

Part 2



What is a Self-Defeating Behavior?

Psychologists have defined “self-defeating behavior” as any behavior that blocks an individual's goals and wishes. The following personality characteristics represent some self-defeating attitudes and behaviors that will keep you from succeeding in school and your career when you become an adult. The numbers next to the personality characteristic refers to the number of the statement on the S-DBS Inventory.

1. Lack of motivation: Part of being successful in school or work is the desire to do well. It must be something that you WANT.
2. Lack of persistence: Everyone becomes discouraged or frustrated at times with school. The successful students will continue and not give up.
3. Little accomplishment: If you are working hard, but have little to show for it, you may need help in how to use your time more effectively. The quality of your effort is more important than just putting in time. Learn how to focus your energy on each of your assignments in school.
4. Inability to complete tasks and to follow-through: Some students are very good at their homework or projects, but seem unable to complete them. In school and life, be rewarded *for* the work you promise to complete and then do it. Would you pay a mechanic who only completed half the repairs on your car?
5. Inability to get started: This is partly related to motivation or wanting to do your work but it also includes being able to do something that's in your best interest even though you would rather be doing something else (e.g., watching TV, being with your friends, etc.). You can help yourself by looking into the future and seeing the payoff (e.g., better grades, learning something new) you will receive by taking the time now to study, complete your homework, etc.
6. Fear of failure: There are two kinds of students – those who are afraid to make mistakes because they think they will look stupid to others, and those who are not afraid to make mistakes because they realize it is the only way to really learn. All successful people have made mistakes or failed at something. They became successful because they learned from their mistakes and did not give up.
7. Procrastination: Procrastination refers to putting off doing things that need to be done. Procrastination only leads to low grades, poor quality of work, increased stress, and disappointment with you.
8. Looking for scapegoats: The student who is “looking for scapegoats” is always looking to blame someone else for their poor performance in school. It's not my fault; my teacher is boring." I don't do my homework because my parents won't stop bugging me about it! It's not my fault I don't know about the test today. I was absent the day the teacher told the class about it." These students refuse to take responsibility for their own mistakes.
9. Excessive self-pity: We might call this the “poor me disease.” Sometimes we all feel bad about one thing or another, but it's a problem when we think like this too much of the time. Students who spend most of their time on self-pity don't have the energy to use their time constructively and make changes. Over time, self-pity also tends to turn other people off.
10. Distractibility and lack of concentration: It is important to be able to focus your energy when listening and completing assignments. Some students have difficulty doing this without help. If this is a real problem for you, then it is important to talk to your teacher or advisor and ask for their help. Break your assignments into smaller activities if you can't concentrate for long periods of time. Try to figure out under what conditions you work best.
11. Ineffective time management: Successful students learn how to balance their school work and personal life. First you have to decide about the real priorities in your life (hopefully school will be high on that list). Then learn how to budget your time so that you can complete the priorities. You will not only feel good about yourself and be more successful in school, but you will find time to enjoy your life outside of school.
12. Too little self-confidence: The best way to build confidence is to first change the kind of self-defeating behavior described above. For example, when you are motivated, you refuse to give up.

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