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Information & Support



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## SELF-SABOTAGE & AUTO-AGGRESSION

You plan to achieve your next goal in life. However, when you try to do it, you feel like you are trying your hardest and yet again something goes wrong. Wondering why? You may be subconsciously sabotaging your own actions. Is this even possible?

### WHAT IS SELF-HINDERING?

According to the definition by psychologist Bogdan Wojciszke, self-hindering (also called self-sabotage) is 'one of the defensive tactics of self-presentation'. In a nutshell, it involves taking actions that reduce the chances of success while absolving ourselves from responsibility for any possible failure. What is more, such a strategy increases personal pride when we nevertheless succeed in achieving our goal.

### WHY DO WE NEED SELF-SABOTAGE?

Self-hindering can seem totally pointless. Why should people build obstacles on their own path? Psychology experts have identified three main reasons:

1. Protecting our self-esteem – when we admit our own weaknesses, we can look at ourselves more favourably.
2. Strengthening our self-esteem – achieving a goal, despite hindering ourselves, makes us see ourselves as more valuable.
3. Positive self-presentation – we want to show others that we are valuable, even when we fail. After all, the goal was difficult to achieve and it is not our fault that it was unsuccessful.

We already know what self-sabotage is and why some people use it. Let us now have a look at what forms it can take in everyday life.

### FORMS OF SELF-HINDERING

If you want to check whether you are unconsciously sabotaging your actions, look at the following behaviours:

- Perfectionism – an excessive expectation to do something perfectly (which is impossible), causing us to not undertake a task at all or to abandon it in the process.
- Taking on too many responsibilities – resulting in an inability to perform them or in negligent performance.
- Escape into addictions – e.g. alcoholism, computer games, social media or overeating.
- Knowingly or unknowingly causing injury or illness – a good explanation for the inability to achieve the intended goal.

Becoming aware of the self-hindering processes within us is the first step to breaking out of this vicious circle. Working on our self-esteem also plays a big part in this.



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## AUTO-AGGRESSION

Another, much more serious type of self-inflicted action is auto-aggression. We are talking about psychological auto-aggression here. How do we recognise it and what consequences can it have? Auto-aggression is a very broad concept and it is difficult to define its boundaries. In simple terms, it can be said that auto-aggression is a variety of destructive behaviours directed against oneself, which can range from verbal aggression to suicide attempts.

## CAUSES OF AUTO-AGGRESSION

The unequivocal causes of auto-aggressive actions have not yet been identified. However, there are some hypotheses, including:

- emotional problems that the person cannot cope with,
- an attempt to increase a sense of control and autonomy (e.g. in the case of eating disorders),
- difficult childhood experiences – e.g. physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect,
- inappropriate parental behaviour towards the child: rejection, overprotection, too high expectations, etc.,
- congenital diseases such as Rett syndrome, autism or acquired diseases (brain injury).

## TYPES OF AUTO-AGGRESSION

Auto-aggressive behaviour can be divided into categories:

1. Direct auto-aggression – i.e. damaging one's own body by, for example, mutilation, starvation, suicide attempts. This includes overt criticism of one's own behaviour.
2. Indirect – it most often takes the form of risky behaviours such as fast driving, alcohol abuse, taking drugs or other intoxicants, failing to attempt treatment of an illness, and provoking others to attack oneself.
3. Overt – the person exposes his or her wounds and scars, there is no reluctance to talk about hurting themselves.
4. Hidden – the person hides the effects of the self-injurious behaviour, mostly feeling shame about it.
5. Verbal auto-aggression – what is characteristic of this type is excessive self-criticism and lowering one's self-esteem through constant self-accusation.
6. Non-verbal – it is linked to direct aggression, i.e. all manifestations of self-harm, e.g. pulling out one's hair, cutting one's skin, banging one's head against a wall.

Regardless of the type of auto-aggression, any manifestation of it has serious consequences for health and life. If you feel you need help, see a specialist as soon as possible: a psychologist, psychotherapist or psychiatrist.

*Don't wait, call now! If you have a problem with auto-aggression, contact a specialist.  
We are here to support you!*