

ERICA SNYDER

A portrait of Erica Snyder, a woman with dark, curly hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a blue denim shirt. The background is plain white.

HOW I BEAT SELF SABOTAGE

And How You Can Too

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by
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This book would not be possible without the love and support of my husband. It has been a long and surprisingly therapeutic journey. Your patience has been a gift. I also want to thank my parents, my brother, and my aunt. Thank you for listening. I'd like to thank the close friends that I'm so blessed to have in my life right now and all of the past friends who've touched me along the way. Finally, I want to thank all of you who are about to read this book. I hope you know how much you mean to me... I truly hope that you will take something away from this book that will help you in some small way.

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PREFACE

Seven years ago I was hung over, lethargic, pre-diabetic, obese, directionless, and depressed. The month before my dream wedding I was trying on wedding dresses, 50 pounds overweight. With my whole life in front of me all I wanted to do was crawl into a hole and die. Then I became sick and tired of being sick and tired and decided to change my life. It seemed easy on paper. Just buckle down and make some changes - lose weight - get healthy - start pursuing my goals and dreams. But no matter how sincere my intention, and no matter how hard I tried, I found it very difficult to even get started. When I did, I just kept quitting. Through a lot of soul searching I eventually discovered that self sabotage was the one thing that kept showing up whenever I decided to pursue any kind of positive change in my life. In order to start living the life that I'd always dreamed for myself it became my mission to beat self sabotage. I became obsessed with learning all I could about it.

After a lot of time spent searching I discovered that while there was no shortage of scientific data about self sabotage out there, and certainly no shortage of

ineffective remedies being offered to manage self sabotage, there was a serious lack of any meaningful, simple, real life, real world, impactful solutions available to beat it. So through a lot of trial and error, countless false starts, and a lot of frustration, I discovered, adapted and applied several different strategies that not only helped me manage the feelings and emotions that accompany self sabotage, but beat it altogether. I'm not saying it's not a struggle, some times daily, but I beat self sabotage and I know you can too.

When I set out to write this book I knew I wasn't a professional writer. I knew there would likely be sentence structure issues, grammatical errors, and probably a few past tense/present tense arguments in a sentence here or there. But all of that didn't matter. The important thing for me is to share with you, as best I can, a few of the most impactful strategies and exercises that have helped me change my life, and I believe will help you too. My wish is for you to beat self sabotage and to start living the life you were meant to live.

I'd like to ask you for a favor before you start reading this book. Take your time. One of the drums that I seem

to be beating more and more these days is of slowing down. The pace of this world drives me crazy sometimes. We live in a microwave it, instant message it, hurry it up world. It seems like we are trying to get through whatever we're doing faster and faster so we can quickly get on to the next thing.

As you embark on your journey of beating self sabotage it's important to take your time. As you read through this book, take your time. There is no doubt you could get through it in one or two sittings, but it's not a race. My husband and I are reading Tao De Ching and we regularly get hung up for weeks contemplating just one page of that book, sometimes just one sentence. So the favor I ask of you is to please take your time. Some of the methods and exercises in this book might seem a little hokey. No one is looking though and you're worth it. Take your time and enjoy the journey of life.

There are wealth's of joy in some of the smallest things that we pass by at break neck speeds throughout the day. Thank you for taking the time to share this one with me...

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Self sabotage shows up in our lives in one form or another every single day. How we react to thoughts and emotions that accompany self sabotage is the real determining factor of how things will turn out in any given situation. Life is coming at us at a dizzying pace each day - home, job, relationships, bills, information, technology, traffic, fitness, meals, kids... the list goes on and on. Daily pressures are endless and it only seems to be getting worse. It seems there isn't enough time in the day to accomplish even half of what we need to accomplish anymore. The modern American life is perfectly engineered to produce a constant stream of moments throughout each day in which to engage in self sabotaging thoughts.

Guilt - fear - doubt - procrastination. To one degree or another we've all suffered the effects of self sabotage at some point in our lives, whether we were aware of it or not. Perhaps we missed out on a job opportunity, got caught in a cycle of yo-yo dieting, or maybe we've suffered the ending of an important relationship. Whatever the effect, our reaction to self sabotaging

thoughts has likely changed the course of our life... forever. But before we all slide off the deep end overthinking that, let me offer this; the absolute perfection of life is that the moment we open our eyes each morning we are presented with a clean slate, a total reset, a fresh opportunity to start anew. The realization of our biggest goals and our wildest dreams is never much further than a moment away...

