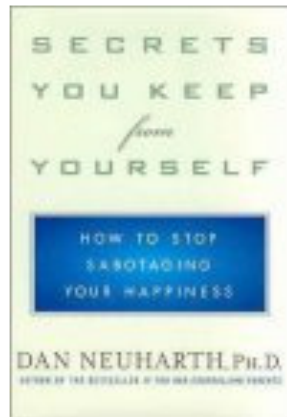


Secrets You Keep From Yourself

How To Stop Sabotaging Your Happiness



Author: Dan Neuharth, Ph.D.
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■ The Big Idea

Secrets You Keep From Yourself offers an eye-opening exploration of the curious human abilities for self-deception and self-sabotage. You have the capacity to focus your attention as well as undermine cherished goals, and act with self-confidence as well as sink into worry or guilt.

This book will help you discover what makes you pursue one course over the other, and it will help you choose self-enhancing paths rather than self-defeating ones.

Self-sabotage is a universal habit reinforced by biology, society and individual upbringing, writes accomplished psychotherapist Dan Neuharth. Yet this habit can be broken, a goal that Dr. Neuharth shows you how to accomplish in a clear, step-by-step fashion.

Why You Need This Book

This book is a step-by-step approach for letting go of counterproductive habits, attitudes, and impulses.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL #1: WHEN IN DOUBT, APPLY THE LITMUS TEST

Take a moment to recall a recent situation that didn't turn out the way you'd hoped or expected, at least partly because of your actions. Do you notice any form of misleading, distracting, overreacting or abandoning playing a role?

You can use this litmus test any time you find yourself in a frustrating or confusing situation. Try to recall what you had been thinking, doing, and feeling just before things went off course. See if you can pinpoint an "uh-oh" moment: the instant, however subtle or fleeting, that you had an inkling of discomfort, worry, concern, or a recognition that you didn't like where circumstances or your feelings or thoughts were headed. Recall what you did next.

Ask yourself how your detour may be benefiting you as well as what it might be costing you. If the costs are higher than the benefits, think of at least two ways you might handle the situation better.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL # 2: LOOK FOR THE LOSS

Think for a moment of an unpleasant feeling or problem you recently faced. Can you identify a feared or actual loss? Or the next time you feel stuck, unhappy, or confused, ask yourself, "What emotional losses do I most fear or want to avoid in this situation?"

In either case, identify any feared emotional loss that may be driving your attitudes and actions. When you explore what you're avoiding and acknowledge the payoffs and costs, you view your counterfactualizing in a more realistic light.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL # 3: OBSERVE YOUR ANIMAL NATURE

Take a moment and recall a time when you stopped short of what you wanted, got in your own way, overreacted to a threat, or disappointed yourself. Do you notice any of the animal-like patterns (immobility, withdrawal, submission, or defensive aggression) in your initial behavior? If so, you have identified possible early-warning signs of self-inflicted losses.

Keep these signs in mind and watch for them from time to time, particularly when you're stressed. Stop, look and listen. By doing so, you interrupt automatic habits that trip you up. You can then think of more productive responses.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL # 4: TAKE STOCK OF YOUR ROOTS IN INFANCY

When you feel confused, in turmoil, or threatened, ask yourself which of your feelings are based in the actual situation at hand and which may arise from a primal reaction to loss, limitations, or not getting what you want. When you recognize feelings driven by emotional charges of decades earlier, you can respond more appropriately to the current situation.

TEN FEAR-BUSTING TECHNIQUES

1. When fear plays the survival card, call its bluff

Our worst fears devolve into concerns about our survival. When your fears deal the survival card, play it out. Ask yourself: Is my actual physical survival at stake?

2. Lay bare the contradictions inherent in fear

Our fears are riddled with contradictions. One of the biggest contradictions of fear is inherent. When you listen to your fears, you can become convinced that you are powerless. The paradox: You are so powerful that you use your own fears to convince yourself that you lack power.

