

Anyone for Pizza?

A user's guide to loving and leaving your inner critic

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What possible function could an inner saboteur have? There's a long answer and a short answer...

Let's meet the F Words

DO ANY OF THESE SOUND FAMILIAR?

- You've a business idea that's been cooking away in your head for years..you have an opportunity to make it happen but can't seem to take the leap...it just doesn't seem to be the "right time".
- You've decided to go it alone as a self-employed person after years of thinking about it .. there's more work than you can handle and you need to employ someone .. just before you hire that assistant all that work seems to dry up and suddenly there's no need for anyone else.
- You've worked hard on the diet, cross-trained, spinned, walked miles and cut back on the carbs... you're 5 pounds from your goal and you decide to celebrate – anyone for pizza?

If any of these sound familiar then meet your inner saboteur. Self-sabotage is more common than you think and most of us have a familiar set of fears in our head that steps in right at the moment when we want to make a change, take a risk or do something different and very often sends us off track.

But if we've worked so hard, harboured those dreams and really want to be different – why on earth do we stop at the last hurdle? What possible function could an inner saboteur have? There's a long answer and a short answer (let's

look at both). The short answer is – we decide that the saboteur's voice is the more sensible view - the long answer is – well ... let's meet the F Words.

FACT AND FEELING

Most sabotaging talk comes from trying to reconcile Fact and Feeling. The facts may tell us that something is really feasible - there's enough cash in the bank, that weight goal is real, I need an assistant. You've crunched the numbers; talked to the bank manager; scoped out the competition – there's simply nothing you can see that's in your way. It should be easy to take that next step. But before you know it feelings emerge and start blurring the equation.

The feelings associated with sabotage are self-doubt, anxiety, and of course the big one *FEAR*. Most of these feelings originate in the early years of our lives. Somewhere along the line we tried something new and got the message that we weren't sufficiently competent, strong or deserving to succeed. It could have happened at home, in school or elsewhere. We were impressionable - perhaps powerless - and we took it to heart. The person who made us feel inadequate probably had no idea of the impact of their words, but they profoundly changed our attitude to risk. Attempting something out of the ordinary suddenly had consequences, and the potential to raise our anxiety levels to a degree that is unhelpful in the present.

Each time we encounter an experience that reminds us of the risk we tried to take in an earlier part of our life it evokes and replays the same feelings and the same messages.

AUTHOR

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When we hear our inner saboteur, we often collaborate with it to find "evidence" so it can say "I told you so" and "you should listen to me more often you know". It's amazing how many reasons we find for not taking the next step.

Psychotherapists talk about the concept of "transference" – we literally transfer feelings, associations and relationships from the past into the present. We re-live yesterday today (a bit like Groundhog Day). Each time we encounter an experience that reminds us of the risk we tried to take in an earlier part of our life it evokes and replays the same feelings and the same messages. No amount of external Fact finding is going to override a long-held and trusted set of Feelings in our heads that say "no way". That is, unless we make sabotage our new best friend.

LET'S BE FRIENDS

Let's imagine for a moment that the feelings blurring the facts are there for a very good reason. What might those reasons be?

If we're feeling nervous or anxious that's a strong signal that we're trying to protect ourselves from something we are fearful of. If we are procrastinating then that's another clear signal that we're not ready to take a leap. Perhaps it's a fear of shame, or failure; or success? Whatever we're trying to protect is something we held very dear in an earlier part of our life– something we clung to and felt safe with. Is it any wonder we pull out all the stops to avoid damaging that bit of ourselves? So our inner saboteur is giving us a clear message that;

- This situation is similar to something that has happened before
- This situation is evoking similar feelings to those evoked at that time
- The feelings I had about that situation were totally justified

Look around you. Is this the same situa-

tion? What do these feelings remind you of? Whose voice are you listening to? Who does it remind you of? Are you the same person now you were then? How much power and control do you have now that you didn't have then?

In most situations, talking out the fear with your inner saboteur can be a useful and productive way of figuring out what the underlying situation is that's provoking this emotional reaction. Don't dismiss those feelings – befriend your inner saboteur. Thank him/her for pointing out an old way of behaving and an old experience that you are replaying in the present. But you are a different person now with skills, expertise and experience that give you a better vantage point.

You've drawn on the right advice and you have a system of support around you. Acknowledging the "rightness" of your inner saboteur and the appropriateness of the response to a situation that is no longer present can be a great retirement party for your saboteur.

The body's physiological response to fear is exactly the same as it is to excitement. The story we tell ourselves to interpret the physical feeling is important in how we experience it. Once you are sure you are not in actual danger in the present and when you've given your saboteur a nice carriage clock – ask yourself the question – Is it possible that your tummy flip is one of sheer excitement? That now is the perfect time to become Slimmer? Self-employed? An employer? An entrepreneur?

Funny things those F words....anyone for pizza?