

The Story You Tell About Your Success

A practical guide to the story you tell about your own success, and how to notice when it leaves you out.

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Using the

The Story You Tell About Your Success

Workbook

We all tell ourselves a story about why we succeed.

For some people, that story includes their own skill and effort. For others, it quietly leaves those elements out replacing them with luck, good timing or the kindness of others.

This workbook isn't about learning to boast, or pretending you did it entirely alone. It helps you notice the story you default to when explaining your own success and where it came from.

By the end, it offers one small way to change how that story gets told, not because you're doing it wrong, but because you may not yet be able to see the pattern you're in.

This matters beyond how you feel.
How you respond to praise teaches the people around you how much credit to give you next time.

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

1. The Story You Tell About Your Success: What?

We all tell ourselves a story about why we succeed. If you're not sure what your story sounds like yet, that's what this page is for.

Imagine, for a moment, that you really are a fraud.
If that's true, how did you achieve so much?

Most people who feel like imposters are very good at explaining away their own success. When they deliver work that is going to be seen or evaluated, these three story patterns show up again and again:



We begin by being fearful of judgment or failure, we (generously?) overcredit others for contributing our success and finally, minimise and undervalue our achievements by pointing out "It was nothing" or highlighting errors and places we could have done better.

Reflections

- Do you recognise a pattern that's common for you?
- How do you respond when someone pays you a compliment?
- And when your work or contribution is praised, your typical response is...

Recognise these?

- You explain a good result by saying you got lucky, the timing worked out or the competition was weak.
- You credit your team, your mentor, anyone but yourself, even when you did the work.
- You feel a flicker of anxiety after every success: this time it worked, but what about next time? Success almost makes it worse...

There's a common pattern underneath all three responses:
crediting success to something beyond your control.

Luck, timing, other people's kindness - all of these are external factors.
None can be repeated on demand.



Strangely, they can feel safer than believing in your own skill.
It removes your responsibility for doing it again - and it feels so precarious.
It's no surprise you wonder whether you deserve credit.

Sometimes, when we're pushed to explain our success we resort to:

Only because I worked so hard!

For some people, admitting it required hard work feels like proof they didn't deserve it - if they were truly worthy they shouldn't have needed to work so hard in the first place.
Admitting effort feels like admitting weakness.

Either way, your own contribution quietly gets left out of the story.

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2. The Story You Tell About Your Success: Who?

These patterns tend to cluster around a particular kind of person.
You may recognise yourself here:

- People with very high personal standards who set the bar high enough that "good enough" when it's applied to them, leaves no room for error
- People with an active self-critical voice who notice what's wrong before they notice what worked
- Perfectionists who treat one imperfect result as evidence that they never deserved it at all.

How do you define being good at your job?

Try finishing this sentence, five different ways:

"If I really was good enough to do my job/deserve my role, I would..."

-
-
-
-
-

What does your list tell you about your own definition of competence?

- Is it realistic?
- Is it quietly designed to be out of reach?
- Does it somehow prove you don't deserve to be here?

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3. The Story You Tell About Your Success: Why?

Much of this comes down to how we define failure.

A neutral definition might be: an absence of success.

For many people with imposter feelings, failure carries a far heavier meaning: failure is personal, shameful, enduring.

What if we could believe failure meant something else?

- Something high achievers experience repeatedly on the way to success.
- Feedback on your strategy.
- An essential part of learning and growth.
- Simply normal.



As devastating as the experience of failure feels, maybe there are more helpful ways to describe many of the failures we experience in our lives.

Perhaps things simply didn't turn out the way we wanted!

> *You know, logically, your achievements are real. You still can't quite believe it emotionally.*

Reflections:

- What definition of failure would serve you better going forward?
- When did you dismiss a success as luck, timing, or someone's kindness?
- What would it sound like to credit yourself instead?

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4. The Story You Tell About Your Success: So What?

By now you may be noticing your story a little more clearly...
The deflections, the caveats, the credit quietly handed to luck or other people being kind.

If accepting credit and deserving your achievements still feels wrong, that's not a failure. That's the pattern working exactly as it intended.

Here's where the story meets a moment you can actually change, not by feeling differently first, but by doing one small thing differently.

Think about the last time someone paid you a compliment:
What did you say?



""You like my shirt?
This old thing? I picked it up in a charity shop."

"You liked the presentation?
It was OK but I completely forgot to say...
and on slide 7 did you notice I got the spelling wrong?"

It feels a small thing but notice what it actually does:
it's a repeated lesson you teach the people around you:
“Don't give this person too much credit, they don't think they deserve it.”.

Say it often enough and people - yourself included - will believe you.

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This isn't about pretending to be someone you're not.

It's not about being happy that you failed or trying to fail on purpose.
It's certainly not about pretending everything you do is perfect.

We need to understand that choices about new behaviour come first.

When we do different things and do things differently
- that changes how we feel

If we go back to the example on the previous page it could be something as simple as letting an honest compliment land, fully, before you move on. The feeling doesn't need to arrive first. Let it catch up.

Try this instead:

"*Thank you.*
I love this shirt too."

"*Thank you.*
I really wanted to focus on accessibility and I'm delighted you noticed."

Two words do the work:
"Thank you".

Everything after that is optional, and it's yours to choose,

- not an apology,
- not an explanation,
- not a discount.

Write two accepting responses you could use this week:

One for a compliment about your work: _____

_____

One for a compliment about something personal: _____

_____

How you receive credit is one imposter habit people can see.
Change this and you change what the room believes about you, not just what you believe about yourself.

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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook helps you notice the story you tell about your own success and gives you one concrete habit to develop: receiving credit well.

This can change how you show up, how you are seen, and yes, even how you feel.

Old habits are persistent.
Expect the urge to deflect to show up long after you've decided to change it.
That's normal, not evidence you're doing it wrong.

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.

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Resources

Let me know how you get on!

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