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THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Are You a Victim?

October 2021

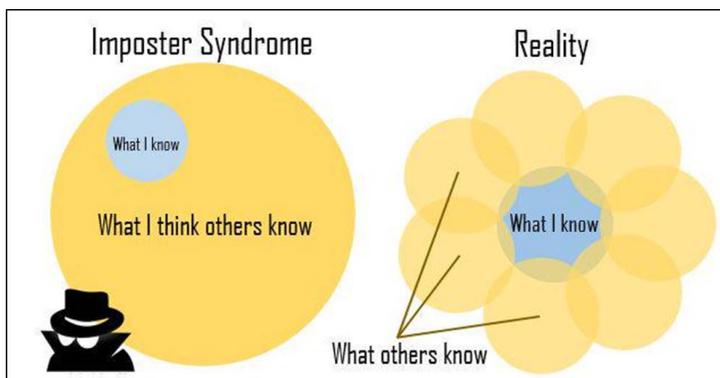
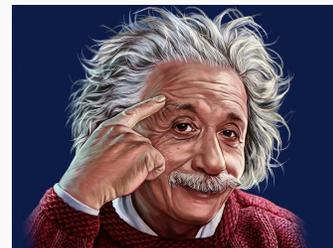


Image by David Whittaker (@rundavidrun) Used with permission

This issue of the "Imposter Syndrome" comes up frequently in my coaching sessions with clients - more often than you might guess.

Most women will tell you that sometime in their career they have suffered from this. It's not permanent and it doesn't have to be. And gentlemen, it's not exclusive to women either.

[Dr. Valerie Young](#), in her book, [The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer From the](#)



"The exaggerated esteem in which my lifework is held makes me very ill at ease. I feel compelled to think of myself as an involuntary swindler."

-Albert Einstein

In the stress session I deliver, I share this...

"The conscious mind can only hold one thought at a time".

Guess what – you get to decide what that thought

[Imposter Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It.](#)

categorized this syndrome into five categories.

The Categories of Imposter Syndrome:

1. **The Perfectionist**
2. **The Superwoman/man**
3. **The Natural Genius**
4. **The Soloist**
5. **The Expert**

Here is the [link](#) and here is the actual address of the link that will take you to an article summarizing her book:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/5-different-types-of-imposter-syndrome-and-5-ways-to-battle-each-one>

I too have been a victim of “The Imposter Syndrome”, and I remember it well. I remember the struggle of feeling inadequate, and how it caused me to feel frozen in finding solutions in my work. Back then, I was also a lone female. There were no mentoring programs, and I was working in a profession with only male peers at the time. I was trying to live up to all the male expectations around me – I certainly didn’t want to talk with a peer. I’d never heard of a coach and so I silently suffered. I belonged to a professional cohort that was a group of folks who did my job from different states who got together three times a year to share ideas. There was a man in that group I was always comfortable talking with and for whom everyone in our group had a great deal of respect. I did share with him what I was feeling and we had a conversation about it. The next day, as he was leaving the meeting early, he handed me his business card. I turned it over and on the back he had written, “Joy, you are not an imposter!” I worked my way out of it, and talking with him helped me change my perspective.

I’m telling you this to say that dealing with it alone doesn’t help much. In my experience with clients, in each of the categories

is going to be. If that thought is about what you are not, you are wasting your time. Make that thought be about what you are, what you have just accomplished, what you are expecting to do well, etc - make it a positive, affirming thought!

Celebrate yourself and focus on your achievements.

In this busy world, we often times are off to the next task without ever taking time to celebrate what we just accomplished. And here’s another reason to choose your conscious thoughts carefully...

“What we think upon grows”



Dr. Young describes, it often, takes a shift in a person's perspective to move beyond "Imposter Syndrome" thinking. And, often, that shift in perspective comes from talking with someone else, because quite frankly, shifting one's perspective usually requires getting out of your own head. We all get stuck in patterns and the way we think in that pattern then becomes self-perpetuating.

Comparing Yourself to Others:

Oftentimes, someone is looking at others and seeing strengths in them, or maybe only one other, and comparing themselves. Sometimes comparing ourselves with others is inspiring or motivating and it can be a good thing, but sometimes, it can turn into a de-motivator if we're seeing something we think we don't have that we should. Please take a look at a previous article I wrote – [Compare Yourself to Others or Not](#) from February 2019

Generally Feeling "Just Not Good Enough"?

