

Imposter Syndrome

Do you feel like a fraud, worried you're not good enough or going to be unmasked as a fake! Feel like you don't quite measure up, you don't deserve that compliment or accomplishment?

Would it surprise you to know that 70% of people suffer from one type or another of Imposter Syndrome on a semi-regular or regular basis? Almost all of us have experienced Imposter Syndrome at one time or another. Take a moment to think about the last time you experienced it; what were you doing? What were your thoughts? What were the impacts (on you and on others, if relevant)?

And just how awful do you feel when Imposter Syndrome partners up with Comparison and Perfectionism???

When I realised (and truly believed) that I didn't have to be perfect (at everything or anything) it felt like such a weight had been lifted off my shoulders! Don't get me wrong, I still get Imposter Syndrome sneaking in, but now I don't let it take over. I know my own worth, even better, I BELIEVE my own worth.



Imposter Syndrome doesn't want you to know that it's you who controls your thoughts. Your thoughts, your inner critic, your Imposter Syndrome come from years of habitual thinking, laying down and cementing the neurological pathways that you now believe. But you can change those pathways; tear them up and create new ones.

You can decide if you want to push on or not, if you want to reach your goal. Why do you want to get to where you're heading? Why is it you chose this goal in the first place? Why do YOU care? Why does it matter so much to YOU? Is this your goal or a goal someone else set for you or thinks you should achieve? If you're 'why' is for someone else, then maybe that goal isn't for you and you need to leave that goal alone. If you've chosen a goal for you, stop listening to your Imposter Syndrome and focus on your why.

Sometimes Imposter Syndrome tries to trick us with compassionate tones that suggest this opportunity or goal wouldn't be right for us, we shouldn't aim higher or shine brighter because it wouldn't be fair on others (for some bizarre reason or other). But what if we inspire others (our children, our friends) by showing up for ourselves and showing them what's possible?



Dr Valerie Young identified 5 types of Imposter Syndrome.....which one(s) resonate with you the most?

1. The Perfectionist

Is this you:

- Have you ever been accused of being a micromanager?
- Do you have great difficulty delegating? Even when you're able to do so, do you feel frustrated and disappointed in the results?
- When you miss the (insanely high) mark on something, do you accuse yourself of "not being cut out" for your job and ruminate on it for days?
- Do you feel like your work must be 100% perfect, 100% of the time?

Constant striving is neither healthy nor productive and for The Perfectionist, achieving what they set out to achieve is rarely enough; they always believe they could've done even better.

Learning to recognise, own and celebrate successes is how you, as a perfectionist, can avoid burnout, while developing feelings of contentment and self-confidence. Taking time to pause and reflect can help massively with this.

When things go wrong for you, taking mistakes in your stride and viewing them as a positive part of the learning process on your way to success can also help with generating self-confidence.

When experiencing procrastination, if you're a perfectionist push yourself to take that leap; after all there is never the 'perfect' time to do anything, and the first time you do something is unlikely to be flawless anyway, that's just life.

2. The Superwoman/man

Is this you:

- Do you stay later at the office than the rest of your team, even past the point that you've completed that day's necessary work?
- Do you get stressed when you're not working and find downtime completely wasteful?
- Have you left your hobbies and passions fall by the wayside, sacrificed to work?
- Do you feel like you haven't truly earned your title (despite numerous degrees and achievements), so you feel pressed to work harder and longer than those around you to prove your worth?



Pushing yourself to work harder and harder may not only harm your mental health, but also your relationship with colleagues around the office. You may well end up striving for the validation of working harder and longer, rather than the quality or the actual work you are doing.

Learning to nurture your inner validation and acceptance of your worth will help you step back and work smarter rather than just working more, leaving you more time again for your hobbies and appreciating your downtime for the value that it gives you.

3. The Natural Genius

Is this you:

- Are you used to excelling without much effort?
- Do you have a track record of getting “straight A’s” or “gold stars” in everything you do?
- Were you told frequently as a child that you were the “smart one” in your family or peer group?
- Do you dislike the idea of having a mentor, because you can handle things on your own?
- When you’re faced with a setback, does your confidence tumble because not performing well provokes a feeling of shame?
- Do you often avoid challenges because it’s so uncomfortable to try something you’re not great at?

Similarly to perfectionists, natural geniuses set their internal bar far too high, impossibly high, it can rarely, if ever be met. As a natural genius though, you won’t just judge yourself on achievement of the bar, you will also judge yourself on how quickly you got there, or how many times it took you to achieve it.

Try seeing yourself as a ‘work in progress’, being human means having a lifetime of learning and skill building ahead of you; Rome wasn’t built in a day! If you haven’t achieved something first time, rather than listening to your inner critic or beating yourself up, identify skills which you can develop to achieve what it is you want to achieve.

