

#5 How to silence your inner negative conversations and embrace success

This being women's history month, I wanted to talk about a phenomenon that many high-achieving women struggle with. It's the Imposter phenomenon. Imposter syndrome is the feeling of self-doubt that causes you to question your ability even when you have success at work, in business, in an academic setting, and in life in general. You feel like you're not good enough, and you have these negative conversations where you ask yourself who are you to do this? Who do you think you are? It's a feeling of being a fraud and that you will soon be found out. Imposter syndrome can affect both women and men, in any line of work, social status or age.

The term Imposter syndrome was first used by two psychologists Dr Pauline Rose Clance and Doctor Suzanne Eanes. Dr Clance says that she had experienced the Imposter phenomenon while in graduate school, where she would be afraid that she would not do well in important exams and only remembered all she did not know instead of what she had done well. She didn't know that other people had the same experiences until she went to teach at a prominent liberal arts school and started hearing this from her students.

In 1978 they were working with very high-achieving women and they began to notice that despite the fact that these women were high achieving academically and in the workplace, they expressed that they felt like they were fakes and frauds despite any evidence of high achievement. After seeing this dynamic repeatedly, these two psychologists coined the term impostor syndrome.

Imposter syndrome isolates people and causes them to keep their innermost feelings secret. It's the fear of not fitting in or not being up to the task. It causes people to feel like they are not good enough like they have to hide and make sure not to be exposed because they feel that they're frauds and that if they are exposed they will lose their job, and livelihoods. Impostor syndrome causes a lot of stress and anxiety,

I first experienced imposter feelings when I first started my business, 7 years ago. I spent 9 months creating the best online course I possibly could. I crossed the creation finish line and while I should have been ecstatic, I was paralyzed. Instead of seeing myself succeed, all I saw were my shortcomings. The ugly voice inside me asked me "who do you think you are to teach this? You're not qualified, you're not good enough!" I was terrified of actually launching the course. I abandoned the

course that I had spent months of blood, sweat and tears creating! I returned to my comfort zone.

Today in the podcast I want us to quiet that voice that you are not good enough and you don't belong here. If you have experienced these feelings you're not alone and 2nd this does not need to be a weight you carry forever.

Imposter syndrome is not a mental illness, the symptoms do not characterize an abnormality. Some of the symptoms that align with imposter feelings are self-doubt, feeling like a fraud, inability to accept your own skills and abilities, attributing success to external factors or attributing it to luck, fear of being found out, constantly comparing yourself and these types of negative internal conversations that tell you that you don't measure up.

As I was researching for this episode I learned that there are 5 types of imposter syndrome from a book called *The Imposter Syndrome* by Phil Roberts.

1. The Perfectionist

Perfectionism and imposter syndrome work together to create negative feelings. Do you have trouble delegating? Do your work relationships and life, in general, have to be perfect all the time? Perfectionists set high goals and when they cannot meet them, they feel like failures. There's nothing wrong with having high expectations however setting them too high can be unrealistic and cause you to experience burnout. To avoid this, accept failure or less-than-perfect work. If you go to the gym 4 times a week but end up going just once that week don't beat yourself up on it. I normally go to the gym 4 days a week and this week I was away because my kids were on Spring Break, so I did not go to the gym.

However, one of the activities my family did one day was to ride bicycles around the Island where we were and that to me was my exercise for the week. But if you can't improvise then accept B minus work. I once heard Brooke Castillo of the Life Coach school say in Amy Porterfield's podcast that it's ok to have a B minus. Tell yourself that you gave it your best. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Instead of saying I should be doing better, say Nobody is perfect, I will do better next time. See perfectionism for what it is and recognizing your specific thought patterns surrounding perfectionism can help you know your triggers.

2. The superhero

The superhero or workaholic is always doing more to prove their worth. They feel the need to be super in their lives in the different roles they hold. They may hold a

demanding career be a parent, a husband or a wife but within these roles, they may feel like frauds even if they are doing all they possibly can. The superhero tends to overwork to cover up their insecurities, They have a hard time accepting their accomplishments. This is damaging to their self-esteem and the way they relate to others.

This creates anxiety. They tend to work late into the night and weekends just so they can feel they are doing enough. They struggle to have down time they miss out on social events and hobbies in order to work more. Their relationships suffer due to their constant need to be working.

They are addicted to the validation of working. Set healthy boundaries otherwise, you will burn out. Superheroes have trouble saying no to work. Know yourself well enough so you can create healthy boundaries. Take a few minutes to clear your thoughts. Listen to a guided meditation or even do a few simple breathing exercises. There are many mindfulness apps you can download right on your phone so you can meditate wherever you are. I use an app called Calm.

Behaviour change takes time, especially when we have engaged in certain behaviours for a period of time, so be kind to yourself and work on it a few minutes a day. Validating yourself can also help by saying positive words to yourself. You can say I am proud of myself and all I have accomplished.

3. The expert

The expert bases their self-worth on what they know. If there is something they do not know they feel like they are not worthy and fear being exposed. They go for degrees and certifications just so they feel they know everything required for their job. I get it there is always more for us to learn and striving to improve your skills can definitely help you professionally and improve your chances of getting a good job but we don't want to take this too far by seeking out too much information; this is actually a form of procrastination. Focus on what your job requires and learn the additional skills that are required as you go. Don't expect to know everything and let go of control which is thinking about everything in advance and just going with the flow.

4. The natural genius

Robert says that people who identify with this type of imposter feelings judge their competence based on how easily and quickly they can adapt to new things. Unlike the expert, they are not concerned with any degrees or certifications needed they actually love being able to know something without those additional credentials. They don't like asking for help because they are afraid of being criticized.

They also feel ashamed or not good enough for getting something the first time and avoid doing tasks they haven't tried before. They would rather do things on their own just so they can prove that they can. If you fall into this category to move past these feelings, see yourself as a work in progress, and admit you don't know everything. Ask questions. Many natural geniuses do not like asking questions but many people appreciate people who ask questions for clarification. While it's good to acknowledge your skills it's also good to acknowledge the skills of others. There's always room for improvement.

5. The soloist

The soloist is afraid to ask for help out of fear that it will only expose them as a fraud. They fear that if they ask for help they will be seen as incompetent or stupid. They feel guilty when they ask for help and will do anything to avoid it. Guilt is the feeling you get when you've done something wrong but there's nothing wrong with asking questions. The soloist feels validated by completing difficult tasks alone that most people could not do by themselves. If your imposter feelings show up this way, know that we can always grow and learn. The fear of looking incompetent actually makes you look more incompetent, so do not be afraid to ask for help.

No matter which category you fall in, just know that you're not alone. Studies suggest that 70% of people experience imposter syndrome. Some famous people like Michelle Obama and even actress Jodie Foster say that they have experienced imposter syndrome. The former COO of Facebook Sheryl Sandberg says that there are still days she wakes up feeling like a fraud.

The takeaway here is that validation comes from within. We cannot control what anyone thinks about us. But we can control what we think about ourselves and that is all that matters. We need to be confident to internalize our successes and not let that internal voice of who do you think you are let us feel like frauds.