

WHY WE SABOTAGE OUR POTENTIAL

You don't **sabotage your potential** because you're lazy or scared of ambition. You do it because you were **conditioned** to believe that success in your hands will either be stolen, distorted, reward the wrong people, or be weaponised against you. When we've been exposed to stress and trauma in childhood, we don't want the same people who caused us harm to claim any part of our success, so we sabotage it. We consciously or unconsciously tell ourselves: *'I don't want you to claim my success'*, or *'I don't want you to know about my success'*.

Let's explore them in more depth:

1. I don't want you to claim my success.

Theme: Ownership & credit.

Wound: Resentment over emotional theft.

Root message: "I won't let you take credit for what you never earned or invested in."

Why it exists: You may have been ignored, doubted, or even undermined... until you achieved something. Then, suddenly, the very people who didn't support you wanted to attach themselves to your achievements as proof of their own worth.

Protective strategy: Withholding success or sabotaging progress so they can't insert themselves into your narrative.

2. I don't want you to know about my success.

Theme: Safety & contamination.

Wound: Shame and misrecognition.

Root message: "If you find out, you'll ruin it or make me feel fraudulent."

Why it exists: When people have previously twisted your wins into guilt, mocked you, or implied you were dishonest, visibility becomes dangerous.

Protective strategy: Keeping success completely private – not from modesty, but to keep it unspoiled and untouched.

The Link Between Them

Both wounds share the same root: your success was never safe in their presence. Whether you feared they'd take credit or destroy the meaning of it, the result is the same: you learned not to trust others with your potential and your light. You've been trained to protect your wins by either dimming them or hiding them altogether. It's not about disliking achievement; it's about safeguarding it from the very people who taught you to distrust it.

Conditional Worthiness Programming

Love or approval was tied to performance. Praise had strings. Visibility felt vulnerable. Achievement felt controlled. **You learned to self-sabotage to avoid being owned.**

Loyalty to Pain

You shrink to stay loyal to people or family dynamics that caused pain. Growth feels like betrayal, so it's safer to stay small.

Fear of Being Seen

Past humiliation or mockery made visibility = attack. Part of you believes: if I shine, I'll be punished, shamed, or abandoned.

Control Through Collapse

Sometimes self-sabotage is a way of staying in control. We tell ourselves, if I fail on my own terms, at least I'm safe from them taking any credit for my success.

The Core Wound

You hide or downplay your greatness not because you don't deserve it, but because you've been conditioned to believe that being visible, successful, or admirable is dangerous. Some part of you thinks if I shine, someone will twist it, take it, or punish me for it. That's the wound. It's not about laziness or lack of talent, it's about survival.

Why This Happens

Parental Credit Hijacking: Caregivers or people close to you either took your growth as their own or punished it. Your wins became theirs, or they used it to control, shame, or manipulate you. Your brain learned: success = unsafe.

You may have had a parent, sibling, or other significant person in your life who sabotaged your success even before you had achieved anything. An argument to destabilise you, an insult to damage your confidence, mockery or humiliation to undermine your abilities - all of these were attempts to sabotage you that resulted in your 'failures'. This is especially confusing if the same person encouraged you to succeed whilst destroying your mental and emotional ability to do so.

A person who outwardly encourages you to succeed, yet simultaneously undermines your mental and emotional capacity to do so, is often:

- A covert saboteur: they appear supportive, but their actions erode your confidence.
- A toxic encourager: giving you words of motivation while planting seeds of self-doubt.
- An emotional manipulator: pushing you forward in ways that keep you dependent or disempowered.

- A double binder: setting you up in a trap where the encouragement comes with conditions, criticism, or withdrawal of love.
- An insecure supporter: someone who wants you to grow but can't tolerate you outshining them.

In essence, they're not a true supporter at all. They're someone who creates psychological sabotage under the mask of encouragement, and encouragement without genuine support is about control, not care.

Here's why someone might behave this way:

- Insecurity: They fear being left behind or overshadowed if you truly succeed.
- Control: By "helping" while undermining, they keep you dependent and doubting yourself.
- Envy: They want you to grow, but not beyond *their* comfort zone.
- Projection: They pass on their own unhealed wounds, pushing you towards success while secretly believing you'll fail.
- Conditional love/approval: Their support comes with hidden strings attached - you can rise, but only if it doesn't threaten them.

These people end up being both your cheerleader and your jailer, applauding with one hand, shackling with the

other. Here are a few metaphors you could use to describe this kind of person:

The Sabotage Cheerleader - they clap while cutting your legs out from under you.

The Double-Faced Coach - teaching you how to win while making sure you never do.

The Velvet Saboteur - soft words on the outside, hidden daggers underneath.

The Judas Mentor - encouragement as a kiss, betrayal in the same breath.

The Puppet Encourager - pulling your strings so you never actually stand free.

The Emotional Truth

You were shamed for achieving anything they couldn't control, anything that angered them, that meant they would mock, abuse, or humiliate you, so you learned to:

- Minimise your wins.
- Dismiss compliments.
- Keep your brilliance hidden.

You've been conditioned to fear what successful visibility has historically meant for you. You've learned it's crushingly embarrassing, humiliating, and potentially

dangerous to sing your own praises or even experience a little bit of success.

- When I did too well I was ridiculed and told I was a brat.
- When I passed the 11+ with flying colours my father told me I was a pain in the arse, and I'd ruined his marriage. When I was 19 and won a scholarship to Oxford, he told me to commit suicide.
- I never struggled academically or creatively but I was mocked for not being clever enough.
- I was told you can't be pretty and clever - but I'd never need to choose one or the other as I was neither.
- When I was accepted to the Royal Ballet School, my mother began to overfeed me.
- I was always praised for my essays at school, but my writer father critiqued them and tore them up. I didn't write my first novel until I was 51 years old.

These are just some of the comments I've heard from women who learned that lighting up the room with their gifts and talents meant that someone who felt undermined, jealous, outshone, or threatened would eventually extinguish their light. Luckily, these women learned how to switch their light back on.

The Healing Shift

You can reclaim your light safely. Success can belong to you without fear.

Steps to Reclaim Your Brilliance

Name the Lie

Write down thoughts like:

- If I succeed, they'll think I've done something wrong.
- If I'm amazing, they'll believe I'm fake.

These are implants, not truth.

Name the Truth

Write down thoughts like:

- My success doesn't need to be dirty to be real.
- I can shine without shame.

Restore Safety in Ownership

Keep a praise journal for authentic acts, integrity, and invisible victories. Rewire your brain to believe that pride in your achievements = safety in your emotions.

Choose One Safe Witness

Share one success with someone who won't distort or judge it.

Being safely seen is healing.

Remember, every time you self-sabotage to avoid exposure, your wounded inner child is living someone

else's limitation. Your brilliance is yours, no one else gets to claim it or twist it.