

Imposter Syndrome

Have you ever had the feeling that maybe you're just not cut out for your leadership role? That your colleagues are better than you are? That perhaps you've made a mistake in thinking leadership was for you?

Welcome to Imposter Syndrome. It's completely normal, and it affects more people than you'd think. From CEOs to teachers, most people in a professional role have experienced Imposter Syndrome at some point.

So, how do you identify it, and what do you do about it?

What causes Imposter Syndrome?

It's called Imposter Syndrome because you feel like an imposter in your role. The calm confidence you used to have is slipping away, and you feel like you're not capable. You also feel like everyone is about to notice at any moment that you're an imposter. It's terrifying.

The first step to dealing with it is to recognise it's perfectly normal. Most leaders deal with a bout of Imposter Syndrome now and again. It usually happens when something changes that disrupts your sense of balance in your role, but it can appear almost out of the blue.

It could be a new employee who has a million suggestions for improvements and you're suddenly looking at all your hard work with a critical eye. How can this person come in and spot so many faults with a team or department you were so proud of?

Perhaps you have a new colleague who seems to be more competent than you are. You find yourself making comparisons—unflattering ones—between your performance and theirs.

Maybe there's been a change of business ownership, a digital transformation or some other large-scale corporate change that's making you question if you fit in your role anymore.

How to handle imposter syndrome.

So, you have a name for all those feelings, but what now? Do you succumb and throw in the towel? Look for a new job? Resign yourself to being miserable and hoping nobody calls you out on being an imposter?

Relax. All these feelings? Other people most likely won't have even noticed. The root of imposter syndrome is that you think someone will notice you're a fraud. That you're not supposed to be doing this job. They won't, because **you aren't a fraud.**

That's why you were hired; that's why you're still in your role. This fear is not just normal, it's a sign that you care deeply about your role and being good at it.

Of course, just telling someone with Imposter Syndrome to not worry about it isn't going to help. Here are a few practical steps you can take to shake off Imposter Syndrome—or even use it to your advantage:

- Spend some time focusing on the positives. What have you achieved in the last day, week, month, and the quarter? How about during the previous 12 months? Focusing on the times you've done a great job can boost your motivation and remind you why you're good at your job.
- Gather 360-degree feedback. Ask for feedback from your line manager, peers, and your teams. Getting an idea of what the people around you see as your strengths and weaknesses can remind you that you have strengths to capitalise on. It can also help you focus your development by concentrating on the highlighted areas for development.
- Having trouble with a particular challenge that's giving you Imposter Syndrome? Ask your teams for their suggestions on how to handle a problem. It will make them feel involved and motivate them, while at the same time giving you ideas for improvement.
- Ask for help if you need it. Asking for help can be daunting for anyone, but more so for leaders. Shake off the idea that asking for help makes you look weak. A strong and effective leader understands their own strengths and knows how to utilise other's strengths when needed. Nobody is good at everything. Getting the help you need to resolve a problem makes you a *more* effective leader, not less.

Are you feeling like an imposter and need some help to get back to feeling confident in your role?

I regularly help my executive coaching clients to develop the focus, confidence, and resilience that helps them overcome Imposter Syndrome.

If you'd like to learn more about how coaching can help, then why not book a free, no-obligation discovery call today?