

CHAPTER FOUR

ALWAYS BET ON RED

OVERCOMING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Real talk: I do not think Imposter Syndrome is a thing. There, I said it. I know many people believe in imposter syndrome, and similar to Santa Claus (CW: spoiler alert!), it is real, but only if you want it to be.

In business, someone experiencing Imposter Syndrome may think they don't deserve their position, even if they have a successful track record. They may believe they are less competent than others perceive them to be and assume their colleagues, peers, or clients have higher expectations of them than they feel capable of delivering. This self-doubt in their skills and achievements can lead to feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, and a constant fear of being "found out." Imposter syndrome can also significantly impact people in their personal lives, leading to low self-esteem, difficulty accepting praise, and relationship strain. But I ask you, "Isn't that just old-fashioned insecurity?"

"The greatest mistake you can make in life is to be continually fearing you will make one."

-Elbert Hubbard

At its core, Imposter Syndrome is rooted in a skewed perception of what others think about us; that's why overcoming insecurities is not as straightforward as merely "believing in yourself." Through distorted thinking and flawed self-perception, we project our lack of confidence onto others, essentially creating a narrative about what we believe someone thinks of us. What we're feeling, in many cases, are natural feelings of doubt, nervousness, and possibly being overwhelmed, which are not uncommon in the challenging world of business. Sorry, you're just normal.

My youngest daughter, Kitty, was homeschooled for most of her pre-college education (not COVID-related, just regular home-schooled, lol). In the equivalent of the 7th grade, part of her home-school curriculum was to create a business. I know, the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree. At 13 years old, she was tasked with developing a business plan, writing a mission statement, and learning about profit and loss statements-the works! This was not a "theoretical" course either. She made and then SOLD her products at local fairs, expos, and shops (I mean, how else would I work in teaching sales, marketing skills, ROI's, and ad placements)?

After a few expos, I noticed she struggled a little with "owning" her business and her space in the business world. She seemed "timid"

whenever someone walked into her booth and asked about her business. It occurred to me that, at such a young age, she was accustomed to being in the position of learning from adults, not teaching them. I sat her down and explained, "You are the expert in everything you know, and no one knows more about your business than you." Hearing this empowered her to take agency in her business. Slowly, she became comfortable talking to people, telling them about her journey, process, and story. She would go on to write her first book, becoming a published author at 15, and launching a 3-day mini-camp curriculum for young girls to follow in her footsteps, all based on her business. She would transform her little business into her platform as Miss Massachusetts Young Miss (ECUSA 2021/22) and Miss Massachusetts Seacoast '21 and '22. The sales proceeds were used to fund her speaking to groups that empowered other girls using fashion and self-expression as her calling card. In college, she is studying to obtain a business and marketing degree (after already obtaining her AD in Theatre and Fine Arts) and plans to go out and bring her creative side into the business world one day. Her site is ReadySetFearless.com if you are interested. And yes, I am a proud mom.

How is this important to you? Believe me, as I say, "Imposter Syndrome" only exists if you let it. YOU are the authority and expert in your business, experience, and knowledge. Looking around at the "adults" in the room, Kitty believed she didn't belong and didn't have enough experience to be an authority. She was comparing her "start" to someone else's "middle" (or more) and couldn't see that she had as much experience as any other new business. As soon as she owned her place in her business, she used it to gain a foothold and started writing her narrative. With newfound confidence, Kitty realized that her unique journey and perspective were valuable assets that set her apart. Embracing her role as a business owner, she began to inspire

others with her story of motivation and determination, proving that self-belief is the key to success.

"Failure is always better than regret."

-Unknown

Breaking the cycle of "self-sabotaging weaponized projection" (that's the new name I'm giving "Imposter Syndrome"... SSWP, for short) involves recognizing that SSWP is a subjective perception rather than an objective reality. That is a bunch of big words to mean... our individual opinions, feelings, and interpretations often shape how we perceive and understand a situation or reality rather than relying solely on factual, concrete, and universally agreed-upon information. Can we stop that?

By understanding the projection aspect of SSWP, individuals can regain confidence, overcome self-doubt, and ultimately excel without being held back by unfounded fears of being perceived as "imposters" by having an ACCESS plan. Here's how;

- **Acknowledge** your own self-doubt and understand that it's a normal part of human experience.
- **Consciously** separate your internal doubts from external expectations, realizing that others may not have the same (possibly unrealistic) expectations you impose on yourself.
- **Challenge** your negative self-perceptions and seek evidence of your competence and accomplishments.

- Embrace a growth mindset where you focus on learning and continuous improvement.
- Seek support, mentorship, or coaching to address your SSWP and build self-confidence through a mentor's guidance and vision of you.
- Strive for excellence, not perfection (oddly enough that is the next chapter).

