

How is Self-Sabotage presented in Romantic Relationships?

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The aim of this paper is to present an integrated review exploring the theme of self-sabotage in romantic relationships. Self-sabotage or self-handicapping is a cognitive strategy employed by individuals as self-protection; primarily aimed at preserving self-esteem and self-image. When faced with failure, the individual can justify the outcome as due to the handicap itself (i.e., an external cause), whereas, if faced with success, the individual can emphasise their ability to withstand the barriers of handicap (i.e., an internal cause). The hypothesis is that the self-handicapper creates obstacles which impede success or withdrawal effort to maintain self-esteem and competent public and private self-image. Most of the research undertaken regarding the practice of self-handicapping has been conducted in the context of education, work, and sporting activities. However, in other contexts this phenomenon is less explored and loosely defined. With regards to romantic relationships, there is a distinct lack of knowledge to explain why some people, having successfully initiated a relationship, embark upon what appears to be a path to certain dissolution of that engagement. Studies will need to be conducted to provide evidence for this phenomenon and directions for practical approaches in relationship counselling.