



eBook

Diagnose & Defeat Imposter Syndrome



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Introduction

What makes you feel legit?

...like you are 10000% where you want to be

...and deserve every accolade, every promotion, every pay raise and more?

As children, we're taught to look for approval from those around us. This approval is how we learn when we're doing things the right way. We beam with pride when we're praised and complimented, and seek recognition. It becomes quite natural to keep our eye on others to figure out if we are on the right track. This can create a reliance on seeking external validation.

The challenge with external validation is it can undermine our confidence. When we don't get the feedback we want or even deserve, and after a while, we might even come to think we're not good enough.

Core confidence comes from understanding our internal motivation, strengths and building our internal validation mechanisms.

Sometimes, especially after reaching levels of success this pattern of self-doubt can be when the Imposter Syndrome starts to bloom. The Imposter Syndrome is often a symptom of success.

When we don't take the time to recognize our accomplishments, we may start thinking we don't have the skills or competence it took to achieve them. We might attribute it to good luck or we might even become convinced we don't know what we're doing at all, and hope others don't find out.

Welcome to the world of Imposter Syndrome.

In this eBook we will explore what Imposter Syndrome is and how to tell the difference between this and feeling a natural caution or doubt. More importantly, dig in to gain a better understanding of it and to see what the limiting beliefs and lingering thoughts are associated with this energy-zapping saboteur. See if you can relate or save this knowledge for the future. Remember that Imposter Syndrome is normal and, thankfully, can be easily defeated. Check out the last section of this book.

Ready to enter the world of intentional influence and personal and professional confidence? Let's get started!

What is Imposter Syndrome?

According to hbr.org, "Imposter syndrome is loosely defined as doubting your abilities and feeling like a fraud. It disproportionately affects high-achieving people, who find it difficult to accept their accomplishments. Many question whether they're deserving of accolades."

Imposter Syndrome starts with a feeling of anxiety. Perhaps there is a hint (or a huge amount) of unease that you don't know what you're doing. It's a worry you're in over your head. It's a certainty or fear that you don't know what you're doing, and everyone in the world already knows it, or if not, is about to find out. It's a sick sense of everything about to collapse around you, as though everything you've ever done is nothing more than a house of cards waiting to fall.

What's even worse is not how Imposter Syndrome is tied into your emotions, though this certainly makes it unpleasant to experience. What makes Imposter Syndrome truly nefarious is how it creates an inner voice that can negate our accomplishments, achievements, and honors as though they never happened or it might merely minimize them.

For this reason, Imposter Syndrome is considered one of the more undermining, sabotaging and most annoying experiences. Worse yet, the odds are fairly good that most of us *will* experience it. Since Imposter Syndrome was first discovered back in 1978, it's been tracked and studied many times throughout the years.

Current thought shows at least 70% of people will experience Imposter Syndrome at some point in our lifetime, with this number climbing still higher, mostly due to the impact of social media upon our lives.

What are some of the key components of Imposter Syndrome?

- Crippling self-doubt
- The absolute need to do better or more than those around you
- Having difficulty taking a compliment
- Inability to see our achievements
- A tendency to sabotage oneself
- Constantly chasing perfection
- The feeling others would do better in your job or situation
- Feeling like you don't deserve what you have
- Worry that someone will 'find out the truth' about you and expose you to the world as a 'fake'

Imposter Syndrome *isn't* a display of healthy caution or even the normal uncertainty that might come with trying something new. It's also not a dose of modesty or even humility which is an intentional downplaying of achievement not to be seen as a braggart. Imposter Syndrome shows up for a variety of reasons. These include:

The Past

Anytime someone pushed you to accomplish more, you likely noticed yourself having thoughts along the lines of "Wait, wasn't what I did good enough?" If you grew up under constant pressure from the adults in your life (typically parents or other authority figures, such as teachers), you very likely internalized some feelings of not measuring up. This feeling is further underscored whenever someone has been critical of you, especially if these criticisms weren't exactly fair. The more this happened, the more likely you are to experience Imposter Syndrome as an adult.

Our Peers

Too often, our standing in a group tends to rely on our accomplishments. In other words, our social credibility relies very heavily on having more achievements, awards, or other recognition than the person next to you. This will push you harder to get ahead. While at the same time building feelings of inferiority, especially if you're already surrounded by high achievers who always seem to outperform you at every turn.

