

Steps in Overcoming Self-Sabotage

Because growth begins the moment you stop fighting yourself.

Introduction

Self-sabotage isn't about weakness or lack of motivation; it's often a way your mind has learned to *protect* you from emotional pain, failure, or even success. You may notice it in subtle ways: procrastination, overthinking, avoidance, or a sudden lack of energy right when you're about to take an important step forward. Beneath these moments, there's often fear, doubt, or an old belief whispering, "*It's safer not to try.*"

This exercise will help you understand what might be happening beneath your self-sabotage, recognize the emotions behind it, and begin building a kinder, more supportive inner dialogue.

All you need is honesty, gentleness, and a few quiet minutes to reflect.

How to Use This Guide

This is not meant to be rushed or "completed perfectly." You can work through it in one sitting, or return to one step at a time whenever self-doubt, resistance, or avoidance shows up in your life. Choose a quiet moment. Write honestly. Pause when emotions arise. There are no right answers — only what feels true for you.

This guide is here to support reflection, not to push you into action before you're ready.

Step 1 – Identify: Recognizing the Pattern

Goal: *To notice when and how self-sabotage appears.*

Think of one area of your life where you often feel "stuck" or find yourself holding back.

Examples:

- *I always quit right before I make progress.*
- *I avoid opportunities even when I want them.*
- *I overthink until I lose motivation.*

Reflection:

Awareness starts with noticing. Bringing attention to the moment you pull back helps you see that it's not random—it's a learned pattern trying to keep you safe.

Step 2 – Reflect: Understanding the Emotion Behind It

Goal: *To connect with the feeling that fuels the avoidance.*

Ask yourself:

- *What emotion shows up right before I avoid or procrastinate?*
- *Is it fear, guilt, shame, exhaustion, or maybe the pressure to be perfect?*
- *What might this emotion be trying to protect me from?*

Reflection:

Every form of resistance carries an emotion behind it. When you stop judging yourself and start listening, that emotion begins to soften.

Step 3 – Question: Finding the Deeper Belief

Goal: *To uncover the story your mind is repeating.*

Gently ask:

- *What do I believe might happen if I truly move forward?*
- *What am I afraid others (or I) will think if I fail—or if I succeed?*
- *Where might I have learned this belief about myself?*

Reflection:

Self-sabotage often grows from past experiences—moments when being visible, taking risks, or expressing yourself didn't feel safe. Recognizing the root isn't about blame; it's about understanding your mind's attempt to protect you.

Step 4 – Soften: Releasing the Pressure

Goal: *To stop feeding the loop of self-criticism.*

When you catch yourself thinking, “I should be doing more,” or “Why can’t I just get it together?”—pause. Criticizing yourself only deepens the resistance and keeps you stuck in the same cycle.

Try instead: “I see that this feels hard right now, and I’ll listen to what’s behind it.”

Read the emotion underneath the avoidance. Maybe you’re scared, tired, or not ready, and that’s okay. Allowing yourself not to be ready helps your body feel safe and heard. When safety returns, action comes naturally.

Reflection:

What you pressure, resists. What you meet with kindness, releases.

(If you’d like to explore how to soften your inner critic, read my post “**Breaking Free from Self-Criticism**” and get your free guide! It beautifully complements this exercise).

Step 5 – Reframe: Creating a Supportive Inner Voice

Goal: *To replace pressure with encouragement.*

Write down a new statement that feels kind, true, and supportive.

Examples:

- *Even small steps count.*
- *I can move forward gently and still make progress.*
- *I’m allowed to take my time while I grow.*

Repeat this phrase daily for one week. Notice how your body and mind respond when you treat yourself with compassion rather than criticism.

Reflection:
Self-trust grows from self-kindness, not from pushing harder.

Closing Thought

Healing self-sabotage isn't about forcing yourself to act—it's about listening to what your resistance is trying to say. The moment you meet that resistance with warmth instead of judgment, the pattern begins to lose its power.

Let this exercise be your first step toward healing that part with patience, presence, and love.

Final Reflection:
"What if every time I hesitated, I chose to listen instead of criticize?"

Support & Next Steps

I Am Here for You!

Thank you for taking this step toward emotional clarity and self-worth.

If this guide brought insight, tenderness, or new questions, you don't have to hold them alone. **You're welcome to share your reflections with me at:**

👉 andressamartinspsychotherapy@gmail.com

If this reflection opened something deeper, you may wish to explore **working with me through a one-on-one session or ongoing support**. Learn more or book a session here:

👉 [Services - Andressa Martins Psychotherapy](#)

If you'd like to continue this journey, I invite you to **visit my blog**, where I share deeper reflections, psychological insights, and practical perspectives on self-worth, emotional healing, and personal growth:

👉 [Blog - Andressa Martins Psychotherapy](#)

**With warmth,
Andressa**