Mind Over Job
How to Take Charge of Your Career & Make Work WORK for You

Module 2: Overcoming Obstacles

Hello, I’m Chrissy Scivicque, founder of EatYourCareer.com and your Mind-Over-Job Mentor. Welcome to module 2.

As I mentioned previously, in this second session called “Overcoming Obstacles” you’ll learn to recognize three of the most common problems professionals face when attempting to take charge of their career so you can be better prepared to fight off these distractions on your way to the top.

We all face challenges in life, especially in the workplace. When we’re attempting to grow and possibly transform into a much more powerful professional, all kinds of challenges (both internal and external) will come up. In fact, you may already be familiar with some of these obstacles.

Before I move forward into addressing the three specific challenges, I’d like to remind you of the information you just learned in the Mindset Makeover program. Your outlook and perspective have a significant impact on how these inevitable setbacks affect you as well as the resulting outcome.

We’ve all heard that old saying “That which does not kill us makes us stronger.” Well, scientific studies have now proven this is true, at least for part of the population—those who have the right mindset.

Have you ever known someone who experienced great loss or hardship, and from that, emerged stronger and happier when it was all over? I hear stories like this everyday from women who have overcome breast cancer, from people who have turned a layoff into an opportunity to follow their dreams, from soldiers who returned from serving only to better understand how precious life is. These people saw the uphill challenge and, instead of asking, “How can I survive in spite of it?” they asked, “How can I grow because of it?”

Studies now show that the people who hold this latter mindset are the ones who experience more positive outcomes, even when facing the most devastating circumstances. In fact, many researchers refer to this phenomenon as Post Traumatic Growth.

So, when approaching obstacles at work, check in on your mindset. Are you finding ways to learn and grow from your mistakes? Are you actively looking for opportunities?
Perhaps you’ve heard the old wives’ tail about two salesmen exploring the shoe market in a remote area of Africa. They were sent there to determine if their shoe business should expand to the region.

Upon arriving, the first salesman wrote in to his boss: “Trip has been wasted. There is no market in this country. No one wears shoes.”

The second salesman also wrote to his boss. He said, “Trip is going great. Market opportunities unlimited. Nobody wears shoes.”

Two people seeing the same thing with drastically different perspectives. Who do you want to be? Who do you think is more appreciated in most companies? Who do you think will succeed more often?

With a strong mindset, confronting challenges will be far more productive. So, what challenges are likely to come up?

The first, and often the most dangerous, is self-sabotage. This is a concept that many people fight hard to deny. They tell me, “I’ve never experienced anything like that” or they say, “It’s the rest of the world that sabotages my efforts, not me!”

And then, once we start working together to achieve their goals, I suddenly see self-sabotage everywhere.

As with everything else, it starts in your head: Those nagging negative thoughts that pop up slowly influence your behavior, causing you to actually work against yourself, often without even realizing it.

Look, even the most positive, well-adjusted person in the world still falls victim to his own negative thoughts now and then. It’s simply human nature. But that doesn’t make it okay. Stop for a minute and listen to the voices in your head. Most of us have at least one or two on a constant loop, repeating the same negative—and often untrue—drivel day in and day out.

It’s such an unconscious pattern that most people hardly even notice it until someone points out the damage it’s doing.

I refer to this voice as the Saboteur. Let me be clear right up front: This guy is a slippery trickster who is out to ruin you. I know, sounds pretty dramatic, right? It’s no exaggeration, my friends.

The Saboteur lives inside those ugly voices that pop up, mostly when you’re really on-track and getting close to achieving your goal or when you’re facing a hurdle you need to overcome. He says all kinds of lovely things like, “You’ll never succeed!” and “Go ahead, you’ll fail miserably like you do every time,” and “Nice try, but you know you’re not good enough to really deserve that kind of success.”
Isn’t he helpful?

You can see how such a voice like that might be a distraction at best; a dangerous, malicious enemy at worst. To complicate the situation further, the saboteur has thousands of different disguises and he has some very convincing words. If you aren’t careful, you could easily find yourself swayed by his charms.

The most important thing to remember is that this voice is not your friend. The Saboteur’s sole purpose is to discourage you and keep you from taking risk. He often has a way of disguising himself as a caring, thoughtful voice of reason, but he’s actually just a nervous nelly. He’s not looking out for your best interests, no matter what he says.