Our 'Friends'

Not every friendship is going to be a healthy one. In some relationships, it's common to find you have a friend or two who is only there for drama or disaster. They're there because every time you fail, they feel better about themselves. Usually, this is the mark of someone who is immature or who has poor self-esteem themselves. Unfortunately, the damage they can do to your self-esteem can be brutal. After all, deep down, they need you to fail for them to feel good. With this in mind, they'll be quick to point out every flaw and remind you of every time where you didn't quite measure up.

Group Think

For some people, there is nothing quite so frightening as being unique. We are wired as humans to want to belong. This kind of thinking generally has some hardwired emotion attached to it which comes from our DNA. Back in the old hunter/gatherer days, the way to stay safe was to be part of the crowd. Doing something which would separate you from the pack was generally a quick way out of the group, which in a world filled with predators was the equivalent of a death sentence. Today we still have this same fear of being alienated from the group even if we've outgrown the need for it. This is why peer pressure can be so powerful, and the idea of standing out can be terrifying. If this fear is strong in you, it can drive an absolute loathing for not fitting in, to the point where Imposter Syndrome becomes a way of life and a means of sabotaging yourself before you ever truly get started doing anything at all.

Another point about the group is we tend to compare ourselves to others with more experience, awards, credentials, and accolades than we have. We literally compare ourselves and come out on the short end of the stick.

Birth Order

For whatever reason, it seems firstborn children have a slightly higher chance of suffering from Imposter Syndrome. While there isn't conclusive evidence as to why this might be so, it is thought parents put more pressure on their firstborn than on the other children in a family. Whether this is because the oldest is expected to be an example, or if it's just a matter of parents 'loosening up' as they become more relaxed with being parents, it's hard to say. Whatever the case, it makes an impact on how these children grow up to think about themselves.

Parenting Style

If you grew up in the last 20 or 30 years, you likely had a more protected childhood than those of previous generations. Children who grew up in very careful environments are going to be less sure of themselves as adults. They haven't challenged themselves to 'see what they're made of' nor have they had to cope with difficult decisions or the outcomes of those decisions. When we're less sure of ourselves, we're more likely to feel like an imposter than someone who has a lot of confidence built through life experience.

Genealogy

Ask any parent who has more than one child, and they'll tell you certain traits just seem to be born in a child. They will quickly identify which is their 'brave' child and which one is more timid. Some people just worry more about fitting in than others. They've always been the sort to internalize negativity. If this is true about you, you're likely to have more trouble with Imposter Syndrome. Regardless of the origin or reason, Imposter Syndrome is something you can escape. You're not trapped as an imposter for your entire life. It means you're going to have to put some more effort into learning strategies for coping with Imposter Syndrome and experiment to learn what works for you.

Who Suffers from Imposter Syndrome?

It might surprise you to find out just how common Imposter Syndrome is. Think about these quotes, which might even be shocking to note who said them.

“Sometimes I wake up in the morning before going off to a shoot, and I think, I can’t do this. I’m a fraud...I’m there thinking, ‘Oh my God, I’m rubbish, and everyone is going to see it. They’ve cast the wrong person.’” – Kate Winslet

“No matter what we’ve done, there comes the point where you think, ‘How did I get here? When are they going to discover that I am, in fact, a fraud and take everything away from me?’” – Tom Hanks

“You think, ‘Why would anyone want to see me again in a movie? And I don’t know how to act anyway, so why am I doing this?’” – Meryl Streep

“I have written 11 books, but each time I think, ‘uh oh, they’re going to find out now. I’ve run a game on everybody, and they’re going to find me out.’” – Maya Angelou

“I have spent my years since Princeton, while at law school and in my various professional jobs, not feeling completely a part of the worlds I inhabit. I am always looking over my shoulder wondering if I measure up.” – Sonia Sotomayor

These quotes come from a variety of individuals famed for their accomplishments. Think about this for a minute. Even the most successful people in the world have felt like imposters at some point or another.

This is because just about everyone has felt Imposter Syndrome at one point or another. Remember the statistic where 70% of people will experience this condition? This statistic came from a rigorous study, yet more informal polls put this number at 87% or even higher.

It doesn’t matter if one is rich or poor. Gender or sexuality doesn’t come into play. Nor does education level, background, location, or any other way we like to divide people into categories. Absolutely *anyone* can feel like an imposter.

This alone can feel pretty daunting. Now consider one more factor: How Imposter Syndrome holds us back.

How Imposter Syndrome Holds Us Back

Imposter Syndrome is more than just an annoying mindset, it can actually hold you back from taking your life and career to the next level. Here's how...