3. Reality-test fear's assumptions

Fear makes the leap from possibility to probability, and it does so on the backs of unrealistic and illogical assumptions. For example: "If this relationship falls apart, I'll never find another love."

4. Tackle fear's "emotional reasoning"

This phenomenon is dubbed "emotional reasoning" by researcher David Burns. Feeling something is so doesn't necessarily make it so. When you see your fear-thoughts for what they are, they become akin to dangerous animals in a zoo – harmless to you in their cages, though interesting to visit from time to time.

5. Look beyond fear's oversimplifications

Fear tends to omit important details and nuances. To counteract this, put back what your fear-based simplifications leave out.

6. When weeding out fears, go for the roots

The remedy to dysfunctional loss-avoidance is not to avoid but to move closer. Many forms of self-defense teach that if you cannot escape an unarmed attacker you may be better off moving as close to the attacker as possible. This seems counterintuitive and risky; yet moving in close can reduce the force of an

attacker's punch or kick because the attacker cannot reach full extension. You also gain greater access to an attacker's vulnerable areas.

7. Do the math

The calculations of fear often don't add up. When you weigh the pros and cons of how you are responding to a particular fear, you regain equilibrium.

8. Measure fear's track record

Fear can arise with full potency no matter how many times that fear has been proven unfounded in the past. Another simple way to return inflated fears to their normal size is to take a few moments and list some past successes you have had in facing that specific fear.

9. You have many more choices than what fear offers

Fear reduces you to either-or thinking. The either and or tend to be shortsighted. When you are in an irritating or puzzling situation, think of a range of possible interpretations.

10. Ask proactive questions

Your questions determine your focus. As Tony Robbins said, "The quality of your life is nothing but the quality of the questions you ask. If you ask questions like, 'Why me? Why does this always happen to me?' then you'll be totally disempowered.'

Creative questioning can give fresh perspective and innovative solutions.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL # 5: RECLAIM OVERLOOKED, ABANDONED, OR FORGOTTEN DESIRES

When you feel a sense of emptiness or a lack of purpose or motivation, ask yourself whether any of these factors is playing a part:

- 1. Your fears or activities are crowding out your deep desires.*
- 2. You have forgotten or overlooked your deepest desires.*

3. *You're convinced you can't have or don't deserve what you desire.*

If your desires have been crowded out, ask yourself how you might make room and invite them back. Making yourself take a vacation or a class you've always dreamed of may give you breathing room to rekindle your desires.

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL # 6: CHECK IN WITH YOUR "CHILDREN"

As parent to your mind, body and heart, take a moment and ask yourself: Which of my children most needs attention right now? What do my mind, body, and heart need? Caretaking? Soothing? To be heard? What specifically could I do to fulfill each inner yearning?

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE STUCK

When you feel overwhelmed, confused, or uncertain, it helps to have a surefire way to anchor yourself. Here are seven ways to cut problems to manageable size:

1. *Be specific:* Describe when, where, and how the problem occurs.
2. *Be precise:* Identify the conflict that makes it a problem.
3. *Be honest:* Acknowledge hidden or conflicting priorities.
4. *Be thorough:* Articulate any problems underneath the obvious problem.
5. *Be concrete:* Identify the direction of change needed.
6. *Be complete:* Search for mind, body and heart elements.
7. *Be introspective:* Use emotional distress as a road map, not a stop sign.

THE GOLIATH PRINCIPLE

Every day, do something you fear or resist. Even better, do so the first thing each day. In the morning, identify a task or problem that saps your energy just to think about. Then, like the biblical David, pick up your slingshot. When you pick the biggest, most-resisted problem or task of your day and do it first, your day will zoom. Once you set off to battle, you are no longer passive, hoping the battle will pass you by or waiting for the ax to fall.

When you set your sights on a resisted task, even if you do nothing else all day, you will feel a stronger sense of self.

You can use the Goliath Principle to conquer long-standing fears as well as everyday problems.

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