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Up in Flames

by Chris Boyd, M.A., R.C.C.

On February 16th 2015, at around 4:15pm, I received a call while at work from a friend who lives in my apartment building. She said "Chris, there's a fire in our building and we've been evacuated. But don't worry; the fire is on the opposite side of the building from where we both live." At

first I was somewhat relieved, then it hit me... we live on opposite sides of the building, so it's impossible for the fire to be on the opposite side from where we BOTH live!

I cancelled the rest of my appointments and hurried home, along the way getting more text messages and calls from concerned family and friends who lived close by. On arrival, I saw that the flames were ravaging the side of the building. The firefighters were working vigorously to stop the advancement of the flames but the fire was spreading to the roof and was creeping closer to my apartment that was located on the top floor, south corner of the building.

I recall looking around at the eclectic crowd of people watching the fire. There were many shocked and sad faces. I heard a lady complaining about how her suite across the court yard would surely smell like smoke, not aware that she was standing next to a couple who were literally watching their apartment being engulfed in flames. A young woman approached and burst into tears, fearing for her cat that was still inside (I heard days later that the cat had in fact died). There was so much activity: from emergency crews, to media, to victim services workers, to onlookers.

I felt kind of numb, trying to comprehend the scale of the loss that might happen and feeling powerless to do anything about it. I was thinking about the items that were at risk: my laptop, pictures and eccentric collectables, wishing that I had opted for contents insurance instead of playing the odds. After 3 to 4 hours the flames made it to my apartment. Though I

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5 Tips for Successful Self-Sabotage

by Joan Schultz, Ph.D., R.Psych.

We don't intend to sabotage ourselves. But if we take the time to observe how we are living our life on a daily basis, we might catch glimpses of how we seem to thwart our own best interests by the habits we keep, the attitudes we hold or the behavior we extend towards others. Based on over twenty-five years of "professional" observation, I've noticed there are common themes in "self-sabotage". We can easily sabotage our lives by not attending to things that matter, insidiously creating personal chaos and discontent.

To self-sabotage successfully, simply follow one or more of these rules:

1. Don't pay attention to your own self-care. Neglect your need for sleep and sleep hygiene. Eat inconsistently, focusing on comfort food rather than nutrition. Refuse to exercise. Decide these things are important for others, (i.e. "the kids") but somehow you don't need them, or you'll get to it next January, or you "can't"* exercise the willpower to put them into practice.

Alternatively, remember that sleep is one of the kindest things we do for ourselves. Sleep stages 3 & 4 are deeply restorative, and most often disrupted by too much caffeine. Limit yourself to 250 mg of caffeine a day (about 2 cups of coffee, before early afternoon). Work with your body's natural circadian rhythms: Wake up with sun, turn lights on, allow yourself to work, eat and sleep at consistent times each day.

Exercise has all kinds of health benefits and perhaps most

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importantly "uses up" our stress hormones and produces endorphins – our "happy hormones," as well as increasing our stamina and cardiovascular indicators.

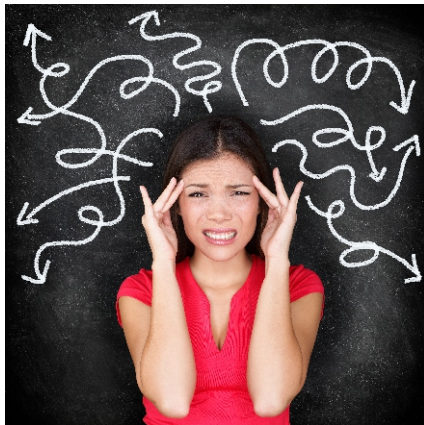
By willing yourself to do what you need to do, setting goals and keeping yourself accountable, you will actually change your brain as well as change the image you have of yourself – from being powerless to possessing self-discipline and control.

2. Let negativity get the best of you. Believe every negative thought that crosses your mind. Focus on your worries and convince yourself that the worst of them will happen. Allow your fears to hold you back from attempting...almost anything. Hang on to resentments and rehearse the offenses others have committed against you.

Alternatively, remember that we may be actually unaware of the negative thoughts we believe about ourselves or others, and instead live unknowingly with their consequences -- feelings that prevent us from enjoying life, or trusting others. Listen to what you are telling yourself day to day. Just because you think a thought does not mean it is true. Challenge yourself to view life with realistic optimism. Each day ask: "What three things went well today?" Write them down. Every. Day.

Deal with the resentment in your life – it is a sibling to anger and bitterness. Step back from the resentment that attaches itself to the hurt others have caused. Practice forgiveness - and perhaps even more radically (where appropriate) - forgetfulness.

Re-circulate your joyful states: Remember wonderful times and people, revisit photos, listen to and tell stories of positive memories and family members overcoming challenges. Keep fun and humor as a part of your daily life.



3. Constantly be in a state of over extension. Consistently have too many commitments and not enough time. Never take breaks in your day or routine. Determine that you do not need any time apart for rest and relaxation. Believe that only you can "fix everything" wrong in your work

world and/or family to the extent you neglect yourself and your actual priorities.