So what is self sabotage? Why should I care? Scientists and psychologists have filled volumes outlining varying definitions and offering brilliant explanations of what self sabotage is and the theories behind it. But in the spirit of keeping it real and getting to the point please pay very close attention to the following simple definition; self sabotage is a behavior, often in the form of an inner monologue, that ultimately interferes with goals and dreams. The key word to hone in on in here is *interferes*. Self sabotage doesn't have the power on its own to eliminate or erase our goals and dreams. It only interferes with our reaching them. That's an awesome thought if you think about it because the power to reach our goals and realize our dreams is truly, solely ours.

So why should you care about all of this? Consider the following - self sabotage is the primary driving force and root cause preventing us from reaching our goals or realizing our dreams. This is huge! The negative effects of self sabotage are crippling, life altering even. Believe me, I've lived with self sabotage and felt its negative effects most of my life. When the clouds began to finally clear away, and strategies for beating my own self sabotaging behavior were put into practice, everything in my life changed for the better! When the fog lifted I was finally able to stop looking at myself through the veil of self sabotaging thoughts and behaviors and start honestly seeing my true self. I emerged energized and became motivated to really start living, to experiencing life fully, and to stop wasting time focusing on fears and doubts and debilitating guilt.

It didn't happen overnight. In my quest to overcome self sabotage there were more than a few false starts. While I was able to identify self sabotage as the root cause of my living in reaction to fear and doubt and guilt, I hadn't yet discovered effective solutions for managing self sabotage and eradicating it from my life. It took wasting some time working through a lot of flat, ineffective

approaches that only put a band aid on the problem, to eventually discover several very effective strategies for actually *beating* self sabotage once and for all. Once I really started to feel the positive effects eradicating self sabotaging behaviors had in my life I became very passionate about helping others beat this monster too. I wanted to share the discoveries I made for removing the filter of fear, doubt and guilt that you might be seeing yourself through to reveal the you you really are so you might live fully and achieve your goals and your dreams. This is my motivation for writing this book.

Whether your goals are fitness or wellness related, if you want to start a new business or go back to school, or maybe you want to change careers, move across country or move across the world - whatever your goals or dreams might be - whether the changes you seek or the visions you see for yourself are big or small, and you feel like there's something preventing you from taking meaningful steps towards it, more than likely the block your feeling is rooted in self sabotage. I'd like to help you get out of your own way, throw a little caution to the wind, and start living the life you were meant to live!

THE BACK STORY

THE BACK STORY

Anyone who knows me will tell you that I am my least favorite subject. But to put a little perspective on how or why self sabotage became a part of my life I wanted to share just a little bit about my back story. Needless to say, this chapter will be kept short and sweet.

We all have unique life stories. The cosmos have produced an endless array of life events that have led us all to the unique places where we find ourselves today. My story is probably very similar to yours. I grew up in the Midwest. My parents were old school. I love and respect my parents deeply and am so thankful for them. I'm much more thankful for them now than I was when I was growing up though. They were hardworking and fiercely loyal to family and church. After over 30 years of marriage they divorced. I was 19. My dad passed away a little over a year ago. My brother, who's always been one of my heroes, is eight years older than me. We were very close, but because of our age difference we lived in totally separate worlds throughout my childhood. As I was starting the 5th grade, my brother

was moving into a college dorm. So, for the most part, I spent my childhood alone.

Whether it was because of the typical ways of the Bible belt culture in the Midwest, or because I was the younger sibling and my parents had already “been there and done that” with my older brother, or maybe because of some generationally rooted family ideology - whatever the reason a deep sense of fear and doubt was instilled in me from a very early age. The strategy used to keep me close and to keep me safe from the world was to make me so afraid of it that I wouldn’t dare want to venture a closer look. That story could fill volumes by itself. But even with as much havoc that was unwittingly wreaked in my life, in many ways I was my own worst enemy. Knowing what I knew and seeing what I saw throughout my family growing up - alcoholism, fear, guilt and self destruction - I still chose to travel a path in a mad search for my own perfect triffecta of self destruction - abusing alcohol, abusing drugs, and becoming dangerously obese. Whether it was food or intoxicants it seemed I couldn’t numb myself enough to the madness around me. Secretly I yearned for something more. My immediate dream was to not just be

as geographically far away as possible but I also dreamed about being healthy and fit and free from all of the alcohol induced “so called” fun I couldn’t stop having.

