

When It Happens Again

You're Prepared and Ready For The Task

A practical guide to spotting your triggers and knowing exactly what you'll do next time.

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Using the When It Happens Again Workbook

Four lessons in, you've built more than you might realise.
You've named your patterns, learned to tell self-doubt from bias.
You've practised receiving credit instead of deflecting it.
You've turned your inner critic's harshest message into something you can say out loud with pride.

This lesson doesn't teach anything new about why imposter feelings happen. That work is already done.

What it does is bring everything together into one simple thing: knowing exactly what you'll do the next time it happens, because it will, and you'll be ready before it happens.

By the end, you'll have a plan you can actually use, not another thing to remember, one sentence you'll already have written.

These are my reflections

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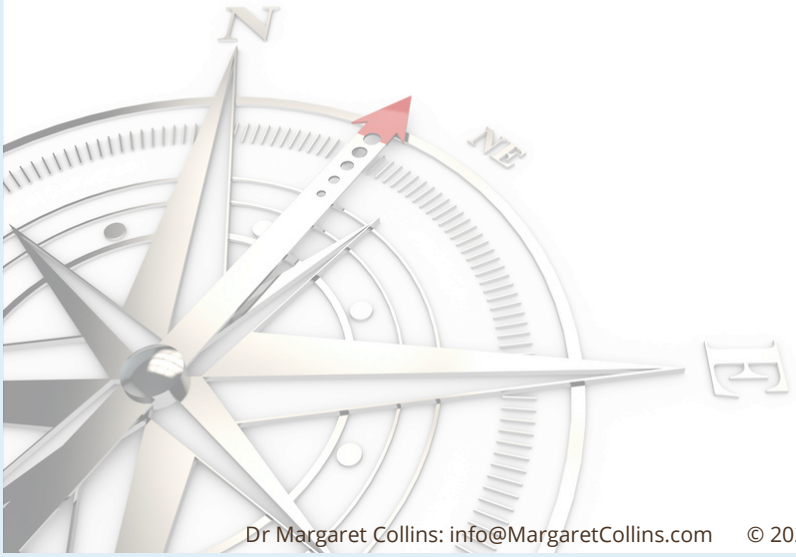
on ___ /___ /_____

What You've Already Built

Before adding anything new, it's worth naming what's already yours:

- **From Imposter Syndrome Feelings**: you know these feelings are common, human and not evidence you're in the wrong place.
- **From It's Not You, It's the System**: you can tell the difference between genuine self-doubt and the weight of unconscious bias that was never only yours to carry.
- **From The Story You Tell About Your Success**: you have two words that change how a room sees you: Thank you.
- **From Making Friends With Your Inner Critic**: you have a sentence that turns your critic's harshest message into the case for why you belong here, your professional values.

Each one of these is already a complete tool.
This lesson doesn't replace them.
It gives you one more and a way to reach for all of them on purpose, before you need them rather than by accident.



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1. Recognise Your Triggers

Certain situations reliably bring your imposter feelings to the surface. Common ones include being tested, being questioned in a meeting, presenting, receiving feedback or being asked to speak with authority you don't yet feel you've earned.

Your “situations” may be different but you’ll know when that feeling hits...

For example:
In situations where: I'm called to take the lead opinion unexpectedly

I usually feel: panicked, rapid breathing, rapid pulse, flushed (physically) exposed, unprepared and anxious (emotionally)

I say to myself: I'm going to show myself up, not know the answer, look like a fool again

And then I: find an excuse, say something non-committal and get out of the spotlight as soon as I can!

Or maybe you’re familiar with this version...

For example:
In situations where: someone asks a question

I usually feel: panicked, rapid breathing, rapid pulse, flushed... exposed, unprepared and anxious

I say to myself: I'm going to show myself up, not know the answer, look like a fool again

And then I: keep my mouth shut! Only, the person who does answer and gets all the praise, doesn't actually know as much as I do...
I then beat myself up because I should have said something.

You can't build a plan for a trigger you haven't named clearly.
Once you recognise the situation AND those first symptoms you can plan to change what happens next.

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Write this out for your two or three most familiar or most common triggering situations. The exact wording, the exact thing you feel that lets you know it's your "Imposter Hijack", the thing you say to yourself.

In situations where: _____

I usually feel: _____

I say to myself: _____

And then I: _____

And again...
The exact wording, the exact thing you feel, the thing you say to yourself.

In situations where: _____

I usually feel: _____

I say to myself: _____

And then I: _____

You now get to choose,
"What would I like to do instead?"

Your preferred actions don't need to be heroic or out of character, just practical, next steps.

What does "Your Best Self" want?



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2. Your Plan for Next Time

Once you can see the pattern, you can interrupt it, but only if you decide in advance, not in the moment. In the moment, your body is already reacting, faster than you can think your way out of it.
Deciding ahead of time works with that, not against it.

This is where implementation intentions come in, simple "if this, then that" plans, decided ahead of time, so there's nothing left to negotiate when the moment actually arrives.

For example:
In situations where: I'm asked a question

I usually feel: panicked, rapid breathing, rapid pulse, flushed...
exposed, unprepared and anxious

And this is where you change your ending...

I say to myself: This is just my imposter kicking in... I know this feeling and I've decided to do it differently this time.

And then I: take a deep breath, sit up straight and say something.

Write your own implementation intention endings, specific for the situation you face, your personal "If I feel _____, then I will _____." alternative plans to let your Best Self, step forward.

In situations where: _____

I usually feel: _____

I say to myself: _____

And then I: _____

This ending is now yours.
The next time it happens, you won't be deciding what to do.
You'll already know.

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Once you get used to writing your own endings it can become easier, less complicated, more simple:

Examples:
If I find myself thinking "I don't know", then I will remind myself that not knowing the perfect answer is not the same as not knowing anything and I'll share what I do know.

If someone compliments my work, then I will say thank you, and let it land before I say anything else.

If I catch myself explaining away a success (as luck or someone being kind), then I will remind myself of the work that I did.

Little by little, one situation at a time, you can choose a different ending.

You might pick a relatively "low stakes" place to start.
Choose an easy meeting to make a decision about asking a question, any question, of the speaker. It doesn't matter what you ask.
What matters is you made a decision and you followed through

If you find, at any time,
"it didn't turn out how I expected",
learn the lesson.

Pick yourself up, remind yourself of what your best self wants and try it all over again.

You might need to calibrate your expectations but change is possible and this is how it starts.



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Reflections:

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WANT MORE?



Reading and reflection are valuable but they can only take you so far.

The rest happens in real life, as you put this learning into practice.

We can continue to develop the habits together, in the room, in the workshops, in the monthly conversations, where these tools get tested against your real challenges, your actual week, your actual voice.

That's where this genuinely continues.

I hope this module has been useful and I'd love to work through the next part with you directly.

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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