of the authors that I talked about the other day said, you don't want to engage in this back and forth. But I think in this moment where you are hearing that voice, that's saying, "Go ahead, it's okay, you should do this", to say, "Actually that logic doesn't make any sense to me, I'm going to say no." Not to keep arguing the point, but just to shut it down with that. That author also recommends another strategy of disengaging. So maybe your saboteur voice, maybe its name is Barbara, maybe it tells you that because today has been a really hard day you should go ahead and have whatever you want. Fasting is stupid and you should just eat something today. You can fast tomorrow.

So you would say to Barbara, "Hey, nice shot, nice try. I'm not listening. I'm not going to do what you say." You just shut it down. Again, I know for some people that starts that argument going and a debate, and you don't want to engage in that boxing match. You want to shut that match down. It makes sense that we think that way. You are not flawed, you are not broken, you are not weak, you are not lazy because you have those thoughts. The important thing now is to recognize, I don't have to keep acting on them. Some of these thoughts are from when you were three and four and six and 12 years old, and you're still carrying them with you. And they tell you, "You don't deserve this. You can't do this. This is too hard. You are not good at this. You never succeed. You always fail."

These really old, really problematic messages. And so this is about again, separating out, identifying them, know what your triggers are. So you stand a chance to dodge them, evade them, shut them down, whatever you need to do. I know I'm using a lot of mixed metaphors here, but I think you have to find the one in there that works for you. The more knowledgeable we are about what thoughts get in our way, the less often we will act on them. The part of the brain that wants you to do this, your saboteur does not control your voluntary movement. It carries a lot of power though. Procrastination, a lot of us procrastinate, even when something's really important to us. So let's say for example, "You want to start more movement, more exercise. So that procrastinator voice will say, "Hmm, that sounds a little bit too hard. I think we have this show in Netflix, let's watch this first and then we'll do it."

It's anything it can do to delay or postpone or avoid that thing that sounds uncomfortable or challenging. What our brain often does is it wants to avoid any kind of tension or discomfort and that doesn't always serve us well. So for example, in what I've just shared, exercising is going to probably hurt a little bit. It's going to be uncomfortable. It's going to take some time, but think about it, Saby the saboteur just had me watching Netflix instead of doing that. That takes a lot of time. So the justification doesn't even work, but our brain will do that for us. And so we have to keep identifying where does my brain throw those punches? What are the old reasons, excuses justifications that my brain uses.

We're coming up on Halloween and I've been making some social media posts about this because a lot of us, even though we're 52 or 65 or 41, we're talking about having candy on Halloween. And this goes against all of our health goals. It goes against our weight loss goals or our weight maintenance goals. It goes against our blood sugar and fatty liver and all of the things that we're working on for our optimal health. And we're willing to break this because it's Halloween and candy is involved. And so we have learned over decades to have a lot of justifications for doing things. And if we go back to everything I've been sharing with you over the past few days. And so I don't really believe that's your rational mind telling you that. That is that saboteur, that beast, that animal brain that wants what it wants now. Oftentimes part of our challenge is that doing the thing that is good for us long term means some discomfort now.

Doing the thing now that brings us some kind of momentary relief or pleasure means negative consequences longer term. So it really is that immediate gratification struggle as well. That inner part of the brain wants immediate gratification without any concern for the future. And that's the part of your brain that is sabotaging you. So you have to learn how to not engage with it in a way that you allow it to determine what you do, that you don't give into that. So I hope that both the discussion we had about binge eating and addiction and problematic foods moving into the self-sabotage, you can really see how this all kind of blends together.

Now tomorrow, as I mentioned, I'm going to do what I'm calling catchers catch can. I don't even know if that's the appropriate use of that phrase, but it's anything that I usually talk about that I haven't already included. So I've been taking some notes throughout and it will be just kind of a hodge-podge of any other things that I think could be useful for you, based on things that I see your writing in the forum, questions that have come up in the Q&A sessions. I hope you're also watching those videos and I look forward to seeing you tomorrow. It's the last day. I hope you do great. Take good care everybody. Bye bye.