When it came to pursuing dreams, or even school assignments, chores, or most anything at all, procrastination was a favorite diversionary tactic of mine. When it came to making any kind of positive change, or even when it came to tackling little, every day tasks like dishes, or paying bills, or getting a school or work project done, tomorrow always seemed like a much better time to do it than today. Procrastination is a tricky form of self sabotage. Being fit and living a healthy lifestyle was something I always yearned for, but I took every opportunity to make terrible food choices and party all the time... My excuse was that I was young. I’m supposed to be having fun now. I’d rather fit in than be fit... I’ll be healthy later. Despite an inner desire to live healthier, to pursue my quest for fitness and wellness, or to just be the me I knew I could be, I couldn’t manage to get out of my own way. I was surrounded by negativity and I was feeding into most of it. Nobody around me talked much about a future that

was very exciting to them so I couldn't grasp a very exciting future for myself either. Deep down I wanted something more, but it seemed like a world away. It was much easier to just go along with the group. Besides, there was always tomorrow to make a change...

Sometimes it takes something drastic to shock us into coherence. For me, it was my annual physical one year. Like so many before I thought I could just show up, jump through some hoops, get my clean bill of health, and go about my merry way. But this time, my doctor had something slightly different to report. With a very sober look she informed me that the sedentary lifestyle I was living, the bad food choices, nicotine and alcohol consumption, was starting to catch up with me. Adverse health effects were starting to show up. My blood pressure was high, my cholesterol was high and I was pre-diabetic. But I was only 25... she must be looking at the wrong chart. She then used words that nearly gave me a heart attack right then and there. "Erica, you are approaching morbid obesity." Morbid obesity! How could this be? Again, I thought she must have the wrong chart in front of her because she couldn't possibly be talking about me, right? Wrong.

My doctor literally gave me orders that day to clean up my lifestyle and lose weight or else face the consequences.

So I had high blood pressure, I was a pre-diabetic, I was borderline morbidly obese and I was only 25. On top of all of this, I was about to get married. It was time for a change and tomorrow wasn't an option anymore.

At this point, all the excuses in the world weren't going to change the fact that I needed to act, and act quickly. I felt I had no choice. Sometimes that's a good place to be. Sometimes we are forced to get out of our own way. With our back up against the wall we either fight or fall. I decided to get mad and fight. And a fight I knew it would be. I knew there wasn't a magic pill and I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

10 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

It was May 2007, and in less than a month I was leaving for a 10-day trip to Hawaii for my wedding. Motivated by the daunting news I had just received from my doctor, and also by this weird notion of not keeling over before my first wedding anniversary, I knew I had no choice but to make a bold move towards getting myself healthy. But how? I wasn't about to step foot in a gym full of pretty, fit people in the shape that I was in. It was then when I remembered this annoyingly persistent infomercial for a home fitness DVD program I always tried to quickly click through as I was laying on the couch, watching TV, eating some god-awful thing at night. The program looked really hard, maybe too hard for me to do....so I ordered it. Thinking back, this may have been another one of my clever, preemptive self sabotaging maneuvers. I probably visualized myself trying it for 5 or 10 minutes and saying, "well I tried honey but it was just too hard" so I'd have an excuse to quit. Anyway, we left for Hawaii, had an amazing wedding and an amazing time. When we returned, much to my dismay, there was this little brown box inside of our front door that had been delivered while we were

gone. Coming off the excitement of the whirlwind trip we'd just been on I was too tired to think about it, but knew the time had come to finally make a change. The gauntlet had been dropped. I drew a line in the sand and decided I was going to just try my best and damn the consequences!

Having had some previous experience with training and nutrition my husband put together a meal plan for me and the next morning, with laptop and DVD in tow, I hit the basement with a vengeance. Looking back now I have to laugh. That first week, I could only do *a* pushup, and even that was a challenge. My initial goal of twenty minutes on the treadmill started out as three. I thought I was going to die in those three minutes! Often I thought I'd quit. But thankfully, I applied some really good advice I'd just used to stop smoking. "Just take it ten minutes at a time. All you have to do is make it through the next ten minutes. Focus on just those ten minutes." Great advice because at first my cardio and weightlifting routine combined only lasted ten minutes... including breaks! But I stuck with it, laser focused, ten minutes at a time.

With the DVD came access to a pretty active on line forum full of people just like me I felt I could cry to when I needed to. This was incredibly helpful. Between the support I felt from the virtual community, and from my husband and other family, plus knowing I only had to make it through the next ten minutes, I actually started to see progress. My ten minute workouts became fifteen, then twenty, and it wasn't too long until I found myself completing the entire workout - start to finish - including 45-minutes of cardio.