Mitigating SSWP involves adopting an ACCESS plan. This approach helps individuals regain confidence and overcome the self-imposed fears of being perceived as "imposters," enabling them to excel without being hindered by unfounded fears. Let's break the cycle.

"Tell It Then Sell It" Education is the key.

In Chapter One of this book (if you skipped over it, I'd go back if I were you and read it; it is that good), we touched on shifting your focus in your business from influencing your clients to educating them. Salespeople typically have the "tell it then sell it" mentality; that's what makes them salespeople. Unfortunately, most skip over the "tell" part and get directly to the "sell" part. That is what makes them ineffective salespeople. The "tell" is about your client; the "sell" is about you.

I built a 30-year sales career on two things: writing (blogs, articles, speeches, books) and talking (classes, seminars, community outreach education). The foundation for both of those things was education. I recognized early on that to feel confident when speaking to clients, I needed to know three things:

- More than my clients knew or needed to know.
- More than was necessary for my position in my business.
- More than my competition.

Simply put, I needed to "perfect my craft."

In the beginning of my career, my "job" was to learn. I took advantage of any opportunity to educate myself on topics directly and indirectly related to my craft, from anyone. I listened to other people in my industry and quickly found out who was reliable and who was best used as a "what not to do." I also listened to clients to learn common concerns and questions, leading to anticipating my clients needs and providing guidance before they had a chance to ask. I was becoming an "expert," and with that, my confidence began to soar. I was shifting from a "sell" to a "tell" mentality and developing my business through knowledge-based selling.

We can all agree the traditional "hard-sell" sales approach is giving way to something more powerful, sustainable, and effective: knowledge-based selling (also known as Consultative Selling). The well-educated in any industry are becoming valuable assets to clients. Consultative selling is having its moment. Knowledge-based selling doesn't just build your confidence; it's a cornerstone of business growth, as confidence in your abilities as a coach or resource inspires trust in your clients. Creating relationships, understanding needs, and providing solutions is the shift we see as business owners, coaches, and salespeople step into their new role —as educators.

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

-Stephen R. Covey

Master The Socratic Method, Robe Not Required.

The Socratic Method is a form of thoughtful, cooperative, and light argumentative-style conversations designed to provoke critical thinking, foster self-discovery, and guide people toward forming their own conclusions through a series of open-ended questions and discussions. It derives its name from the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who frequently employed this approach (or so we are led to believe) to engage in profound philosophical debates and encourage his followers to challenge their beliefs and assumptions. This approach still serves as a valuable tool for exploring ideas, encouraging self-awareness, and fostering independent thinking. In client prospecting, business owners, coaches, and salespeople can benefit from employing the Socratic Method in the following ways: (for ease of reading let's just refer to all business owners, salespeople and coaches, as coaches)

- **Building Rapport:** The Socratic method encourages active listening and empathy. By asking open-ended questions and genuinely listening to the client's responses, coaches can establish a stronger rapport and build trust with potential clients. This can lead to a more open and productive conversation.

- **Understanding Client Needs:** Through a series of probing questions, coaches can gain a deeper understanding of the client's goals, challenges, and pain points. This helps them tailor their approach and offers to meet the client's specific needs, increasing the likelihood of a successful outcome.

- **Uncovering Motivations:** The Socratic method helps uncover the underlying motivations and desires of the client. Coaches can inquire about what truly matters to the client and why they seek assistance or

a particular product/service. This information can be used to frame the coaching or sales pitch effectively.

- **Addressing Objections:** When objections or concerns arise, coaches can use the Socratic method to delve deeper into the client's objections, understand their perspective, and address their concerns more effectively. By asking questions, they can uncover the root causes of objections and offer relevant solutions.

- **Encouraging Ownership:** The Socratic method empowers clients to own their decisions. Rather than being told what to do, clients are encouraged to arrive at conclusions themselves, making them more committed to the coaching process or purchase decision.

- **Tailoring Solutions:** Coaches can use the insights gained through Socratic questioning to customize their coaching plans or sales proposals. This ensures that the solutions offered are aligned with the client's unique circumstances and needs.

- **Enhancing Communication Skills:** The Socratic method promotes active listening and effective questioning techniques. Coaches who use this method become better communicators and can adapt their approach to different clients and situations.

A coach using the Socratic method of interviewing clients can benefit from establishing trust and credibility, zeroing in on specific coaching strategies and mitigating SSWP (imposter syndrome) by investing time to inquire and learn about the client's expectations and needs. By doing so, the coach gains a deeper understanding of how their expertise can be applied effectively. This understanding boosts the coach's confidence and enhances the effectiveness of the coaching relationship.