- Imposter Syndrome floods your brain with negative thoughts.
- You're more likely to procrastinate.
- You take longer to get things done.
- You experience a lot of uncertainty.
- You don't try new things because you don't know how they'll come out.
- You miss more opportunities or don't see opportunities when they come to you.
- You have a harder time judging what you're capable of achieving.
- You tend to set goals that are too impossible to achieve.
- You miss out on time with your family as you fall into overwork patterns.
- You sabotage relationships as you feel you're not worthy of your partner.
- You experience burnout quicker than other people do.
- Your health suffers from the added stress Imposter Syndrome creates.
- You avoid networking/new relationships because you feel like you have little or nothing to offer.
- You become an overachiever.
- You experience more anxiety than those around you.
- You are more likely to fail even when you do try to achieve things.
- You're more prone to depression, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts.



Dealing with Imposter Syndrome

If you or someone you know experiences Imposter Syndrome, this chapter is a tool. Experiment with these techniques to discover ways to deal with Imposter Syndrome, and reclaim your confidence. Then move on to the last section, which talks about how to keep Imposter Syndrome away for good. Think about it: No more living life feeling like a failure and fearing you will be found out!

The first step to deal with Imposter Syndrome is building an awareness of the internal automatic and judgmental thoughts. The next step is to determine actions to rewire those thoughts. First acknowledge the thoughts, then notice how some of these tips are going to use distraction to help you regulate your emotions and shift your feelings in a different direction. Feelings are not facts, they are data. Feelings change.

Other times simply use a different script when it comes to dealing with the voice in your head. None of these tips are meant to be permanent fixes yet are intended to keep Imposter Syndrome from ruling your life.

Remind Yourself Everyone is an Imposter

Remember those earlier statistics? Most of us feel this way sometimes. It's normal. Don't let your Imposter Syndrome become a thought pattern or internal experience that disconnects you from peers, partners, co-workers, and personal relationships.

Name the Imposter Bothering You

Another method to try is to distance yourself from the thoughts of being an imposter by recognizing the imposter you're dealing with at the moment. Say, "Oh, that's the soloist trying to get me alone." Or, for added fun, give it a name you can call it. "Well, it looks like Myrtle the Mutterer is back to tell me I'm an idiot." Remember, if you can laugh at the Imposter, it no longer holds power over you.

Act Quickly

Imposter Syndrome is great at making us procrastinate about doing things by telling yourself you're not ready. If you've already been preparing for a while, tell yourself today is the day to dive in. Take action quickly before you can talk yourself out of it.

Avoid Validation

Most people with Imposter Syndrome tend to look to those around them for reassurance they're doing things right. The problem? They don't always give it. Instead of waiting for external validation, start a practice of validating yourself.

Embrace Criticism

Okay, maybe you're not the best at some things. Instead of listening to your imposter making a list of your faults, why not seek out some constructive criticism from someone you trust? They're apt to be

more honest and a whole lot kinder than you'll ever be. You'll also know where you truly do need to make improvements...and, more importantly, where you *don't*.

When my coaching clients, often successful leaders and executives engage in a 360 Assessment whereby they seek feedback from peers, their managers, and others, they often find their self-ratings are lower than how others perceive and value their work and personal qualities. Get a balanced perspective to identify strengths and opportunities to grow.

Learn What You Need, When You Need it

Learn when enough is enough. Don't get caught up in doing additional research you don't need or pursuing added education and certifications which have nothing to do with what you're currently doing. These actions may be signs of imposter syndrome gone out of control. Instead, focus on the here and now. What do you need to learn at this moment? What will you need next? Trust that the distant future can be addressed in due time. Focus on short-term goals and small steps.

Find Support

Studies have shown people who tell a trusted friend, or mentor about feeling like an imposter are more likely to feel better much more quickly than someone suffering through imposter syndrome alone. Find a coach, mentor, friend or co-worker you can be honest with about what you're going through.

Allow Others to See the Flaws

Speaking of flaws, how about letting others see your own instead of putting so much effort into hiding them? Why not share your rough draft? Send out the proposal, which isn't perfect. There are benefits with letting others see work in progress sometimes.

Call Out Comparisons

You're never going to feel good about yourself or what you're capable of if you're constantly comparing yourself to those around you. There may be someone better at something than you are. That's ok. They had to work up to their successes as well. Instead of dwelling on this, just get started.

Refocus Energies

Imposter Syndrome needs to be fed to survive. Instead of getting caught up where you're going wrong, shift your attention to something else for a while. Ask yourself how you can help someone else. Move forward, excel.