While I didn't see much difference visually right away, I felt better than I had for years. So I stuck with it - ten minutes at a time. It was painful. Very painful. I wanted to quit every single day. I kept telling myself that it would get easier, and it did. My husband took pictures of me on day one. Front view, back view, left view, right view -YIKES! On day 30, I have to admit I didn't feel like I could really see very much improvement in the mirror, but when we put the 30-day pictures side by side with my day one pictures I was shocked to actually see a slightly smaller me. From there I was hooked. That was all the motivation I needed. Not only was I feeling great but now I could actually see the fruits of my labor

paying off in those pictures. Day 60 pictures next to day 30 pictures were another great surprise and by the time I had completed my initial goal of 90 days, I was literally a totally different person. At this point in my journey I had lost a whopping 35 pounds of fat, had gained 5 pounds of muscle, and had lost six inches from around my waist. The surprises kept coming...

Part of the online forum I had been participating in over the past 90 days was an invitation to post progress pictures. Each month the company who sponsored the site gave away prizes, including a top prize of \$10,000 for the best weight loss transformations. Despite the embarrassment of my day one photos - messed up hair and being in my bra and underwear - my husband encouraged me to enter my photos anyway. Not too long after entering I was actually chosen as the top transformation winner! I couldn't believe it. And if this weren't enough, not long after winning the top transformation contest, I was invited on an all expense paid trip to California to be featured in one of their national TV infomercials - just like the one I had tried so hard to avoid watching months before...

The whole thing was amazing. And to think just a few short months prior, I was clinically obese. I could hardly wait to see my doctor again. I'd soon have the chance.

Several months later the time came for my annual doctor visit again and by this time I had lost a total of 50 pounds. I'd gone from a size 16 to a size 4. I was looking so forward to walking into that office and showing her the new me. I'd made her a promise the year before that I was going to follow her advice and when I walked in to her office, she didn't even recognize me. My own doctor didn't recognize me! She had to take a seat when she realized who I was. It was amazing.

Later, one of our close friends we hadn't seen in a while stopped by to visit. He didn't recognize me either. He later told my husband he thought I was my little sister... and I don't have a little sister! It's still one of the best compliments I've ever received.

MAGIC MONDAY

MAGIC MONDAY

We all know the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. So why do we do it? When it comes to setting and pursuing goals, or realizing dreams, the objective is to overcome obstacles standing in our way. So why is it then that *we* become our biggest obstacle? We take the time to come up with brilliant ideas for our lives, and we have the most sincere intent to realize our dreams, but then we engineer circumstances that derail the very success we seek before we even give ourselves a chance to get started. We're pretty clever about it too. We get very good at setting traps and at constructing minefields in our pathways ensuring we will never reach our intended destination. Exerting great amounts of energy we set ourselves up for failure. One of the more subtle ways we do this is with what I call Magic Monday's.

When it comes to health and fitness we admire the bodies of the models and athletes we see in magazines or on TV. We visualize ourselves achieving *that* body. With a lot of conviction we decide we're going to do whatever it takes to get there. We make our plans, we buy new

exercise clothes, fitness DVD's, organize our schedules and formulate perfect strategies of attack. We're convinced! We can do this thing. All we have to do is follow the plan, get over the hump, turn it into a habit, a lifestyle, and then we'll be in the clear. That body will be ours! We then pick a day to draw a line in the sand and start our new life, as the new us.

Monday is almost always the magic day. "It's all going to change starting Monday!" Usually by Wednesday though a totally different conversation starts taking place in our heads. *"Why did I sign up for this? This is so stupid - who does this! You know, I actually like my body, those people in magazines don't even look healthy, they're probably not happy either; they're all photoshopped anyway.... Oh forget it, I'm going to the bar after work... I really love their fries!"* And the cycle continues. I've been there a hundred times myself. Often by the very next Monday we're back to the "I can do this!" conversation in our head again, making plans to start our new life the following Monday. Isn't it great how we always set our goals to start on Monday so we don't interrupt our weekends? I love that. Don't mess with my weekends!

By the way, it's not just ambitions of losing weight either. "Magic Monday's" bring the promise of new us's on many fronts. One of my old favorites used to be "Monday I'm going to quit smoking." I usually threw away a perfectly good pack of cigarettes on Sunday night. By Monday afternoon, I'd totally lost my cool and was fiending so bad that I had to make a bee line to the store to buy another pack. I wonder how much money I wasted doing that... And drinking! Oh my goodness, how many times did I swear off drinking. "Starting Monday I'm going to stop drinking - and stop smoking - and become a vegetarian - and get into pro athlete shape - and...." It's crazy the pressures we put on ourselves! I have to admit though.....