Look again at the drawing at the top of this article. Are you looking at others, each of whom may know one thing that you don't know or don't yet know or have one skill you don't have or don't yet have and thinking therefore others have ALL these collective skills? That can happen. One can see strengths in others and start merging them into one mystical person with every skill and all knowledge to which they then begin comparing themselves. Wherever you are in your career, you are in the position you're in because your organization believes you have the basic skills and knowledge necessary for that level role and the potential to grow into "more". If you don't have everything they may have been looking for, then you are there because you have some skill that is extra special that put you ahead of other candidates and that's what you need to focus on. Where there is room for you to grow into "more", then it is your job to figure out what "more" is for you personally. (Again, please check out the article I mentioned in the last

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

-Denis Waitley

When babies take their first step and then fall on their bottoms, **we praise the first step. We don't criticize their fall...**

I think we as adults could learn a lesson here...**We spend more time criticizing our falls and not enough time applauding our small step.**

"Someone will always score slightly higher on a quiz than you, will run faster than you or get promoted more quickly than you. This doesn't mean that we don't belong."

-Jason Helfer

Quote From
The Johns Hopkins News-Letter

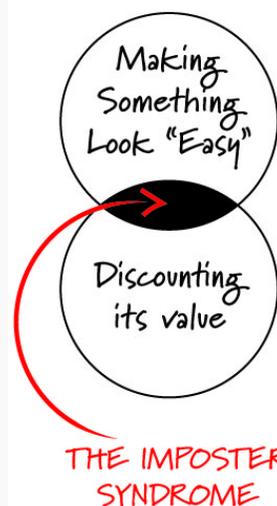
paragraph.)

Struggling with Perfectionism?

In other situations, a person is only looking at themselves, but insisting on perfection in every task. I was recently working with a client on this very issue and together we uncovered a very important, mind-changing perspective for her. (By the way, this is what I mean by a coach being a “thought-partner” to help you work through issues.) We were actually working on ways for her to advance in her career. I work with clients on how to talk about and characterize their strengths and one way is to talk about results of the work you do, not just the work you do.

She was frustrated because she had so many more goals than she was able to get to – isn’t that common for a lot of us! She said she spends 20% of her time completing a task and then the other 80% of the time she attributes to that task perfecting it. So I asked her what the result would be of that task at the 20% mark? What level of “result” would she be able to claim? Then I asked her to think about how much the “result” meter would go up after the additional 80%. So let’s say she would be able to claim that she increased productivity by 25% after investing the 20% of her time. After the additional 80% of her time, she could increase it by another 5% - a total of 30%. So then I asked her, how much she could increase productivity by going to another goal on her list and spending 20% of her time there. If she can increase productivity by another 25% by focusing on a second goal, then which will get her more recognition for the company’s goals – increasing productivity by 30% and only accomplishing one of the goals with unprecedented perfection that may not even be required or accomplishing two of the goals and increasing productivity by 50%?

The point here is that there are diminishing returns with perfectionism. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying that anyone should put out work that is not quality work. Our work and our



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reputation should never be represented by sloppy, incomplete or unattractively presented work. So maybe it would have taken her 50% of her time to get to that point of quality. But then, where is it better to spend the other 50% of the time she previously would have devoted to the first project.

Oftentimes, what value someone personally gets from reaching “perfection” on a task is not what the person or organization for whom they are working values and is looking for from them.

In short, perfectionism is not necessarily being strategic and will likely not be the thing that gets a person the recognition they are actually seeking, unless perfectionism is what is actually required and a lot of times it is not. Many times, good is good enough and all that is expected so that other things can be accomplished.

Are you struggling with some form of “Imposter Syndrome”? If you are, don’t suffer silently and don’t waste any more time thinking you are an imposter. Reach out and talk with someone who can help – a mentor or a coach. Hopefully you have a mentor, but if you don’t I’m also more than happy to help you as a coach.

I started this by telling you how often I see this with my coaching clients. It’s more common than you think, and my clients do find their way out of the syndrome and I know that I am part of that as their coach and thought partner.

Look at the quotes in my sidebar – even Einstein suffered!

4. Stress is an Inside Job!
5. Coaching & Mentoring Skills
6. Everything is Negotiable - Do It Skillfully!
7. Results Leadership (Part I & Part II)
8. Leadership Skills
9. Public Speaking & Presentation Skills
10. Effective Time Management Skills
11. Running Effective, Time-Saving Meetings
12. Working Effectively With Your Manager
13. Networking - Opportunities for You Personally and for Your Organization
14. Transitioning Into Retirement
15. Get Them There Better and Faster; Coaching & Mentoring Skills
16. Thoughtfully Choosing Your Approach to Conflict
17. Mediation Skills for Employee Conflicts

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Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and executive coaching.

As an Insights Discovery® licensed practitioner, Joy provides clients the added value of the Discovery® Portfolio of tools when working with individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to create inspiring visions for collaborative, cohesive teams to produce superior results.

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