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Self-Sabotage Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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2 · Identify Your Impulsive Responses

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4 · Healthy Response Tools

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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What Is Self-Sabotage?

Self-sabotage is the act of standing in your own way and hurting yourself.

It could take the form of preventing yourself from moving forward from the past or achieving what you want in life (e.g. getting a promotion, finding a romantic relationship, losing weight, etc.).

Write about ways you're sabotaging yourself:

If you find it difficult to come up with examples, think about what you want that didn't achieve yet and what you're doing or not doing that's preventing you from achieving those goals.

- What do you want in a career that you haven't achieved?

- What do you want in a relationship that you haven't achieved?

- What do you want in my friendships/family that's missing?

- What do you want in your life that you don't have?

- What are the negative things in your life that you want to remove?

- What would make you feel more confident, capable, and secure?

Identify Your Impulsive Responses

The following is a list of common impulsive responses. These are coping mechanisms you may have learned as a child and you're still using as an adult.

Check off the ones you relate to and add more to the list:

- ☐ Acting as a caretaker and enabling others' destructive behavior
- ☐ Acting clingy
- ☐ Acting passive-aggressive
- ☐ Apologizing a lot
- ☐ Attacking others or getting angry to hide shame
- ☐ Avoiding conflict
- ☐ Being a perfectionist
- ☐ Being impulsive
- ☐ Being overly controlling
- ☐ Being petty
- ☐ Being sarcastic
- ☐ Blaming
- ☐ Brooding
- ☐ Bullying others
- ☐ Feeling as if you have no needs
- ☐ Feeling greater-than
- ☐ Getting too invested in a relationship too soon
- ☐ Giving too much or too little
- ☐ Oversharing intimate details about yourself too soon
- ☐ Overspending
- ☐ Overworking

- ☐ People-pleasing and changing yourself for someone else's approval
- ☐ Playing the victim
- ☐ Projecting or mind-reading what other people think or feel about you
- ☐ Pushing people away
- ☐ Seeking attention
- ☐ Self-blame and feeling responsible for everything bad that happens
- ☐ Self-harming to soothe yourself
- ☐ Self-loathing
- ☐ Shutting down
- ☐ Suppressing difficult emotions until they manifest as anxiety, depression, or physical pain
- ☐ Discounting or minimizing the difficult or traumatic experiences you had growing up
- ☐ Normalizing your emotional pain
- ☐ Avoiding bad memories or denying that healing is possible
- ☐ Throwing temper tantrums
- ☐ Using alcohol, drugs, food, or other substances to cope
- ☐ Using gambling, sex, shopping, or other activities to cope
- ☐ Withdrawing
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Identifying Your Triggers

Think about times you use your impulsive response to determine triggers.

1. What situations trigger your impulsive response?

2. Who or what do these situations remind you of from your early life?

3. Who are the people in your life that trigger your impulsive response?

4. Do certain objects, sounds, smell trigger your impulsive response?

5. What memories trigger your impulsive response?

6. What do you feel immediately when triggered? Where do you feel it in your body?

7. How, Why and When did your impulsive tools developed?

Healthy Response Tools

The following is a list of common healthy responses to aim to develop. Check off the ones you think you mastered and add more healthy responses that you want to develop:

- ☐ Asking for help from others when you need to
- ☐ Being emotionally vulnerable with people you trust
- ☐ Encouraging yourself and finding motivation to do what you know is right for you
- ☐ Feeling good about yourself even when you haven't been acknowledged by someone else
- ☐ Loving parts of yourself that still need healing
- ☐ Nurturing supportive and safe relationships in your life
- ☐ Practicing good self-care
- ☐ Respecting yourself and your decisions
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Managing Triggers

Review the list of triggers you wrote earlier.

For each trigger, come up with a plan to respond in a healthier, more mature way.

Trigger: _____

Old impulsive response: _____

New healthy response: _____

Trigger: _____

Old impulsive response: _____

New healthy response: _____

Trigger: _____

Old impulsive response: _____

New healthy response: _____

Behavior Goals Worksheet

Old Behavior	New Behavior
e.g., worry	Use problem-solving exercises

Cognitive Distortions

Self-sabotage is rooted in the way we think.

The following are some common examples of cognitive distortions or thinking errors that might be fueling your self-sabotage:

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking

This is when you look at experiences in absolutes or black and white terms.

Example: “if I can’t have my dream body, then there’s no point in going to the gym.”

- Are you using all-or-nothing thinking to create excuses to not try?
If so, give some examples:

2. Overgeneralization

This is when you view a single negative event as a pattern of negative events. If you engage in this type of thinking, you may find yourself using words such as always or never.

Example: “He rejected me. I must be unlovable.”

- Do you often decide that one single negative experience describes your life or your entire self? If so, give some examples:

3. Discounting the Positive

This is when we dismiss good experiences or compliments as being exceptions or insist that our positive qualities are average and shouldn't count.

Example: "I did well this time, but anyone could do that."