Alternatively, consider Segerstrom and Miller's (2004) meta-analysis of 300 studies on stress led them to conclude that a Biphasic Model best explains the impact of stress on our immune system. Acute stress enhances the immune system for a short time, but as stress accumulates and becomes chronic, the immune system is overloaded and is eventually suppressed, opening the door to serious physical illnesses. ** Recognize and limit the cumulative stress you carry. Plan breaks and "down time" to recuperate before moving on to the next challenge.

Learn to recognize how much you can handle and allow yourself the option of saying "No" or "Not now"... and to balance that by saying "Yes!" to things that matter.

4. Isolate yourself. Avoid people... even those who care about you. Avoid initiating activities that might lead to

friendship with others. When you are in difficulty, don't talk about it to anyone and don't make any effort to help others in difficulty either. Make no attempt to resolve conflict or a misunderstanding –avoid it completely or let it "work itself out". Use sarcasm and criticism frequently. These are ways you are sure to increase the distance between yourself and others, which leads to loneliness, hurt feelings and false assumptions.

Alternatively, consider making the effort to have a supportive connection with someone every day by initiating an act of kindness or engagement with another person. Initiate it, don't wait for someone else to do it first. Look for ways to increase your own trustworthiness by demonstrating follow-through.

Often when we are in difficulty, we assume others won't care. Suffering is part of the human condition and only made easier when shared with others who want to help. Initiate helping first, so others can follow your lead. Having daily contact with nature and other living creatures helps too. Get outside!

We can easily sabotage our lives by not attending to things that matter.

5. Lose Perspective. Think only of yourself and what you might gain from any relationship or activity, including work. Consider only your present situation, give no thought to what you need to do to create a future where you could be engaged in purposeful activity. Have an attitude of entitlement, with expectations that you should be taken care of instead of instead of taking responsibility for yourself and others. Use your resources only for yourself with a short term focus. Have low expectations of yourself and be sure not to work too hard at anything.

Alternatively, consider keeping focused and working towards a valued goal – something that you find meaningful. Keep clear about what is important in your life, and how you can impact others for good. In that sense, your life is not your own. Determine to be an influence for good in your world.

The most effective treatment for depression is "life engagement". The opposite of depression is not happiness, it is "feeling alive"! To circumvent the "Self-Sabotaging blues", become fully engaged in meaningful activity and in the lives of others. It's a clear road to mental health.

*Let's replace that word "can't" with "won't", just to be honest with ourselves.

** For more information on understanding stress and it's effects, check out Gabor Mate's book, *When the Body says No: The cost of Hidden Stress*.

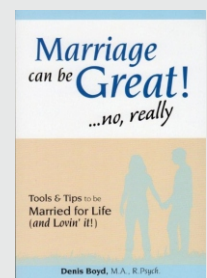
Books

**Marriage can be Great!...
no really**

by Denis Boyd, R.Psych.

**Parenting Teens Without
Power and Strings**

by Rick Hancock, R.Psych.



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didn't know it at the time, it turned out to be almost a complete loss, with the exception of a few salvaged items covered in particulate/mold (including my Geordi LaForge decorate plate, wine barrel shelf, sports jerseys and golf clubs).

That night the residents met at the local community centre and were provided updates on the fire and services for those affected. I didn't sleep well that night as my mind continued to race. The next day was the most challenging as I felt mentally and physically exhausted. I was more emotional than usual, not as much due to the loss of my home but from the outpouring of support and kind words I was receiving. I took the day off to figure out the next step. I felt more at ease after stopping by Como Lake and sitting calmly for about an hour.

I began to put my situation into perspective and reframe some of the thoughts I was having that consisted of a lot of 'would have, could have, should have' thinking. I realized how fortunate I am, as a therapist, to meet with some incredibly resilient people each week who have experienced unimaginable hardship and trauma. I thought to myself, if they can get through and cope with their circumstances, I can deal with this; I fed off of their strength. 'Stuff is stuff,' I told myself. 'It can be replaced. Life goes on.' I pondered how the situation could have been way worse.

I also chose to focus on the silver linings, including the incredible response from family, friends, colleagues and the community as a whole. I was very moved by how the community rallied around those of us who were impacted; Coquitlam's true colours were shining through. There was still so much to be grateful for, even in this challenging time.

It's not necessarily the situation itself, but one's perception of the situation that leads to how traumatizing it will be for the individual. Everybody reacts differently to a loss and that's OK. Here are a few ideas that can be helpful if you experience a similar circumstance in your life.

- 1) Take time to grieve the loss. Talking with someone you trust is important when experiencing a trauma. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone, or don't have an established social network, do some writing. Even 20 minutes of writing, 4 days in a row can be cathartic and extremely beneficial.
- 2) Don't be afraid to reach out for and accept support if you require it. In this situation, the community rallied and donated the necessities, including clothing, food and money. Fortunately, the support is there to assist the families that need it the most when emergencies like this occur.
- 3) Keep your routine intact. Focus on the essentials: sleep, nutrition, exercise and connecting with positive people. Incorporate other strategies to boost well-being, including: breathing exercises, meditation, writing, yoga, mantras, guided imagery, gratitude exercise, connecting with nature, volunteering, etc.
- 4) If you continue to ruminate on the past, worry about the future, or focus on something you don't have control over, try to redirect your attention back to the moment or focus on the positives (there are always positives, no matter how small they are!).
- 5) Adopt an action oriented mindset. If something can be done to improve the situation, set some goals and start to work towards them.

