

# Self-Sabotage versus Self-Awareness

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## Introduction

Some students may not recognize the damage of self-sabotaging behaviors in their school life. When students are off course, they may make decisions that work against their academic goals. To be off course means to take actions that lack personal responsibility (Downing & Brennan, 2019). After reading case studies on how some high school students engage in self-sabotage, I decided to further look into the mindsets these students portray throughout their journey to self-awareness. A mindset is “a characteristic mental attitude that determines how you will interpret and respond to situations” (Webster’s, 2020). Self-awareness is the process of learning about self and recognizing your feelings and thoughts that impact your decisions (Downing & Brennan, 2019). The purpose of this study was to analyze case studies and describe self-sabotaging behaviors of high school students as they become more self-aware of their decisions.

## Success quote

*“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.”*

M. Scott Peck, MD

## Methods

-I researched two different case studies on self-sabotage by high school students.

- In order to find this research I searched key words on the Internet like “student gets suspended from high school” and “high school suspensions”. These searches took me to Internet sites like [edweek.org](http://edweek.org) where there is a variety of cases where students got suspended for their actions.

-I further viewed the decisions these students made upon their sabotage by using the Wise Choice Process. The six questions of the Wise Choice Process are as follows:

1. What is my present situation?
2. How would I like my situation to be?
3. What are my possible choices?
4. What’s the likely outcome of each possible choice?
5. Which choice will I commit to doing?
6. When and how will I evaluate my plan?

I looked at the decisions these students made after their sabotage by searching up their names and following their social media accounts. For myself to determine whether or not they made better choices, I viewed their current success and took into account the possible or obvious actions taken to get there. ( Student 2 noted the decisions about self-sabotage on social media account).

## Self-Sabotage

Sometimes self-sabotage happens to students while pursuing their academic goals. The diagram below illustrates common factors / feelings students have which may lead to self-sabotage behaviors (Downing & Brennan, 2019).



## Observations

Case Study	Actions	Consequences	Did student know actions were off course?	Why did student make the off course decision?	Change Actions	Self Awareness
1	Made a thoughtless decision. This student recorded and submitted an inappropriate rap video on school campus. Student 1 did not show awareness to his actions.	Suspended from school; held back for one year	No	Student made a rap video with unapproved content. This action violated school policy. The student was focusing on making content to help chances of going viral and entering the music business.	After being suspended the student realized that there are consequences for one’s decisions. Student recognized decision would interfere with goal to graduate from high school in a timely manner.	Student realized “ I was not focusing on school and paying attention to other things”. Student 2 elaborated with “ I realized what I wanted to do in life and that my actions were not getting me there”.
2	Student committed plagiarism in writing a research paper. Student 2 was unaware that the absence of one citation could lead to sabotage.	Suspended from school; held back for one year	No	Student repeatedly plagiarized writing assignments. Student had gotten a warning for plagiarism, and was unaware of the meaning and implications of proper citations and plagiarism.	Student learned the difference between paraphrasing to give credit to the author and using the author’s words without giving proper credit. Student sought help from teacher and learned to write assignments using her words and correct citation methods.	Student stated “ I did not realize that not paying attention was affecting my grade so much”. Student 1 elaborated with “ I did not want to get held back again so I started paying more attention in school and became more aware of what I was doing”.

## Conclusions

The two students did not consider their decisions as a form of self-sabotage until after they were faced with negative consequences for their actions. Both students considered their reasons for self-sabotage behaviors after being suspended from school. Both students started reevaluating the reasons connected to their decisions after the suspension period. The challenges to becoming self-aware as a high school student is recognizing the importance of personal responsibility in all decisions and better self-management skills. Students made decisions without connecting to their reasons for being in school to graduate and graduate on time. For both cases, it took forks in the road for them to realize that these actions were leading them to more self-sabotage without self-awareness of decision-making process. Awareness of these actions was the solution to their success. To conclude, students who develop self-sabotaging behaviors will face challenges on their road to success which will further lead to self-awareness. Based on the viewing of the graph placed on my poster, disengagement is a leading factor to self-sabotage and with disengagement comes unawareness.

## References

- Downing, S. & Brennan, J. (2019). *On Course Strategies for Success in College, Career, and Life* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cengage Publishing  
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