

Week 24 (January 27, 2026): Recognizing Self-Sabotage

20 Common Self-Sabotaging Behaviors in OA

- "Cleaning up" the plate of a child or partner to avoid "waste."
- Delaying a phone call to a sponsor until the urge to binge has already been acted upon.
- Consciously choosing "trigger" foods under the guise of "practicing moderation."
- Attending meetings but staying on mute or keeping the camera off to avoid being "seen."
- Changing the definition of a "slip" to make it sound like a conscious choice rather than a loss of control.
- Comparing progress to others and using their success as a reason to give up.
- Over-scheduling the day so there is "no time" for meal prep or meditation.
- Helping everyone else with their program while ignoring one's own food plan.
- Waiting for "Monday" or the "first of the month" to restart after a minor lapse.
- Conveniently "forgetting" to weigh or measure a specific portion.
- Engaging in "procrastivity"—doing laundry or chores to avoid writing Step work.
- Withholding small details from a sponsor because they seem "too minor" to mention.
- Replacing food addiction with a different compulsive behavior, like overspending or overworking.
- Telling oneself "I've got this" and stopping attendance at meetings once the weight starts to drop.
- Buying "safe" foods in massive quantities that lead to grazing.
- Focusing entirely on the physical weight and ignoring the emotional or spiritual recovery.
- Setting such rigid, perfectionistic goals that any minor deviation feels like a total failure.
- Keeping "thin clothes" or "fat clothes" as a safety net for an expected relapse.
- Refusing to ask for help during a crisis because "other people have bigger problems."
- Believing that a higher power or our higher self will fix the problem without any action on the member's part.

20 Non-Food Self-Sabotaging Behaviors

- **People-Pleasing:** Saying "yes" to every request until you are resentful and exhausted, eventually using food to "reward" yourself for the burden.
- **The Silent Treatment:** Withdrawing from a partner or friend instead of expressing a hurt feeling, creating an emotional vacuum that you try to fill with food.

- **Financial Chaos:** Avoiding looking at bank statements or bills, creating a low-grade anxiety that makes the "numbness" of a binge feel necessary.
- **Doom-Scrolling:** Spending hours on social media comparing your life to others' highlight reels, triggering feelings of inadequacy.
- **Neglecting Physical Boundaries:** Allowing people to invade your space or time because you feel you don't have the "right" to say no.
- **Over-Scheduling:** Packing your calendar so tight that there is no room for a connection with a higher power or our higher self.
- **Procrastination on Difficult Conversations:** Putting off a "hard talk" at work or home, which keeps you in a state of high cortisol and "stress-eating" readiness.
- **Perfectionism in Non-Food Areas:** Demanding 100% excellence in your career or hobby, leading to a "collapse" where food becomes the only place you're allowed to be "messy."
- **Martyrdom:** Taking on everyone else's problems so you can feel "needed," while secretly feeling bitter that no one is taking care of you.
- **Isolating During Success:** Pulling away from the fellowship when things are going *well* because you feel you don't "need" the program anymore.
- **Ignoring Physical Pain or Fatigue:** Pushing through exhaustion instead of napping or resting, then using food as an artificial energy source.
- **Clutter and Disorganization:** Living in a chaotic environment that mirrors internal mental fog, making it harder to make clear, recovery-focused decisions.
- **Negative Self-Talk:** Constant internal criticism that creates a "hostile environment" inside your own head, from which food feels like the only escape.
- **Refusing to Ask for Directions/Help:** Insisting on "doing it myself" in life tasks, leading to unnecessary frustration and burnout.
- **Conflict Avoidance:** Swallowing your anger or "eating your words" during an argument to keep the peace, only to literally eat those feelings later.
- **Comparing Your "Inside" to Others' "Outside":** Assuming everyone else has it all figured out while you are struggling, leading to deep spiritual loneliness.
- **Living in the Past or Future:** Dwelling on old resentments or worrying about future catastrophes, which prevents the "one day at a time" focus.
- **Minimizing Achievements:** Refusing to acknowledge your progress, which keeps you in a "failure identity" that feels "at home" with a binge.
- **Staying in Toxic Environments:** Remaining in friendships or jobs that drain your spirit because you feel you don't deserve better.
- **Neglecting Joy:** Treating recovery like a somber chore and skipping hobbies or play, making life feel so "grey" that food becomes the only "color."

5 Activities to Catch Sabotage Early

Since you've explored themes of recovery and art, these activities lean into those mindful and creative strengths to help you "see" the sabotage before it takes hold.

1. The "HALT" Check-In

This is a staple in many recovery circles. Before making a snap decision to quit a task or avoid a meeting, ask if you are: **Hungry**, **Angry**, **Lonely**, or **Tired**. Self-sabotage loves a depleted battery. If you're any of these, address the physical need before the "problem."

2. The "Fear-Setting" Map

Inspired by Tim Ferriss, grab a piece of paper and create three columns:

- **What if I do it?** (List the worst-case scenarios).
- **How can I prevent/repair it?** (Ways to mitigate those risks).
- **What is the cost of inaction?** (What do I lose if I let sabotage win?). *Seeing the "costs" on paper usually makes the fear feel smaller.*

3. "Intuitive Art" Mood Tracking

Since you enjoy intuitive painting, try a **5-minute color splash**. When you feel an urge to procrastinate, don't think—just grab a color that matches your mood and fill a page. Looking at the "energy" of your art can reveal hidden anxiety or anger that you were about to use as a reason to sabotage.

4. The "Inner Advocate" Letter

Write a short letter from your future self—the one who has already reached that 150-160 lb goal or finished that podcast. Have that version of you explain *why* the current struggle is worth it. This builds an emotional bridge over the "sabotage gap."

5. Accountability "Feeling" Updates

When checking in with a partner or buddy, don't just report your actions. Use a **"Feelings First"** rule. Tell them: *"I did the task, but I felt incredibly anxious doing it."* Vocalizing the feeling takes the power away from the sabotage, making it harder for the behavior to hide.