



Imposter Syndrome: Taming the Success Eating Monster

If you are a high achiever, you've probably experienced imposter syndrome.

It's that feeling of insecurity, the self-doubt that eats away at you just as you are about to take a step forward. It's the moment you ask yourself: "Who do I think I am? What makes me think I'm qualified to do this?!" And, this insidious feeling of self-doubt sabotages personal success.

Studies show that up to 82% of the population has experienced imposter syndrome at some point. Some more than others. Imposter syndrome is common, especially among high achievers, women, and people of color. And it can be especially crushing for introverts and those who feel isolated working from home.

There are lots of psychological theories for why this happens. It may be caused by certain personality traits, family dynamics, our culture, or some combination of the above. But, understanding why it happens is less important than figuring out what to do about it.

In my personal experience and through my coaching practice, I've found the following to be effective ways to shake that feeling of inferiority and jump back in to advancing your passion. I hope you find some of these strategies helpful for taming your own success-eating monster.

Get back in touch with what brought you here. Think about why you started this position/project/business/practice in the first place. What was appealing about it? What was the catalyst that caused you to take that first step? Why is this important to you – is it the lifestyle it enables, the mission you are pursuing, the impact you want to make? Remembering your passion can jumpstart your excitement which can propel you forward.



Check your physical state. Make sure you are taking care of yourself physically to ensure you have the energy to pursue your passion. Is your mental state being negatively impacted by your physical state? Are you feeling stressed? Are you eating well and getting enough sleep? Knowing it's your mental state that creates these feelings makes it easier to see that your fear is less about who you are and more about what you are (not) doing to take care of yourself.

Reconnect with people who care about you. In today's digital world, it can be easy to get disconnected from real life humans. Are you spending too much time alone? Are you getting caught up in your thoughts, spending too much time 'in your head'? When is the last time you connected with family and friends? What was the last non-work-related conversation you had with a colleague? We need human connection to stay mentally healthy and sometimes that takes intentional action.

Connect with others in your field. Every profession, industry and role have its own unique set of challenges. Is there anyone else in your network taking on these same challenges? When is the last time you made a new professional connection? How are you growing your network to learn from others in your industry/profession? Simply being able to commiserate with others and share notes on challenges can be cathartic. Sharing your knowledge with others can be extremely empowering. Join a networking group or attend a networking event and make a point of having real conversations with those you meet.

Get a broader perspective. Changing your view by focusing on something else for a short time can change your perspective and bring new clarity. What is the last thing you learned for no reason whatsoever? When is the last time you read a book? When is the last time you tried something completely new? What topics, outside of work, interest you? Pursuing something completely outside of your norm creates new neural pathways and opens up creative thinking. Make a point of continuing to learn and grow beyond your professional role and you will be surprised at how your newfound perspectives will propel you forward.

Spend time with nature. I know, this one sounds really touch-feely, and we're not all big nature lovers. But, there truly is a huge body of work that says nature has a calming and centering effect in every culture around the world. When is the last time you left your desk to take a walk, or roll, around the block or to a local park or nature preserve? Do you have anything in your work space that brings nature indoors – a plant, a picture, a window? Take a few minutes to appreciate the natural world. Look up from your work, enjoy the sights and sounds around you, and you will be amazed at how refreshed and reinvigorated you will feel.

Talk to colleagues, clients and customers. Check in with those you've impacted. See how they are doing and how they have grown since your last interaction. How have you positively impacted their work and their lives? What have you taught them? What have you learned from them? How have you worked together to make an impact? There is nothing more empowering than remembering the positive impact you have had on others.

Re-read your resume, bio, or CV with a positive eye. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of how far we've come and all we've accomplished. What was the biggest impact you ever had? What was the hardest thing you've ever done? What obstacles did you overcome? How many people are better off because of the work you've done? Remembering all we have accomplished reminds us that we are not imposters and that we do have something important to offer to the world.

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Consider the alternative. If all else fails, kick yourself in the behind. Consider the alternative. If you don't keep going on this path, what then? Will you give up? Will you go from being an entrepreneur back to a full-time job? Or squash your dream for the security of a paycheck? Will that potential client/boss hire someone else to do what you could do better? Ultimately, you have the choice to pick yourself up and move forward or change your path. It is up to you.

Do what makes you happiest. In the end, it's up to you to decide. Consider the alternatives and choose the direction that makes you feel most empowered and alive. Your positive energy can make it happen. Take measured action, but trust yourself and your ability to succeed. And, ultimately, make a choice that is based on positivity and strength not fear and falsehoods. You've got this.

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to take the next step toward accelerated success.