

DO YOU SUFFER FROM IMPOSTOR SYNDROME?

"It's not what you are that holds you back, it's what you think you are not."

Denis Waitley

How do you know if you are displaying symptoms of Impostor Syndrome?

Simply start listening for that little inner critic... It sounds like a little voice inside you, criticising you, doubting your ability, listing all the reasons you can't or don't deserve something. It can also provide you lots of excuses for not doing something at all.

Do you...

- Have difficulty accepting compliments or praise?
- Discount your success (i.e., "It wasn't that big of a deal.")?
- Fear failure so much it keeps you from trying new things?
- Fear success and being "exposed"?
- Constantly compare yourself to others and feel like you don't measure up?
- Consistently feel like you don't belong?
- Attribute your success to luck (and no part of your own)?

If any of these sound familiar you may be experiencing a dose of Impostor Syndrome.



The Negative Effects of Listening to your Inner Critic

Your inner critic may sound annoying, unimportant, and useless. But it actually has a purpose. Think of impostor syndrome as a built-in self-protection system. It wants to protect you from failing. It does this by planting seeds of doubt in your mind, hoping that you will believe it.

Consider this:

If you've always done only what you know you can, trying something new carries with it an inherent risk of failure. Your inner critic wants to avoid failing at all costs, so it sabotages you by putting scary messages in your head. When your inner impostor is so strong that you actually avoid things — things you want to do, things you've dreamed of doing, things that would be amazing opportunities for you — in the name of "playing it safe," you let the impostor win.

Impostor syndrome can keep you in the wrong job, in the wrong place, with the wrong partner, living a life beneath your full potential. But you don't have to let it.



Befriend your Inner Impostor


Once you identify your inner impostor, you can choose to:

- 1) Listen to it, accept it and let it hold you back or
- 2) You can hear it out, acknowledge it, and put it in its place, and go for it anyway.

Eventually, over time, you will start to notice the messages as they arise and learn to differentiate the voice of your intuition (i.e., the real you) and your inner impostor (i.e., the fearful one who wants to protect you.)

Your inner impostor will never go away entirely. It's likely to rear its ugly head whenever you are faced with a new challenge. So you might as well make friends with it :)

You can do this by creating awareness. When you hear the voices of doubt and fear, acknowledge that it's the voice of your impostor. Recognise that it shows up when you are on the verge of something big. Know that it is trying to protect you. But also know that **it is your choice how you respond.**



"But also know that it is YOUR CHOICE how you respond"

Taming you Inner Impostor

When your inner impostor shows up, ready yourself to deal with it, so you can make the right decision and move on with your life.

Here are 5 ways to break free from Impostor Syndrome and reclaim your control:

1. Notice. First, identify which areas of your life your impostor is showing up for you. Are you constantly looking for external validation that you “belong”? Procrastinating on something for fear of it not being perfect? Holding yourself back from new opportunities or challenges because you feel like a fraud? Choosing not to share your true feelings or beliefs out of fear? Recognise the messages that are showing up for you and what it really means.

2. Be kind to yourself. Just because you notice the voice of your impostor doesn't mean that you have to have a reaction about it. Think of it as something that everyone deals with from time to time. Know that by virtue of having this affliction, you are most likely a high-achiever who has accomplished quite a lot! Instead of beating yourself up about it, know that it's just trying to protect you. Recognise that it's likely showing up because you are embarking on something that is very important. The more important something is, the more likely we are to want to protect it and shield it from potential failures.

3. Question the voices. When you start to hear the critical messages spin in your mind, stop and observe them. Then start to question those messages. What is your inner imposter telling you? “I could never do that.” “I will fail at this.” “I'm not as good as so-and-so.” When you hear this kind of internal dialogue, start questioning it instead of automatically believing it. Ask yourself, “**How true is this really?**” and “**What could be another way to look at this?**”

4. Change your inner dialogue. After you've started questioning the voices, the next step is to change your response to the messages. Consider your response to the voices in your head, and to replace them, come up with words that support you rather than drag you down. For example, when you hear “I'm a fraud,” you can reassure yourself, “I'm here because I belong here.” When you think, “What if it doesn't work?” replace it “What if it does?” Rephrase these into statements that you actually believe and that you feel good about.

5. Give yourself permission to do your best and let that be enough. Letting go of perfection is hard, but it is also freeing when you are able to let yourself off the hook and know you are enough. Instead of worrying about “failure” as the end-all-be-all, think of it failure an opportunity to experiment and learn. Give yourself permission to try new things, no matter how they might work out.

6. Be open about sharing your experiences with others. Each time someone shares her story of impostor syndrome, more stories are brought to the table. It's not as rare as you think – especially within groups of high achieving women. When more people talk about their experiences, we not only normalise it, but we serve as sound boards, support resources, and reality checks for each other.

7. Think of fear as an indicator of what you must do. Instead of thinking of the imposter voices as red flags or stop signs, think of the voices as green lights showing you the next thing you need to do. If you're terrified of being found out or discovered, take the chance to show up, confront the fear, and prove to yourself you can handle it.

SO... Make a conscious choice to go in the direction of your dreams, despite the fear of failure. Think of life as an experiment rather than a win-lose game. You only learn and achieve new levels of success by expanding yourself. Each time we confront expansion, we encounter the imposter, and must choose how we will deal with it.

"Everything starts with a conversation"

www.frances-sarah.com

