



10 Reasons you may not be succeeding

25 November 2025

We all sabotage ourselves and our success in some way. Some of us do it in many ways. Some of our actions that hold us back we know, and some we are not aware of. Being asked to list or to discuss the ways in which you sabotage yourself can be quite hard. Whatever was on your mind at the time it was probably not that. So, sometimes it can help to kickstart understanding your self-defeating habits by looking at a list of prompts.

Read through the points below and see if any of these apply to you.

1. **Too many distractions.** If you want to be successful you need to focus. And if you want to get anything worthwhile completed you need to focus for a period of time, not just five or ten minutes. Think about the distractions that surround you and think about how you can eliminate most of them.
2. **You don't like what you are doing.** We cannot be doing what we love all the time. That is reality. No job, no matter how much it resembles your dream job, will be wonderful all the time. There will be parts of it you don't like doing. This is not what this point refers to. If you are doing work that you really cannot stand, or is totally at odds with your values and principles, you will find some way to self sabotage so you can get out of doing the work or get out of that workplace. If you don't like what you are doing you may be able to suck it up for a while, but in the long-term it won't work.
3. **You lack confidence and self-belief.** When you lack confidence and self-belief you will always achieve less than you could. Without confidence you won't put yourself forward for interesting and challenging work or personal activities. You are also likely to be heavily influenced by the opinions of those around you. It doesn't work to base your life on what others think of you. It is not their life. Your life is your own. You get one shot at it. Believe in yourself and go for what you want to go for. You will either get it or learn more about yourself, other people, and the world.
4. **You lack patience.** Patience has always been a challenge, and in this world where we expect immediate results, it is especially challenging. People expect to see change immediately and get very demotivated if they don't. They wonder why it is not working when they are following all the best advice. The truth is, in this world, most of what we see and read about is the tip of the iceberg. The parts that people want to show us and that we want to see – the successful results. The parts that are usually hidden and not frequently shared are the painful, long, mistakes and delays that are part of life. If you ever achieved anything significant, it took time.

5. **You give up too easily.** This point is similar to the above. I deal with a lot of people who sailed through school. They were clever, school was easy, and they shone the whole way through. Then comes adult life and it is not so easy. Especially because the rules are not so clear and more factors other than academic brilliance are needed to succeed. When things have come easily to you, it is usual to get into the habit of expecting this to always be so. And thus, when things don't seem to be going right or the way you expected, you give up, saying things like, "this is not for me". Nothing great comes easy. Persistence is one of the most important factors linked to success.
6. **You see failures as a reason to give up.** For some reason most people see failure as something terrible. However you cannot have success without failure. You will never be successful at something if you don't try. And when you try for the first few times you are most likely to fail. So the only way to not fail is to do nothing. And doing nothing means you are not going to go very far in your life. This applies for career as well as the personal and social side of life.
7. **You are focusing on things that don't matter.** Prioritising is an important skill. Knowing what to prioritise is even more important. Do not spend time, unless you have lots of free time available to you, on things that don't matter. As most of us are very busy and wish we had more hours in the day, you want to do what matters to you.
8. **You are not constantly learning and improving.** Learning should not stop when we finish tertiary studies. More than ever in the world we need to be constantly learning and improving our skills. We need to be doing this because things change, knowledge gets updated and new skills become important in life. If you don't believe in continuous learning your life will be very limited.
9. **You are not prioritising health and wellness.** We usually take our health for granted. Until we get old or ill. And then suddenly we realise how important it is. You can do most things if your health is good. When your health is terrible, any task is difficult to do. Not only is action affected. Motivation is too. Apart from not having the energy to do anything, when you are ill your motivation is also affected; you don't want to do anything.
10. **You pay too much attention to other people's opinions.** One of the biggest ways in which we self-sabotage is to take in the opinions of other people and make them our own. Especially when those opinions are about what you cannot do or what you should not do. If someone doesn't think you can or should do something they are talking from their perspective. They don't have to do it. But don't take what they say and assume it means you should also not do something. Listen to your own heart and voice. Do what you need to do. Remember you cannot fail, you can only fail to try.

Probably the one thing successful people do is surround themselves with other successful people. If I had to turn things around and say what is the one thing you need to do to be successful, it would be to associate yourself with successful people. The words and actions of successful people rub off on us. We learn the thoughts and habits of successful people when we spend a lot of time around them. We learn to take action and learn from it. We grow. You can associate yourself with successful people in many ways. You can build networks with successful people. You can watch videos and podcasts and listen to audio programmes of successful people. You can sign up for their workshops and do their courses. You can befriend successful people. If you do have a habit of engaging in negative thoughts and actions, then you will start changing, through the people you associate with, to engaging in success thoughts and actions. And you will start to see results in your life.