If the intense emotions and thoughts persist and impact your ability to engage in life, please consider connecting with a clinical counsellor, psychologist, or other mental health professional.

A profound thank-you to everyone who responded to this situation with kindness, compassion and generosity. It made all the difference!

“Everything can be taken from a man or woman but one thing: the last of the human freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.” -Viktor Frankl





Orthorexia Nervosa: When Healing Becomes Unhealthy

by Brooke Lewis M.A., R.C.C.

Sally scrolls through her social media and an article catches her eye. She clicks on the link and begins to read about how processed foods can be harmful to health. She resonates with the article and slowly stops eating processed foods such as cereals and canned soups. Sally becomes more curious and starts researching more about food, its production, and the impact on our health. She begins to cut out other food categories believing they are bad for her, such as dairy and wheat and insists on eating organic only. As Sally's food rules become stricter, her social life begins to dwindle. She starts declining social functions as they mostly involve food that would not follow her rules. Her way of eating becomes more rigid and when she does have a treat, she experiences strong feelings of guilt. Sally's belief system also begins to change. Sally starts to develop a sense of superiority as she becomes a strictly 'clean' eater. Overtime, Sally begins to experience medical concerns and consults her physician whom suggests she is struggling with Orthorexia Nervosa (ON).

Can healthy eating become unhealthy? Doctor Steven Bratman thinks so. Orthorexia nervosa is a term coined by Doctor Bratman in 1997 in an article he wrote for Yoga Journal detailing his experience of his own obsession with healthy eating that developed while working in a commune. Bratman also commented about other restrictive eating habits of visitors to the commune, all of which had the goal of eating for purity. According to Bratman (1997), ON is characterized by the obsession for the quality of one's food rather than the quantity of food, as seen in anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Rather than having the goal to lose weight, the goal of an orthorexic individual is to eat healthy. As healthy as possible.

An individual with ON will pursue this obsession through a restrictive diet, a concentrated focus on meal preparation, and specific patterns of eating. This individual will spend much time scrutinizing the food to be consumed, questioning about pesticides and hormones, questioning the processing of the food and whether nutrients were lost during cooking, and inquiring about the packaging to assess if labels are providing enough information regarding the product. Beyond meal time, this individual may spend considerable amounts of time researching food, weighing and measuring food and meal planning for the future. Typically, ON develops out of a desire to maximize one's own health and well-being (Koven & Abry, 2015).

Medical problems start to occur when eating rituals and rules become too rigid and strict. Medical consequences of ON include nutritional deficiencies as individuals omit entire food groups, such as grains or dairy. Psychological consequences are seen in intense anxiety and frustration when food-related rituals are disrupted, disgust when food purity is compromised, and intense guilt when food violations occur. Compensatory behaviors may occur post food violations in the form of stricter food rules or purification rituals such as fasts or cleanses (Koven & Abry, 2015).

Orthorexia nervosa seems to be quite the hot topic in the media. *Daily Mail*, *Global News*, *The Times*, *Huffington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *CNN* are just a few sources that

have released a news story or article regarding ON. In Dr. Bratman's book (2000) he states there is an orthorexia nervosa epidemic occurring in North America. Interestingly, there was very little research to back up this statement. Orthorexia Nervosa, currently, is not an official diagnosis in the DSM-V. Controversy exists whether Orthorexia Nervosa could be its own eating disorder or whether it is a subtype of another eating disorder. Even with a lack of definition, people are resonating with this "disorder." It appears many people are coming forth confessing their battle with ON through fitness blogs. I am curious about whether part of the development of Orthorexia Nervosa is correlated to the shift in media beauty standards from thin to fit. Fitspo is a common hashtag used in social media to indicate fitness-inspiration. Often these posts include bodies of unrealistically low body fat with convoluted messages that are meant to be inspiring, along with dietary education that demonizes certain foods or ways of eating.

Further research is being conducted on ON to help provide effective treatment suggestions. Therapy can help those who believe they are struggling with ON by helping them reduce fear that is related to "unhealthy" foods, to re-introduce a larger variety of foods, and re-engage in social situations that may involve food.

Bratman, S. (1997). Original essay on orthorexia. Available at: www.orthorexia.com. Accessed: February 2015.

Bratman, S. & Knight, D. (2000). *Health Food Junkies: Orthorexia Nervosa – Overcoming the Obsession with Healthful Eating*. New York, NY: Broadway.

Koven, N. S. & Abry, A. W. (2015). The clinical basis of orthorexia nervosa: emerging perspectives. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 1(1), 385-394. Doi: 10.2147/NDT.561665

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