IMPOSTER SYNDROME FEELINGS



What, Who & Why

A practical guide to recognising imposter feelings and why they don't mean what you think they mean.

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Imposter Syndrome Feelings

Using this Workbook

Imposter Syndrome isn't a medical condition. Experiencing imposter feelings doesn't mean there is something wrong with you and it certainly doesn't mean you need fixing.

It is entirely possible to be an expert in your field and still feel like a fraud.

This workbook isn't therapy or counselling.

It helps you recognise imposter feelings if they show up, understand who is most likely to experience them and why some people are more likely to experience them than others.

See your own experience as part of a well-documented, very common pattern that is experienced by many talented people rather than a personal failing.

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

1. Imposter Syndrome Feelings: What?

Academically speaking, the Imposter Phenomenon was first described by Prof Pauline Clance and Dr Suzanne Imes in 1978. They were working with talented, high-achieving women who felt unable to properly accept or own their achievements.

You may recognise imposter feelings if, in the face of evidence:

- You put your success down to luck, timing or other people helping, rather than your own ability
- You feel you don't really deserve your success or recognition
- You secretly feel other people over-value you and your work...

And somewhere, quietly, you sense that one day you'll be found out.

Initial work suggested that over 70% of high-achieving women experienced these feelings at some point in their careers though wider research reveals men are also affected, often just as intensely.

The effects tend to be more persistent for women but many things affect how these show up.

People who are more inclined to “hold back” are more likely to be more strongly affected even if they look confident and capable to others.

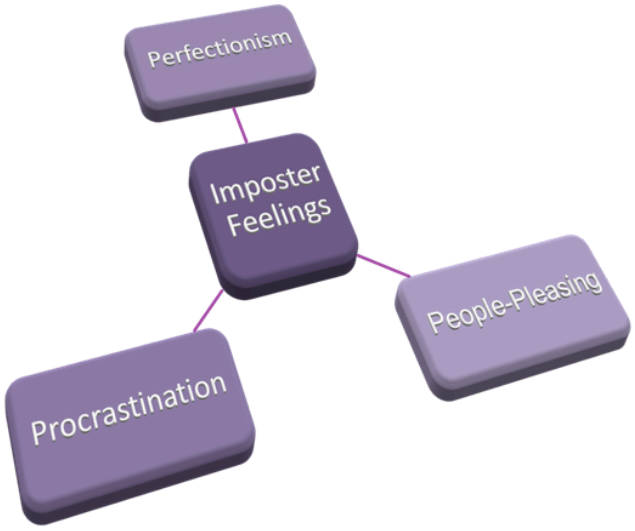


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Recognise this?

- You've worked hard. You've done well. And still, somewhere underneath, a quiet question: what if they find out?
- Maybe you hold back in meetings, downplay what you've achieved or set standards for yourself that nobody else would think to ask for.
- Maybe you've already decided that when it all falls apart, it will be your fault for not being good enough in the first place.

Imposter feelings often show up as one of three familiar habits:



- **Perfectionism:** More than wanting to work to high standards, there's a fear of "What will people think of me if they see my work is less than perfect, if they see I got *that* wrong?". There's also a heavy dose of over-preparing for things you can competently do...
- **People-Pleasing:** Saying yes, to keep people happy, to avoid conflict and, because saying no feels like failure. "If I say 'No' it tells them that I feel I can't cope with this.".
- **Procrastination:** Delaying the start because it has to be right - perfect. Avoiding tasks that risk exposing you. Leaving it to the last minute because, if it turns out badly, I've got an excuse. I started late.

Which one do you reach for first?

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2. Imposter Syndrome Feelings: Who?

Imposter feelings often take root when we feel different from our peers or from family or cultural expectations.
You may recognise yourself here:



People who are the first or in a minority

- the first professional in their family
- the first to go to university
- the first "whatever" in their workplace

People who are atypical or different, for example

- a female engineer or a male midwife
- a person of colour/with disability
- a "non-native" accent or culture
- different sexual orientation or gender identification
- political beliefs/social class
- different religion, faith or philosophy

People who achieved success

- early in life
- with apparent ease (if it came easily first time, can it be repeated?)

People who have no easy comparators

- work alone – entrepreneurs,
- work in creative industries or professions
- work in roles where intelligence or expertise are valued

Your feelings may have different roots but these are most common.
Do you recognise yourself in any of these?

Note which ones and try to identify one specific moment-event-story that comes to mind when you think of this...
And remember - you can re-write the meaning of that event.

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3. Imposter Syndrome Feelings: Why?

For many people, Imposter Syndrome feelings have their roots in some form of being different, to their peers or to family or cultural expectations.

Then the doubt arises:

"If I'm here. in this job. in this role. doing the same as others...
but in fact. I'm not like them...
then I must be the fraud.

"I don't belong here."

Any difference in background, culture, experience, even neurodivergence, if you feel different to your peers, it's possible, you can interpret this as meaning you don't belong.

Of course, that's only one of many possible conclusions. You could choose to see how it gives you a different perspective or increases your creativity.

Examples from my personal story include:

- Not being like "them" - I had to work harder, find my own route
- Failure – Not getting what I wanted developed resilience, persistence, and my own sense of self-worth
- Working away – I learned independence but realised it's good to have others around.

What events or experiences shaped you and leave fingerprints in the person you are today?

What honest and realistic interpretation of "your facts" could be interpreted more positively than believeing you don't belong?

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4. Imposter Syndrome Feelings - So what?

The feelings, the fear… sometimes they are real. They might not be true.

None of this means you are not good at what you do.

Feeling like an imposter is not evidence that you are one. It's evidence that you are human, working somewhere where your competence and expertise is regularly tested or watched.

It’s likely that you are comparing yourself to others and worrying that you don’t match up.

Recognising this as a pattern is the first useful thing you can do with it.



Reflections

What would change if you treated this feeling as information, not as truth?

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WANT MORE?



This workbook helps you recognise imposter feelings when they show up and understand why you might be more likely to feel them.

Recognising a pattern doesn't fix it overnight. It does mean you stop mistaking a common, human response to being different as proof that you don't belong or don't deserve success.

You'll soon learn that sometimes, we need to be more brave and do it anyway!

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

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