4. The Soloist

Is this you:

- Do you firmly feel that you need to accomplish things on your own?
- “I don’t need anyone’s help.” Does that sound like you?
- Do you frame requests in terms of the requirements of the project, rather than your needs as a person?

Sufferers who feel as though asking for help reveals their phoniness are what Young calls Soloists. Asking for or accepting help is often hard for Soloists, but it can be really beneficial; think of the skills and learning you can offer someone else as they support you in reaching your goal or completing the project, and the other perspective they can give you. No man (or woman) is an island. It’s OK to be independent, but not to the extent that you refuse assistance to prove your worth.



5. The Expert

Is this you:

- Do you shy away from applying to job postings unless you meet every single educational requirement?
- Are you constantly seeking out trainings or certifications because you think you need to improve your skills in order to succeed?
- Even if you've been in your role for some time, can you relate to feeling like you still don't know "enough?"
- Do you shudder when someone says you're an expert?

Do you measure your ability or capability on how much or what you know or can do? Do you feel that you will be exposed as not knowing enough or being inexperienced?

While there is always more to learn, and developing your skills and knowledge can help to develop you professionally and develop your career, constantly quenching your thirst for knowledge and information could be a form of procrastination, designed to avoid you focusing on moving towards your goal. Sharing your knowledge with others can be a good way to realise your own ability, increase your confidence and quieten Imposter Syndrome.

How to overcome Imposter Syndrome.

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome starts and ends with you. Respecting yourself and how far you have come is a good start. Adjusting habitual, well-trodden self-limiting beliefs and critical thinking is the way to move forward; changing your mindset.

Learnt to be Happy with Who You are:

Write down a list of all the things you're are good at related to the project or situation that you experience imposter syndrome in. When you receive a compliment or you achieve an accomplishment, write down the reasons you deserve it.

Accept Your Role in Your Success:

This is probably one of the most difficult steps. If someone compliments your hair or your dress, simply say 'thank you' and move on. Don't try and justify yourself with comments like 'I got this in the sale'. Try not to brush the compliment off, accept it with grace and fight the urge to give your usual habitual response of discarding or minimalizing the compliment.

Keep a File of Compliments:

This is particularly good if you're suffering from Imposter Syndrome in relation to your job. When you receive a compliment or recognition that you have done something well, save it in a file somewhere. You can then go back to this file whenever your Imposter Syndrome voice starts to talk to you and tries to take over your thought process. If you manage anyone and you receive a compliment about them, pass it on to them – you never know, they may also be dealing with Imposter Syndrome (70% of people are!).

End Unhealthy Comparisons:



When Imposter Syndrome partners up with its friend Comparison, shut it down. You are you; you are an individual walking in your shoes, travelling in your lane. You need to stop comparing yourself to others and playing yourself down. Quite clearly some people are going to be better at things than others.....that's just part of being human. But just as they may be better than you at one thing, you will most definitely be better at something else than them. That's just the law of nature.

Being Wrong Does Not Mean You Are Fake

If you get something wrong it is not the end of the world. It just means you're human!!! And that's OK! You are entitled to your opinions and beliefs and being you. So, when you get something wrong, learn from it, see it as an opportunity to learn something so that you can improve and move on.

Learn to Say "No":

Learning to say no can be really hard, particularly for high achievers (most likely to suffer from Imposter Syndrome) or those of us who are people pleasers! However, learning to create and stick to your own boundaries can massively help with overcoming Imposter Syndrome. You'll probably be pleasantly surprised by the reaction you get, people respect that kind of honesty and managing their expectations of what you can and can't do or don't have the time to do. Nobody will think less of you if you say that you feel overworked or overwhelmed and that you can't fulfil a new task right now. No one will think of you as a fraud.

Realize that Everyone Is Struggling:

Remember that just like you most people are putting on a mask of what they want you to see. Remember 70% of people deal with Imposter Syndrome, so you're not alone. To some extent everyone is improvising and doing the best they can. Talk and listen to your friends and colleagues, and realise that you are not alone.

Coaching:

Getting some outside support and investing in a coach can also help with mindset and dealing with or overcoming Imposter Syndrome. Having that safe space created by your coach to air your thoughts and work with them through questioning, tools or other techniques can help you to see things from another perspective, move you through the fog and give you clarity.

Sharing your knowledge and experience:

Mentoring a colleague, volunteering your skills to a community group, or setting up learning networks between friends or colleagues, can be a good way to recognise your own abilities and skills and quieten the inner voice of Imposter Syndrome.