Example: If a business coach is well-informed about the client's specific industry, they can discuss industry trends, best practices, and challenges during coaching sessions. This demonstrates to the client

that the coach understands their unique context, which builds trust. For instance, a coach who has prior experience in the healthcare industry can provide more valuable guidance to a healthcare executive.

Example: Suppose a business coach is working with a client who wants to improve their team's performance in a tech startup. By learning about the client's company culture, technology stack, and team dynamics, the coach can design coaching sessions and exercises that directly address the client's challenges. This personalized approach is more likely to yield positive results.

Example: A business coach may initially feel unsure about their ability to help a client in a highly specialized field like blockchain technology. However, through extensive research and discussions with the client, they can identify areas where their broader business expertise can be valuable, such as leadership development, team building, or project management. Armed with this knowledge, the coach can approach the coaching relationship with confidence, knowing they can make a meaningful impact despite not being a blockchain expert.

Being educated on a client's needs and expectations through the Socratic Method, a coach can establish credibility with clients, brand their business and expertise as a resource, simplify their life by managing expectations, and gain more business through knowledge-based selling.

The Sales Pitch -Help Me To Help You

Imagine you're a Wellness Coach. Employing the Socratic method during a sales pitch with a prospective client can be a powerful tool to grasp their needs, build a strong connection, and ultimately lead them toward a tailor-made wellness program. Through skillful use of open-ended questions, a coach can delve into the motivations driving

the client's objectives, uncover valuable insights, and empower the client to draw their own conclusions. This approach not only gives the client a sense of control but also motivates them to take ownership of their decisions. In essence, the Socratic method becomes a bridge that guides both coach and client towards successful wellness journeys.

Assessing Client's Goals:

Coach: "What are your main wellness goals or areas you'd like to improve?"

Client: "I want to lose weight and have more energy."

Coach: "That's great to know. Can you tell me more about why these goals are important to you and how you envision achieving them?"

Exploring Current Habits:

Coach: "What does your current daily routine look like in terms of nutrition and exercise?"

Client: "I eat a lot of fast food and hardly exercise."

Coach: "I appreciate your honesty. How do you think your current habits affect your energy levels and overall well-being?"

Identifying Obstacles:

Client: "I always struggle with sticking to a diet or exercise plan."

Coach: "It's common to face challenges. Can you share more about the specific obstacles you've encountered in the past?"

Highlighting Benefits of Wellness Coaching:

Coach: "Have you considered working with a wellness coach before?"

Client: "I haven't, but I'm open to the idea."

Coach: "Wellness coaching can provide personalized guidance and support. How do you think having a dedicated coach could help you overcome your challenges?"

Confirming Commitment:

Coach: "Based on our discussion, it seems like you're interested in making positive changes. Are you ready to take the next step toward a healthier lifestyle?"

Client: "Yes, I am."

Coach: "Great! Let's discuss how we can work together to create a wellness plan tailored to your needs and preferences."

Setting Realistic Expectations:

Coach: "What do you envision as a realistic timeframe to start seeing improvements in your energy levels and weight?"

Client: "I'd like to see some progress in the next three months."

Coach: "That's a reasonable goal. Let's create a plan that helps you achieve that."

Establishing a Coaching Agreement:

Coach: "To get started, we'll need to set up regular coaching sessions and design a wellness plan together. How does that sound to you?"

Client: "I'm on board. Let's do it."

Coach: "Excellent! We'll work together to achieve your wellness goals and make sustainable changes to improve your overall well-being."

Socrates- I Know Him!

The Socratic Method encourages open communication, deep understanding, and client-focused solutions. This approach builds trust, uncovers client needs and motivations, and leads to successful business relationships and conversions. Embracing the Socratic method enables coaches to navigate client coaching confidently, removing any hint of SSWP (Imposter Syndrome) and authentically promoting personal and professional growth through mutual education.

Unlike Santa, believing in Imposter Syndrome only seems to have a downside. As far as I know, there are NO gifts received when believing in Imposter Syndrome, just stockings filled with coal. The Socratic method is like a magical gift bestowed upon coaches who aim to excel in client interactions, much like the enchantment of Christmas when Santa Claus delivers presents to eager children around the world. Just as Santa's gifts bring joy and wonder to those who receive them, the Socratic method equips coaches with the power to provide well-informed and transformative services to their clients through meticulous planning and deep understanding. In this way, the Socratic method works its own kind of magic, enabling coaches to bring clarity, growth, and success to their clients' lives. So, the next time you meet with a client and aren't feeling empowered to do your best, think to yourself, in your best "Buddy the Elf" voice; "Socrates-I know him!"