That voice is also stuck in the past. He only knows what happened before, not what’s possible or what could be. His job is to take the lessons you’ve learned and hold them over your head forever and ever. Sure, it’s a necessary part of growth to learn from history. But the past isn’t always an accurate indicator of the future.

I find that the saboteur most often pops up when there’s a possibility for discomfort. He doesn’t want you to rock the boat because, in his opinion, comfort and safety are the most important things in life. Of course, as we all know, any kind of growth requires a little unease and, at times, a little intelligent risk. But, if the saboteur had his way, you’d stay right where you are forever. You’d never move forward, never improve.

Ultimately, this is the voice of someone who has no faith in you. The saboteur isn’t aware of your capabilities. He doesn’t care about helping you become your best self. He doesn’t really think your worth much anyway.

Call it whatever you want: The Saboteur, the gremlin, the jerk in your head. The name you give it doesn’t matter. The important thing is to recognize its existence. When you hear the voice of a Saboteur, politely take note of what’s being said and ask yourself: Is this really a voice I trust? If it is indeed a gremlin, acknowledge it and move on. Set it aside. There is often no reasoning that will make it go away on its own.

The voice may tell you that you’re too old to take on that project, you’re not smart enough to get that promotion, you’ll never get the respect you deserve, no one cares about you.

These are so common in the world it’s almost comical when I hear them. We all have saboteurs. They come out in different ways but they always, always try to hold us back. Don’t fall for those tricks.
As I mentioned earlier, the saboteur commonly comes out at two very specific times for most people: The first is when you’re just one step away from success. You’re so close you can almost taste it. Ridiculous, isn’t it? You’ve done so much great work to get to this point and, at the very last minute, something inside you turns. It’s as if success is more frightening than failure.

I know it sounds odd but think about it: Failure is comfortable. It’s easy. It doesn’t require the effort of success. No one pays attention to failure, so you can stay unseen, unnoticed. Success, on the other hand is bold. It takes you to brand new, completely foreign territory. And that’s scary as hell!! Where do you go once you get there? What will life be like? What if you finally achieve this goal and you realize it’s not something you want after all? What if all that success makes you turn into a completely different person? What if your friends and family stop loving you? What makes you think you even deserve success??

You see? For the saboteur, failure is a much more inviting prospect. So, as you get closer to achieving your goals, expect the negative voices to get louder and more persuasive. That’s just the way it works.

The second most common time that the saboteur appears is simply when you’re facing a challenge of any sort. I find this is especially true at the very beginning, when the challenge appears insurmountable. This is when the saboteur gets really forceful. After all, taking on any challenge is a clear danger zone for him. It’s uncomfortable, it’s uncertain, and it could possibly lead to that dreaded “success” territory.

So, to help you make the safe, comfortable decision, the saboteur will kindly point out all of the ways in which you are likely to fail should you approach this challenge. He’ll be quick to remind you of the past, when you tried this exact same thing before and it didn’t work out. He’ll help you see just how unrealistic you’re being by even thinking you actually could succeed if you tried.

The saboteur wins when you see the challenge in front of you and decide NOT to accept it. Instead, you back slowly away and pretend it doesn’t exist.

But if you can just get past those early stage jitters, you’ll eventually reach a “quiet zone” where the voices fade away and you’re able to just do your thing. I know because I’ve seen it happen hundreds of times, and I’ve also experienced it personally.

Ultimately, the saboteur survives on fear. That’s what all of these situations have in common. They spark some level of fear inside you: Fear of success, fear of failure, fear of not being good enough, fear of being too good, fear of the future, fear of the past. We can find a way to fear anything and everything.
And that brings us to our second common obstacle you’re likely to face: Good old-fashioned fear. It’s simply unavoidable. However, it’s also completely manageable, which is something that many people fail to realize. Instead, they let fear manage them, and they end up practically paralyzed.

I ask you now to look deep inside yourself and put words to your fear. What stops you from being and achieving everything you want and more? Go on. There’s something. Unless you’re currently 100 percent happy with every aspect of your personal and professional life, I’m willing to bet that some kind of fear exists inside you.