- Is engaging in this type of thinking causing you to doubt yourself and keeping your self-esteem low? If so, give some examples:

4. Magnifying the Negative

This is when we put extreme emphasis on the negative while minimizing any coexisting positives.

Example: "Yeah, I worked out for 15 minutes today. But why does that matter, I'm still overweight."

- Is engaging in this type of thinking causing you to lose motivation to pursue your goals? Is so, give some examples:

5. Shoulds, Oughts, and Musts

This is when we criticize ourselves or other people using shoulds, oughts and musts.

Example: “I should work overtime for a month before I can ask for a promotion.”

- Is this thinking causing you to establish unrealistic expectations and then feel incapable when you can’t uphold them 100% of the time? If so, give some examples:

6. Fortune Telling

This is when we predict or assume the outcome ahead of time without knowing for certain.

Example: “There’s no point in getting back on dating websites. I’m never going to find the woman of my dreams.”

- Does this type of thinking cause you to not acknowledge the possibility of a positive outcome or believe you are protecting yourself from risk or danger that may not even exist and not even try? If so, give some examples:

7. Mind Reading

This is when we jump to conclusions regarding others thoughts and feelings without any clear evidence.

Example: “I know she didn’t smile at me because she thinks I’m fat.”

- Does this type of thinking cause you to internalize the thoughts you’re projecting and cause your self-esteem to get lower? If so, give some examples:

8. Emotional Reasoning

This when we turn our feelings into facts.

Example: “I feel like I’m on the verge of a nervous breakdown, so I must be in real danger.”

- Does engaging in this type of thinking cause you to adopt negative beliefs? If so, give some examples:

9. Labeling

This is when we try to capture the “essence” of ourselves or someone else with a label.

Example: “How could I get this wrong? I’m stupid.”

- Does this type of thinking cause you to focus on how bad you are and distract you from learning from your mistakes? Is so, give some examples:

Challenge Your Thinking

1. Negative thought that you want to change:

2. What feelings go along with this thought?

3. Put your thought to the test:

- Is this thought moving you forward or holding you back?

- Is this thought accurate?

- What would you tell a friend who has the same thought?

Opposite Action

Opposite action is a skill that dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) teaches.

This skill helps you regulate emotions by doing the opposite of what your emotions urge you to do.

For example, you may identify that you're feeling sad and that the urge associated with sadness is to stay in bed.

You can influence the way feel by choosing to do the opposite, that is getting out of bed and getting active.

Keep track of your emotions and urges related to them and try to think of an opposite action:

Emotion	Urges	Opposite Action

Systematic Desensitization

Fear can be an important factor that causes us to self-sabotage.

Systematic desensitization (SD) is a type of behavioral therapy that is primarily used as a treatment for phobias.

But the technique can be used to overcome fears, as well.

To use SD, you need to:

- learn relaxation techniques (e.g. Progressive Muscle relaxation, deep breathing, etc.)
- create a hierarchy of stimuli from least fear-provoking to most.
- slowly expose yourself to items on your hierarchy list while using relaxation techniques.

Example: overcoming fear of spiders

1. Thinking about spiders
2. Looking at pictures of spiders
3. Looking at a spider through a window
4. Looking at a spider across the room
5. Looking at a spider within a few feet

Your fear: _____

Hierarchy of stimuli:

Values Card-Sort

Clarifying your values helps you take value-based goals.

The following are cards to print and cut. Each card contains a value.

Once the cards are in a stack, sort them into two piles, one representing values important to you and the other not important. Try to go with your first instinct.

Take the important values pile and sort the cards into three groups: very important, important, and of little importance.

Set aside the cards in the “of little importance” pile and repeat the process until you only have five cards left. These are your top five values.

Acceptance Being open to and willing to experience thoughts and feelings without resistance or judgment.	Equality Treating others equally, consistently.	Meaningful work Doing and providing work that has a purpose and/or significance.
Achievement Placing importance on the fulfillment of activities and goals.	Ethics Valuing moral standards.	Open-mindedness Approaching issues from an objective position, listening, and considering other views.
Adventure Seeking out and/or participating in exciting events that involves uncertainty.	Excellence Pursuit of the highest level of optimal performance.	Patience Waiting calmly for what you want or need

Affection Displaying and expressing love for others.	Fairness Being just, rational and reasonable.	Philanthropy Giving donations of money to good causes.
Aspiration Actively seeking opportunities and striving for success.	Fame A desire to be well-known and recognized by others.	Play Spontaneity and the ability to be amused.
Assertiveness Standing up for your rights while balancing your needs with the needs of others.	Family Maintaining healthy connections to immediate or extended relations.	Pleasure Enjoyment and satisfaction.
Authenticity Being genuine and true to yourself.	Faith Belief in something, someone, or a higher power.	Privacy The need for solitude or separateness and being free from public attention.
Caring Helpful and considerate towards yourself and others.	Flexibility Adjusting and adapting to changing circumstances.	Power Strength, superiority, dominance, and/or authority.
Compassion Recognizing and acting to alleviate suffering for yourself and others.	Forgiveness Coming to terms with or letting go of negative feelings towards yourself and others.	Relationships Connection between and among people.
Competence Ability to solve problems and demonstrate mastery.	Friendliness Being friendly and companionable towards others.	Religion A particular system of belief or faith and worship.

