

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome – Cheat Sheet

Introduction

Business owners and entrepreneurs face challenges every day

Sometimes setbacks shake our confidence

But if a sense of unworthiness, self-blame, and negative feelings persist, you may be experiencing imposter syndrome

Do you feel like you're 'faking it'?

Do you fear people will say you're a fraud?

If 'yes', know that imposter syndrome can:

- Destroy your confidence
- Leave you exhausted and frustrated
- Stop you from reaching your potential

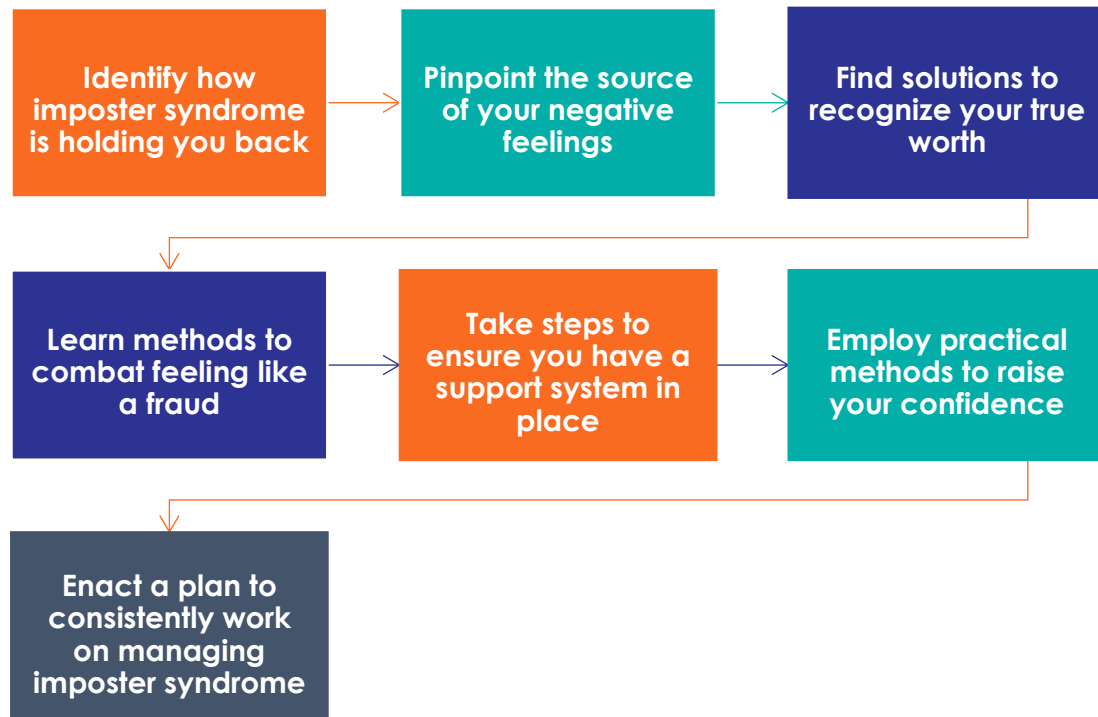
This syndrome is common, affecting people from all walks of life

There are ways to manage imposter syndrome

By the end of the course, you'll have an action plan to free yourself from imposter syndrome and start exploring what life has to offer

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome

Here is your roadmap through the course:



Learning Objectives:

By the time you complete this course, you'll be able to:

- Recognize how imposter syndrome is holding you back
- Pinpoint the source of your negative feelings
- Select solutions to recognize your true worth
- Explore methods to combat feeling like a fraud
- Develop a support system for getting help when you need it
- Employ practical methods to raise your confidence
- Create a plan to consistently work on managing imposter syndrome
- Consolidate and implement your learning and plan future action

Module 1 - What is Imposter Syndrome?

Lesson 1: How Imposter Syndrome Holds You Back

Learning Objective:

Recognize how imposter syndrome is holding you back

First described by psychologists Suzanne Imes, PhD, and Pauline Rose Clance, PhD, in the 1970s

- A feeling that success and achievements are due to luck rather than ability
- Fear that others will eventually unmask you as a fraud

It's a common experience among high-achieving women

Research shows men also experience imposter syndrome

Entrepreneurs are one of the largest groups affected

Different Levels of Severity

Imposter syndrome doesn't affect everyone the same way

There are roughly three levels of severity

Level 1

You feel anxious/fearful when facing something new or challenging

If that's temporary, it isn't imposter syndrome

But if it lingers, imposter syndrome could be having a subtle influence on your life.

