

ENDING *Self Sabotage*



By Jojo Marie Schillaci

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER & AUTHOR OF *MY MISSING PEACE*

SIMPLYJOMARIE.COM | SIMPLYJOMARIE@GMAIL.COM



Do you ever find yourself in a great place in your life and everything is going beautifully, but your mind continually goes to the negative? You're paralyzed by fear, but unsure of the source? Sound familiar?.... *You're not alone.*

On the surface, we call it doubt or fear, but the deeper darker truth is that it's self-sabotage, or as some like to call it, a self-fulfilling prophecy. By Wikipedia definition, a self-fulfilling prophecy is "a process through which an originally false expectation leads to its own confirmation." This can be summed up in one simple phrase "I knew it was going to happen!"

Life is great and then suddenly, either consciously or subconsciously, we're triggered by a past memory. In an instant, our happiness and peace come to an end and are quickly replaced by a cavalcade of negative feelings. We begin experiencing anxiety and feel the need to flee as doubt is stimulated and fear takes over the driver's seat.

As we begin recalling pain from the past, we slowly start the process of "armoring up". We begin erecting walls around ourselves and before you know it, we are in full-blown "protection mode". We go within ourselves, ending communication and experiences with others, especially those we feel to be a potential threat. The irony is that we are now creating the precise pain we were attempting to protect ourselves from, and therein lies the self-fulfilling prophecy.

We can thank our miraculous, and yes, sometimes challenging brain, or more precisely, our amygdala for this response. The amygdala is a cluster of small almond-shaped cells that regulate emotional responses to memories. It also activates our "fight or flight response" which happens unconsciously, meaning it is automatic and done without forethought or reasoning. This response is what allows us to quickly react to immediate dangers and real threats to our lives. In prehistoric days, it would signal us to run from a saber tooth tiger, but in today's world, it is likely to be activated by emotional stressors such as work, family, relationships,

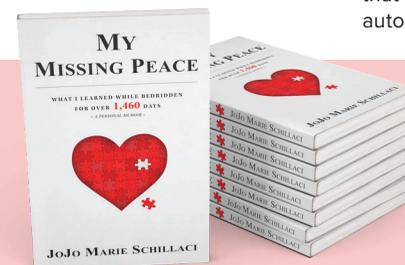
or finance. It is attempting to protect us from pain and hurt; a perceived danger.

When it comes to reactionary responses, there are 2 more very important parts of the brain called the frontal lobes which are responsible for conscious actions such as reasoning and decision-making. This is the rational part of our thinking brain, unlike the amygdala which is strictly reactionary. The amygdala will automatically go into fight or flight mode, but the frontal lobes are what determine if the threat is real.

Problems occur when the reactionary amygdala sees challenging experiences as life-threatening causing it to override our

frontal lobes, making reasoning and rational thinking difficult and in some cases, near impossible. The good news is that there is a way to circumvent the amygdala's response to non-life-threatening situations and the power is within our own thinking! We indeed have the power to retrain our brain from fear and doubt to trust and acceptance! Neuroplastic research tells us that the brain is not hardwired; it is plastic, meaning that we CAN teach our brain new tricks, but it takes everyday discipline.

For me, the first step is to bring awareness to what I'm feeling and take a series of deep cleansing breaths, bringing my thoughts to the present moment, reminding myself that this is not a logical response, but an automatic one.



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Next, I allow myself to be vulnerable by sharing and giving voice to my thoughts, emotions, and fears; I allow myself and my feelings to be seen and heard. When we open ourselves up and clearly communicate our feelings, the perceived monster within automatically gets smaller. What was once insurmountable becomes manageable, as the fight or flight response ends and our frontal lobes of reasoning begin to do their job.

Once our frontal lobes are in control, we realize this was something created by our brain in an attempt to protect us from an unreal threat triggered by our past. With this knowledge, we can learn to respond rationally and logically. If we can create something negative, this means we truly are the creators of our experiences and

we can also create something positive! It is essential that we be vigilant of our thought processes and patterns and learn the triggers that send us down a waterfall of despair. Trust that this is a new experience, and remember that living in the past will always hijack our future. It's about being committed to mindfulness every day, and not just in a moment of panic; committed to healing our triggers by choosing to be vulnerable. Most importantly, it's about being committed to living a life free of fear.

Remember to be gentle with yourself. It's always about taking small, but steady steps forward by making small, yet powerful changes each day. Don't get overwhelmed, just keep taking that next right step...*it simply begins with you!*