Learn How to Deal with Compliments

When someone says something nice about you, what do you do? Instead of avoiding taking credit for your work, skills and efforts or negating the accomplishment, practice saying “Thank you.” That is one of the best lessons I learned from my mother - to simply say, “Thank you”. Then take a mental note of the compliment. Make it memorable—write it down so you can read it over again later. **Compliments are worth keeping!** Stand firm in your knowledge that you deserve it.

Know Your Value

Hey, you’re an incredible person. Why are you listening to someone telling you you’re not? Make a list of all your best qualities. If you’re having trouble doing this, ask someone else to help you make your list. Read over it often, whenever you need a boost.

“Imposter Syndrome
is a symptom of
success.”

Barb Girson



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Keeping Imposter Syndrome Away for Good

Let's get to the good stuff. In this section, there are several steps designed to attack the roots of Imposter Syndrome. You're going to explore why you feel the way you do and explore methods that will dig down to shift your thinking entirely.

Recognize What's Going On

This almost goes without saying, sometimes we don't always recognize where we are internally until we're already neck-deep into the negative emotions. With this in mind, part of your plan to keep Imposter Syndrome away is to spot the signs when you feel it coming on. The moment you feel those old thought patterns wrapping around you, stop and ask yourself if this might be Imposter Syndrome.

Perform a Reality Check

If it is Imposter Syndrome, it's crucial to ask yourself what you're reacting to. What are you feeling uncertain about? What do you fear? Is there any basis for feeling this way?

Accept the Insecurity

If there is a basis for these thoughts, it's important to validate this. So, if you're feeling a little lost because you're in a new place, remind yourself this is a perfectly normal feeling. People will feel lost when they're someplace new. This doesn't make you an imposter.

Negate the Nonsensical

If there is no basis for the thought, it's time to remind yourself that while your emotions are valid and you might have feelings that make you uncertain, there is no reason to feel this way. List how this line of thinking can be considered false. For example, if you feel like you don't know enough to accept the promotion, deliver a high profile presentation, or have a difficult conversation at home or at work,, you'll want to remind yourself *in detail* of how well you've performed with challenges or leaps in the past.

Adjust the Thought Processes

Usually, when you're falling into these patterns again, you'll note some negative thoughts in the background, which are not only setting you up for Imposter Syndrome and trigger big emotions. Put the brakes on this kind of internal dialogue and reframe your focus. Or instead focus on the most positive thought you can to replace it.

Move Past Mistakes

If these thoughts are cropping up because of failure, have a script ready for what to tell yourself. Include a reminder that everyone makes mistakes and instructions on how to look for what can be learned from the experience instead of falling into a cycle of negativity and self-blame, self-doubt and even self-sabotage.



What About the Rules?

It might be you're still battling Imposter Syndrome because of something someone else said to you a long time ago, which has now become an internal rule for your life.

Consider whether what you're feeling might be one of those 'unbreakable' laws which were never of your own making, such as "You must always finish what you've started" or "You must have things perfect before you turn them in."

Now ask yourself if this is a rule you want to live by? Are there better rules you could create and apply to your life instead? For example, "It's okay to walk away from a project which no longer brings pleasure or satisfaction" or "Sometimes it's okay for things to be just 'good enough' rather than perfect."

Picture A New Outcome

Forget the disaster movie trying to play in your head. Think about the situation which has triggered the feelings of being an imposter. Now picture the outcome you would like to have instead. Imagine what success looks like and the steps you took to get there.

Reward Right Behavior

As you step back away from feelings of being an Imposter, give yourself acknowledgement. Never, under ANY circumstances, do you want to beat yourself up for having these feelings or for not reacting fast enough. Instead, celebrate catching yourself and doing a great job in squelching these feelings before they got very far.

Conclusion

Are you feeling a little more confident? Hopefully, by now, you are. If not, maintain your hope. Keep working on the steps in the last chapter, and with practice you will improve. Be kind and patient with yourself. Show more self-compassion. More importantly, be consistent. In time, these new thought processes will become a habit, and from there, a way of life.

It's a wonderful feeling to be in tune with yourself and feel worthy of every success. When you reach this point, you'll know you're legit. Even better? The rest of the world will know it too.

So hang in there! You're not an imposter, nor will you ever need to feel like one again. The new you starts today, with a new way of looking at the world. How exciting to finally see yourself as you truly are!

Beyond Sales Tactics



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- Speaking
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In person or virtually, Barb is here to help you take your high-performing team to the next level.



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