

Strategies To Avoid Sabotaging Your Career

Ever have a small setback or fall into a bad mood and throw your resolutions to the wind? Ever say to hell with it because you blew your eating plan when you polished off that chocolate bar in the morning, so you decide you might as well have dessert after dinner? Or after missing a week of exercise, you chunk the whole idea of physical fitness? Welcome to the Club.

It has been said that taking a step backward after taking a step forward is not a disaster; it's a cha-cha. When you're grappling with changing a bad habit, relapse is often part of the package deal. If you were to plot the average person's progress, it would make an upward zigzag, not follow an ascending straight line. When you have a setback, it's tempting to condemn yourself and give up. That impulsive reaction is an attempt to bring quick relief to your misery of failing. So you seek comfort in the very thing you're trying to conquer. Truth be told this self-sabotage—scientists call it the what-the-hell effect—adds insult to injury and heartache on top of heartache.

Studies show when you're trying to break a habit, disappointment triggers a what-the-hell attitude and turns a minor slip into a major relapse. It lets you return to the bad habit, which comforted you in the first place. Dr. Janet Polivy at the University of Toronto put the What-the-hell effect under scientific scrutiny. She served dieters unusually large slices of pizza to compare with non-dieters who were served smaller slices. When a plateful of cookies came their way, dieters were inclined to eat more of the sweets than non-dieters. Turns out the dieters saw the excessive pizza that they'd already consumed as a license to pig out.

Once provoked into a bad mood, you're more likely to give up on your goals and engage in risky behavior (procrastination, overeating, or alcohol) so you don't have to keep feeling bad about failing. The bad mood eclipses your goal of breaking the habit. And self-sabotage gives you a way out—permission to backslide with whatever behavior you're trying to change. One of the best strategies to keep you from falling into relapse is to treat yourself with compassion after your shortcomings get the better of you.

If you're like most people, you kick yourself for your shortcomings. You probably have a deep belief that self-ridicule can help you do better. But it doesn't. Or you might worry that giving yourself too much leeway would turn you into a total slacker. But it won't. You don't have to berate yourself to make successful change. When you substitute self-compassion for self-condemnation, you break the self-sabotage cycle and foster positive change in just about anything you do.

When you have a setback—whether you're trying to taper off alcohol, stay on an exercise regimen, or stop smoking—accepting exactly where you are without criticizing yourself makes you more likely to succeed. Self-compassion allows you to deal with the painful experience, not the added bad feelings from your self-judgment. When you're self-compassionate, you don't deny the hardships you're going through. You admit the frustration and disappointment while supporting instead of attacking yourself through the struggle.

There are 10 surefire strategies that can keep you from undermining your progress and stick to your personal and professional goals.

1. Accept the defeat, put down your gavel, and replace the judgment with self-compassion so you can recover more quickly.
2. Separate yourself from your shortfalls and see them for what they are: habits, old behavior patterns, or just plain mistakes that all of us make.
3. Think of foregoing that cigarette, beer, or extra piece of cake as self-care instead of self-deprivation.
4. Don't get fooled into just looking at where you want to land and feeling disheartened that you haven't reached your goal. Learn to look back and affirm how far you've come instead of how far you have to go. Then you get a truer picture of your map of progress.
5. Talk yourself off the ledge with comforting self-talk after a setback. Self-soothing in the form of pep talks and supportive words ("You've got this!") reduces the stress and helps you hop back in the saddle and try again.
6. Pinpoint the challenge, solution, or opportunity in the relapse. When you look for opportunity in the difficulty ("How can I make this setback work to my advantage?"), instead of the difficulty in the opportunity, it renews you with the fuel of optimism.
7. Think of a setback or mistake as a lesson for you to learn from instead of a failure to endure.
8. Remind yourself of how a setback can make you stronger and more resilient and the personal resources you have to get back in the saddle.
9. Look at the big picture. As you broaden your outlook and name all your blessings, how important is the judgment you make against yourself? Chances are when you create a wider context, your failure loses its sting, enabling you to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.
10. Remember this: Success and failure are a package deal. As long as your zigzag keeps spiraling upward, you're "cha-cha-ing" your way to success.

Credit: <https://www.forbes.com>