

# Imposter Syndrome Self-Coaching Guide

## *How can I overcome self-doubt?*

At certain times in life, we can all feel inadequate, doubt our past accomplishments, or fear being caught out by others as a 'fraud' or 'imposter'. And these feelings can linger despite our various achievements and others affirming our abilities and past successes. Having a persistent feeling of self-doubt is called '*Imposter Syndrome*' and it is commonly experienced by many high-achieving men and women. These irrational fears can prevent us pursuing desired opportunities, taking on new challenges, and, in some cases, will cause us anxiety, stress and depression. These effects can have a negative impact on our health, well-being, relationships, work performance and career. Imposter Syndrome takes various forms, depending on our background, personality, and circumstances, and it is sometimes triggered by key events (e.g. taking on a new role or responsibility).

Here are some strategies which, combined, will help to overcome self-doubt and boost self-confidence.

1) **Accept your feelings.** 86% of 18-34-year olds recently surveyed in the UK, have experienced Imposter Syndrome at work in the past 12 months. Many highly-successful people have admitted suffering from it. We all have thoughts and feelings of self-doubt. It's been shown that trying to control them doesn't work and even makes them worse. It's better to accept them, knowing everybody gets them.

Writing down your thoughts and feelings helps you start to examine them more rationally. Also, talking to others can make you feel better by (a) receiving encouragement, and (b) hearing how they often can feel the same. Others can help you assess the reality of your situation much more objectively.

2) **Assess your reality.** Asking yourself some insightful questions can help you assess the reality of the situation causing self-doubt. Asking questions in the third person gives you a much more objective perspective, focusing on facts rather than feelings. (See some suggested questions overleaf).

Answering these questions will help you to (a) dispel any unreal concerns, and (b) develop actions to tackle any genuine weaknesses. (See SCGs – 'How can I set achievable life goals?' and 'How can I handle 'new things' better?') These actions will better prepare you, resulting in increased confidence.

3) **Anticipate the outcomes.** Thinking through all possible outcomes can strengthen your confidence. Asking yourself, "*What could go wrong?*", "*How could I prepare for that?*", and "*In big picture terms, how important is this?*" will encourage you to take some practical steps to reduce your anxiety.

You'll never feel totally ready to do some things. Occasionally, you will need to '*fake it till you feel it*', since taking action will give feelings of confidence afterwards. Fear shouldn't prevent you from attempting important things that you value. Doing something 'afraid' is a very courageous act. Fear of failure can often feel worse than the failure itself, and facing your fears helps to overcome them.

You should pursue healthy achievement and growth, strive to be your best, but be ready to forgive yourself should failure occur. Failures sometimes happen, so be ready and willing to learn from them. And remember, real frauds don't get Imposter Syndrome.

*"You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." A.A. Milne*

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## More Information

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## Some Suggested Assessment Questions

- How qualified is he/she in doing this?
- How experienced is he/she in doing this?
- How successful was he/she in doing this the last time?
- What strengths has he/she got that are important for doing this?
- What weaknesses has he/she got that are important for doing this?
- What can he/she do to improve the likelihood of succeeding for doing this?
- Who can he/she speak to for help, guidance and support for doing this?

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