



# ‘Some more snags’: A reflective resource on self-sabotaging loops



Dr. Anthony Ryle identified relational patterns in The Psychotherapy File\* so people could recognise them more easily. Among these were snags – loops of self-sabotage that can prevent change. He described two which I've summarised here: 1. If I succeed, I must sabotage it because it might harm others, invite envy, or there may not be enough to go around. 2. I must sabotage good things because I don't feel I deserve them. After 30 years of clinical work, drawing on Cognitive Analytic Therapy and Brené Brown's focus on vulnerability, I've seen some modern snags that also keep people stuck. I've included them here, alongside the original two, to support reflection and open conversation.

Read these slowly. Notice if any feel familiar. or parts of the patterns are familiar. You can change/circle the ones you want to think about more. You can also change the words or patterns to fit your experience.

→ **If I change or succeed, people are off the hook.** Healing/recovering can feel like excusing harm. The snag says: “If I get better, injustice goes unchallenged.” So, staying stuck becomes a form of protest/control or loyalty to my pain.

→ **If I get my needs met, I will be emotionally exposed.** Showing I have needs equals vulnerability. The snag says: “If people see my needs, they can hurt me. So, independence becomes my protection.”

→ **If I change, people will stop caring about me. I may be left alone.** My distress sometimes organises care or closeness. The snag says: “If I get better, I lose connection.” So, my distress becomes my way of connecting and feeling cared for.

→ **If I change, I will make others uncomfortable or put them at risk.** I worry about outgrowing certain roles with family, friendships, work, or other groups. The snag says: “My change threatens belonging and familiar dynamics or group workings.” So, staying the same protects relationships.

→ **If I improve, people will expect more from me and I won't cope or it will feel too much.** Change raises the bar. The snag says: “Success is a trap that leads to overload.” So not trying new things becomes my way of protecting myself from being overwhelmed.

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\* Appendix 1: The Psychotherapy File This resource is not a clinical tool or substitute for therapy. It is designed to invite curiosity, reflection, and dialogue about relational patterns and change. © In Dialogue Pty Ltd.