Fear in the workplace shows up in several common ways: Perhaps you’re afraid of letting people down or taking up too much of the spotlight. Maybe you’re afraid of looking like a power hungry know-it-all. Could it be that fear of rejection, fear of embarrassment or even fear of hard work are keeping you from achieving the success you deserve? For many it’s as simple as fear of change or fear of the unknown.

Now is the time to confront that fear. Look it in the eye and say “hello”. It’s there. Ignoring it won’t make it go away.

Once you can clearly articulate the fear, ask yourself, “What is the cost of this fear?” What challenges have you avoided? What opportunities have you sacrificed because the risk was too frightening to intelligently evaluate? What forward movement have you neglected?

A famous quote states: “Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you’re scared.” I would take this idea one step further and say, there can be no success without courage.

Having courage means seeing the fear, acknowledging it, and forging a path ahead. Another famous quote states: “Life isn’t about waiting out the storm; it’s about learning to dance in the rain.” Your fear is like a storm, keeping you locked up inside your comfort zone. Imagine for a moment the exhilaration of dancing in the rain. That’s what it feels like to confront fear. It’s joyous and terrifying all at once.

Truth be told, I believe fear is actually a very good sign. It means you’re on the right track. For most people fear pops up only when something matters, when it really hits your soul and strikes a nerve.

Whenever you’re chasing after something you truly desire, fear will inevitably take hold. Where there is great possibility for joy, there is also great possibility for disappointment. Fear is simply your brain’s reminder not to get too excited about the reward without remembering the risk.
Yes, fear has a job to do and he does it well. But that doesn’t mean any of us have to let him run the show. It’s our job to recognize his presence, thank him for his perspective, and then carefully set him aside. Fear, like the Saboteur, is not something that needs to be coddled or indulged.

Whenever you notice fear, take comfort in the fact that you’re on the right track. You’re doing something that matters. You’re getting closer to whatever it is you really want. That’s why it’s scary.

Does that realization take the fear away? Nope. But it becomes a much more acceptable part of life when you see it for what it really is. Don’t hide from fear, or ignore it. Demonstrate your courage instead.

Fear is a consequence of simply being alive. It’s an unavoidable element of growth. If you want to live a life without ever confronting fear, stay right where you are. Let your dreams, your goals, your hidden desires wither away and die.

If, however, you want more, it’s time to make friends with fear. Let him walk beside you. Recognize his voice as he whispers in your ear and let his presence reassure you. This path is moving you closer to your desired destination with every step. Each time you confront your old friend fear, hear his words and keep going anyway, you’ll gain strength, knowing you’re one step closer to the life you deserve.

I know all of this might sound almost trite to you. Feel the fear and do it anyway? Isn’t that a tired cliche? Well, if it’s true, you can’t argue. So I ask you to simply accept this fact about fear and I ask you: What are you willing to risk to get what you want and deserve from your work and your life? What have you been holding on to that no longer serves you? What fear are you ready to acknowledge, embrace and then powerfully push through?

Answer these questions thoughtfully. And this obstacle won’t throw you off track in the future.

The third and final obstacle we’ll be discussing is a big one. Without exception, everyone I speak to has trouble with this to one degree or another. Yes, it’s that elusive thing called “balance.”

Taking charge of your career and getting ahead at work sometimes means making sacrifices in other areas of your life. But how much is too much? How do you know where the perfect balancing point is? Or, perhaps the more accurate question would be: Does a perfect balancing point even exist?

Some people wonder if having it all is possible. Can you really have a fulfilling, engaging career while also maintaining an active, enriching personal life? Sometimes it seems like the two are mutually exclusive, meaning they can’t
happen at the same time. And, to a certain degree, that might be true. After all, you only have 24 hours in any given day. You can’t be in two places at once. And you only have a certain amount of mental and physical energy to devote to various pursuits before reaching a breaking point. So it may not be entirely realistic to think you can do and be everything to everyone all the time.

Nor is it realistic to think you can chop things perfectly down the middle, giving half of yourself to work and half of yourself to everything else. The 50/50 model sounds fine conceptually but, in practice, it’s nearly impossible to execute. It’s far too rigid for the real world. We simply must remain flexible. Balance itself is fluid. It comes and goes, shifts and reshapes continuously. It’s our job to understand our unique needs and structure our life accordingly.

