

Abstract

The Inner Saboteur is a figure in the psyche - an unconscious 'part of self' - that is commonly conceptualized as a hostile and unwelcome aspect, of many individuals' inner worlds. Existing literature, traces the origins of the saboteur to personality traits, and links it to criminal behaviour, addiction, violence. In psychotherapeutic literature, Fairburn, and Erskine, describe the *Inner saboteur* as an unconscious psychological defence against the perceived threats of intimacy and relationship.

This explorative qualitative research study attempts to explore the *Inner saboteur* in a different way – by interviewing five participants about their own personal experiences of their *Inner saboteurs*, including the experience of the researcher himself, using Heuristic methodology. The study is autobiographical – aiming to explore a topic of longstanding personal interest, and significance to the researcher. It also seeks to challenge the existing literature - investigating whether the Inner saboteur is not simply a negative, unwanted phenomenon, but possibly has some positive aspects to it.

Two core themes were found to be representative of the five participant experiences;

1. *'The unwelcome intruder - Nothing to offer but doubt, criticism, destruction!'*
2. *'Perhaps it does have a (non-hostile) role to play?'*

The study offers fresh insight into the *Inner saboteur* phenomenon, from the point of view of individual's lived experiences. It also raises the question about the possibility of integrating the *Inner saboteur* (part-of-self) into the personality – in line with Integrative therapeutic theory and clinical practice.