



Newsletter

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Imposter Syndrome

Are you experiencing internal self-doubt and criticism that makes you feel less King of the Jungle, more Hello Kitty? You may have Impostor Syndrome.

Key takeaways

- Impostor Syndrome occurs when successful and intelligent people feel they do not deserve their accomplishments and that they have faked their way to success.
- The phenomenon occurs with the greatest frequency among successful, high-achieving people.
- Left unchecked, it can cause fear, anxiety, stress, loss of confidence, procrastination, and self-sabotage.
- Getting to the root of the problem, talking about your experience, reframing your thoughts with positive self-talk, and learning to believe in your self-worth are some ways of overcoming Impostor Syndrome.



Despite looking like you're powerful and in control, do you internally think thoughts like.... "I have to be twice as good". "They must have made a mistake picking me." "I just got lucky." "I can't afford to fail"?

Are you experiencing internal self-doubt and criticism that makes you feel less King of the Jungle, more Hello Kitty?

You may be grappling with a phenomenon known as Impostor Syndrome. Surprisingly, it's people who strive to excel who are most likely to exhibit Impostor Syndrome – including celebrities, trailblazers, students, and entrepreneurs.

First described in 1978 by psychologists Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes, Impostor Syndrome (also called Impostor Phenomenon) is a well-researched, well-documented phenomenon that occurs when successful and intelligent professionals feel they do not deserve their accomplishments and that they have faked their way to success.

Left unchecked, Impostor Syndrome can cause fear, anxiety, stress, loss of confidence, procrastination, quitting, shying away from attention, concealing your opinions, and self-sabotage.

Do you live behind a mask?

There are a number of common indicators of Impostor Syndrome. You may suffer from it if...

- You have difficulty accepting compliments and recognition.
- You feel you need to work twice as hard to prove you're worthy.

- You avoid situations where you're not 100% confident you know what you're doing. (And asking for help feels like that naked-at-school dream.)
- In your lack of confidence, you procrastinate until the last minute to work on assignments.
- When you succeed, you doubt you could repeat it again – and success, after all, is like snow in the Sahara; highly unlikely, and if so, something's up.
- Everything has to be perfect before revealing a project you have been working on.
- You worry regularly about your performance, fearing you won't meet people's expectations and be uncovered as a fraud.

If I'm so successful, why do I feel like a fake?

The Impostor Phenomenon occurs with great frequency among successful, high-achieving people. They've done well in school, earned the correct degrees, received awards and praise from their colleagues and advanced rapidly through their careers. In fact, to others, these people have made it. So the question is, "If they've done so well, what's the problem?"

"The answer is that their success is never truly fulfilling because they're always too busy trying to make sure no one finds them out," says Dr Clance in *The Impostor Syndrome: Overcoming the Fear That Haunts Your Success*. "Impostors believe they are intellectual frauds who have attained career success because they were at the right place at the right time, knew someone in power, or simply were hard workers – never because they are talented or intelligent or deserved their positions."



How to replace self-doubt with self-confidence

Success doesn't necessarily mean happiness, but at the same time, it shouldn't cause guilt, fear, and stress. And even when a mask fits well – even looks good on a person – there comes a time when it grows heavy and needs to come off.

Dr. Valerie Young, an internationally recognised expert on Impostor Syndrome and author of *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women*, suggests these tips for overcoming feelings of fraudulence:

Get to the root cause of your Impostor Syndrome

In order to understand why you're not currently capable of acknowledging your skills and talents, you'll need to explore where these feelings stem from. According to Young, feelings of low self-worth could relate to family expectations, but they could just as easily arise from studying in a competitive environment or working in certain fields – particularly creative ones.

Talk about your experience with someone you trust

You're probably familiar with the notion that voicing worries or fears out loud will lessen the power they hold over you. "I would encourage anyone feeling that they may be experiencing Impostor Syndrome to talk about it with someone they trust; whether that be a professional or someone from their own circle of family and friends," suggests Young.



Reframe your thoughts with positive self-talk

The aim of practicing positive self-talk is to learn how to manage your thoughts when an Impostor moment strikes. "If you want to stop feeling like an Impostor, you have to stop thinking like one," advises Young. "We need to become consciously aware of the Impostor thoughts running through our heads so that we can reframe them the way a non-Impostor would," she says.

Remember, feeling like an Impostor does not make you any less intelligent, talented or capable than anyone else, the difference is in how you react to situations. While a new situation might currently make you worry about the fact you don't know what you're doing, try reframing these thoughts to focus on how much you might learn from this new experience.

If you find yourself caught up in thoughts of "how" and "why" you got the job in the first place, Young recommends putting a positive spin on any external factors that have propelled you towards your current situation. "It helps to understand the legitimate role that things like luck, timing, connections, and personality play in all of our success," she says. "It's what you do with these external factors that matter."

Learn to believe in your self-worth

"What we want is to feel confident 24/7, but that's not how it works," says Young. Instead, she suggests learning how to *act* with confidence, even when you're feeling insecure, as a way of gradually changing how you feel internally.

Taking back control of a situation can also help you rediscover your self-worth. "Impostor Syndrome is the symptom, not the cause," reminds Young. So rather than letting your feelings of self-doubt get the better of you, focus on developing your self-worth and remember: you're worthy of the place you're in.

**Never measure
your self worth
by what other
people think
you should
have become.**

This newsletter has been issued by:

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