I recommend one simple rule when it comes to this topic: Concentrate on finding the balance that’s right for you, where—at any given time—you can comfortably dedicate all of your attention and energy to the chosen pursuit. That means you aren’t distracted by something else. So, while at home, your focus isn’t being pulled to work, and while at work your focus isn’t being pulled home.

When you’ve struck the right balance, you’ll know because you’ll be able to comfortably (though perhaps, not always easily) set aside thoughts of everything else you could be doing or should be doing, and you’ll be truly present in what you choose to be doing.

However, beware: Today’s perfect balancing point may not be the same tomorrow. And, in realistic terms, there are many, many periods in which balance must be sacrificed for the greater good.

We must constantly adapt our strategy in response to life events. For example, a new baby will require a hefty shift in focus, especially in the first months. We may find that work goals are put on hold or at least placed on the back burner during this time. Likewise, at other times, certain projects or goals at work may require temporary shifts the other direction. And we may worry that our home life is suffering in the meantime.

But ultimately, we must always know where our center is. We must know when we’ve veered away from it and why. The sacrifices must be worthwhile and acceptable. If they aren’t, we must recalibrate quickly and effectively.

This is once again a matter of simply understanding that balance is within your control. You make choices, each and every day. You accept responsibilities; you take on more and more. In doing so, you are shifting the balance in your life. You have the right, and really the obligation to yourself and everyone around you, to know your limits.
The thought of saying “no” may send shivers down your spine, but most professionals come to understand, sooner or later, that it’s an absolute necessity. Generally, this realization dawns on them when the balance has shifted so extraordinarily to one side (usually the work side), that they feel completely overwhelmed. Every waking minute it seems is consumed by work. When not at the office, they’re tied to a Blackberry or a laptop. They miss out on family time, personal time, and hobbies become a distant memory. Only at that point do these people finally wake up and say, “Wow. Learning how to say ‘no’ sounds much less painful than dealing with the consequences of always saying ‘yes’.”

What activities affect your work life balance in a negative way? What responsibility can you take for these things? Have you allowed them to happen? Have you said yes when you should have said no? Have you failed to recalibrate when needed? Go on and acknowledge your role in this. Don’t pour on the guilt trip; just recognize that this is within your control. After all, it’s your life. It’s your work. It’s your balance or lack thereof.

Sometimes, regaining balance requires serious, difficult action. Some careers, just like some companies, make maintaining a personal life outside of work impossible. Similarly, some personal situations make maintaining a professional life impossible. In such cases, you must fall back on your values. What is most important to you in life? What contribution do you want to have in the world? What are you willing to release in order to more fully honor your values?

If family is the most important thing, you may find yourself transitioning to a career that allows for more personal time. If making an impact in your chosen field is most important, you may find yourself renegotiating family obligations to allow for more work time. It’s always a choice. And the ball is always in your court.

I ask you now to think about the obstacles you’re currently facing and those you may be likely to face in the future. Are you willing to confront these things with your new, empowered mindset? What will be different from this point forward?

Recognize that every challenge is a hidden opportunity. As you begin to take charge of your career, you will continue to face new and different challenges. But each obstacle you overcome will move you closer to your goal and will serve as a reminder that you do have the power to do and be anything you can imagine. Take note of your victories. Remind yourself of how insurmountable they first appeared. And then acknowledge your strength. Remember how you pushed through when all seemed hopeless. That’s who you are. That’s what you’re capable of. Never forget it.

Once again, I applaud you for making the time to listen to this training. As a participant of this program, you will receive special offers in the future including a personal invitation to join the Powerful Professionals Mentorship Program. I hope
you’ll consider being part of this exclusive group, where you’ll receive more training like this along with personalized coaching and step-by-step implementation resources. Details will be available shortly on EatYourCareer.com and be sure to check your email for your invite.

Until then, I wish you the best of luck in your professional journey. However, I don’t really think you need luck. In fact, you already have everything you need inside you. Embrace your power, take charge of your career and make work WORK for you. I know you can.

Start today.

This is Chrissy Scivicque, your Mind-Over-Job Mentor, signing off.