Competition Comparison of self, team or organization against oneself or others	Friendship Strong ties with others.	Respect Being considerate and showing positive regard to others.
Conformity Respecting and obeying helpful rules and obligations.	Generosity Sharing and offering time, attention and resources to yourself and others.	Safety A concern for the wellbeing of one's self and/or others'.
Cooperation Working collaboratively and harmoniously with others.	Gratitude Being appreciative of and valuing the things that you have.	Security Feeling protected or safeguarded from danger – a sense of comfort.
Courage Being brave and persistent in the face of fear, threat or difficulty.	Helping Placing importance on assisting others.	Self-awareness Being aware of your own thoughts, feelings and actions.
Creativity Being Imaginative and innovative.	Honesty Being truthful and sincere with yourself and others.	Self-discipline Acting according to your values over your mood or vulnerabilities.
Curiosity Being open-minded, exploratory and interested in new and alternative ways of thinking.	Humility Being modest about your contributions whilst allowing your achievements to speak for themselves.	Spirituality The recognition of a feeling or belief that there is something greater than yourself

Decisiveness The ability to make decision firmly, clearly, and in a timely manner	Humor Seeking out and engaging in the humorous side of life.	Status Placing importance on the rank or position of something in a relationship or group.
Ecology/Environment Being aware of natural resources and seeking to preserve them.	Independence Being self-directive, contained and able to support yourself.	Tolerance Coming to terms with, acknowledging and respecting things that different or unfamiliar.
Education Placing importance on learning.	Leadership The ability to influence and guide others.	Wealth Richness in terms of assets and money.
Emotional awareness Being open and receptive to your own feelings and the feelings of others.	Loyalty Allegiance to people, organizations, ideals, causes, etc.	Wellness Improving and maintaining your physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing.

Now that you have your top five values, describe in a few words why each value is important to you and how you can incorporate this value more in your life:

1. Value: _____

Its importance: _____

Ways to incorporate it: _____

2. Value: _____

Its importance: _____

Ways to incorporate it: _____

3. Value: _____

Its importance: _____

Ways to incorporate it: _____

4. Value: _____

Its importance: _____

Ways to incorporate it: _____

5. Value: _____

Its importance: _____

Ways to incorporate it: _____

Asking for Help

Having the support of a friend, family member, or professional will make your recovery easier.

Please make a list of three people who can support you through this process and ways they can help you:

Once you finish your list of supporters, reach out to let them know what you are doing and how they can be helpful.

Self-Care Assessment

This assessment will give you an overview of strategies you can use to practice self-care.

Use a scale of 0 to 5 to rate each item according to its frequency with 0 being never and 5 being frequently:

Psychological Self-Care:

- Journaling _____
- Self-reflection _____
- Being curious _____
- Reading _____
- Psychotherapy _____
- Practicing receiving from others _____
- Standing up for yourself and setting healthy boundaries _____

Emotional Self-Care:

- Spending time with people whose company you enjoy _____
- Allowing yourself to cry when you need to _____
- Being compassionate with yourself _____
- Doing things you enjoy _____
- Affirming yourself _____
- Using healthy coping strategies when needed _____

Physical Self-Care:

- Eating healthily _____
- Exercising regularly _____
- Getting quality sleep _____
- Getting medical attention when needed _____
- Resting when needed _____
- Wearing clothes you like _____

Spiritual Self-Care:

- Spending time in nature _____
- Finding a connection or community _____
- Knowing what is meaningful to you _____
- Having a regular spiritual practice (praying, meditating, etc.) _____

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · not a DSM-5-TR diagnosis
- ICD-11 CDDR: · not an ICD-11 mental disorder diagnosis
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 7, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 27, 28. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Do not infer a disorder from worksheet endorsement. Assess duration, severity, distress or impairment, medical/substance causes, cultural context, and relevant differentials when symptoms warrant evaluation.

Document-specific corrections

- Replace intentional-sounding ·sabotage· explanations with functional analysis that includes executive dysfunction, trauma avoidance, depression, anxiety, substance use, and environmental barriers.
- Do not use systematic desensitization without a defined fear target, hierarchy, consent, and screening for realistic danger.
- Use values cards only as a reflection activity; verify the provenance and reproduction rights of any supplied card set.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [18, 27]: identify each measure and rights holder; verify intended population, reliability/validity, scoring and cutoffs, reproduction permission, and current license. If these are author-created items, label them informal, remove diagnostic cutoffs, and do not claim validation.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23]: require topic-qualified clinical review for consent, readiness, contraindications, escalation thresholds, and whether clinician-guided use is necessary.

Crisis and current resources

- NICE anxiety guidance for exposure-related scope.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>