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Level 2

Progress is blocked by ingrained patterns of negative behaviour, including:

- A fear of being found out
- A search for perfection
- A recurring doubt in your skills
- This prevents you from achieving your full potential

People at this level commonly experience:

- Lack of confidence
- Fear of failure
- Striving for perfection
- Inability to delegate
- Feeling like a fraud
- You can find ways to overcome imposter syndrome

Level 3

For some, negative feelings are so extreme that self-help strategies are ineffective

Therapy could be the answer to help them work through the issue

The implications of doing nothing are serious and can include:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout
- Panic attacks
- Other mental health issues and sustained low performance

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Your Experience of Imposter Syndrome

You believe your success is due to luck, not skill

- This can prevent you from e.g., running a business

You hide away from the limelight to keep a low profile

- This will hamper your ability to gain visibility

You overwork to meet your unrealistically high standards

- You can't delegate to others or ask for help

You fear others will think you're foolish

- This stops you from expressing ideas and finding info

Take the time to pinpoint where you are now

Someone close to you may see the situation more clearly than you

Lesson 2: Where Imposter Syndrome Comes From

Learning Objective:

Pinpoint the source of your negative feelings

The sources of imposter syndrome are varied and complicated

However, there are two key places it stems from:

- Past experience
- Present experience

Past Experience

The way you were raised impacts who you are today

Influences will have come from our immediate family, teachers, friends etc

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Any negative messages can chip away at your confidence,
transforming into imposter syndrome in adult life

Many “imposters” grew up with a huge emphasis on achievement

The received mixed messages about success and self-worth

Present Experience

Adult experiences can reinforce or bring back past experiences

Add societal pressures and imposter syndrome becomes magnified

In our society there's a huge pressure to achieve

Compare to others on social media and you increase pressure

Past Triggers

Separate past from present to find the influences on your life today

Try to examine these influences objectively

How we feel about someone/something now can be affected by the
past

Sounds, smells, looks can all trigger negative reactions

Identify those triggers and trace them back to their source

You are now free to choose the way you react to current situations

Complete the **Identifying Triggers Exercise** to start this process

Is it Really Imposter Syndrome?

If you're in a minority position, you may feel you don't belong

You may have unreasonable expectations thrust on you Does this
resonate with you?

But if it doesn't, don't dismiss it We've all been in a minority
sometime.

How did it feel?

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Reality Check

Can you answer 'yes' to the following?

- Do you work in a setting where you have to constantly prove you're 'good enough' even though you're qualified?
- Are you expected to get better results than the majority of your colleagues?
- Are your chances of promotion less than your majority peers?

If yes, this isn't imposter syndrome, it's accurate

You may also have feelings of imposter syndrome from your past

Module 2 – Ways to Manage Imposter Syndrome

Lesson 1: “It’s no big deal”

Learning Objective:

Select solutions to recognize your true worth

“Imposters” attribute their achievements to luck

They believe their success has nothing to do with ability

Studies show people with imposter syndrome have multiple advanced degrees and demonstrated track record of success

Internal dialogue can sound like this:

- I’ve got where I am through luck
- I don't deserve this; I did nothing special
- anyone could’ve done the same
- If I can do it, anyone can
- I had a lot of help
- This was down to team effort

They feel like they’ve ‘lucked out; they negate their expertise:

- I’m no expert
- I’m not good enough
- I don’t know enough
- Why should people listen to me?
- What do I have to say that’s so interesting?

Do you recognize any of these?

They have huge implications for business owners

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Ways to alleviate the effects of imposter syndrome include:

Measure Your Self-Worth by Your Achievements

People with imposter syndrome deny the evidence in front of them

Collect reminders of your successes such as positive comments and testimonials

These help you recognize what you do well

Look back at them whenever you doubt yourself

Adopt a Growth Mindset

People who have a growth mindset see obstacles as temporary

They're open to learning and developing their skills and abilities

People with imposter syndrome have fixed mindsets

They believe that failure is the result of their limitations

Confront your imposter syndrome with facts

Your success reminders will help

You won't feel like an imposter for long

Open up to bigger and better possibilities every day

Build on known past success to create more in the future

Replicate the behaviours that brought you achievements before

Each day work hard, gain knowledge, and achieve your goals

Practice mindfulness to help you stay in the moment

Use Confident Language

The words we use, both to ourselves and to others, are powerful

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They influence how we approach tasks and address challenges

"Imposters" have a negative narrative in their heads

Identify what you say to yourself and then turn it round: ○

Negative: "This is out of control. I can't handle it."

Positive: "I can't control all the events, but I can control my reaction to them."

"Imposters" also use a lot of minimizing language e.g.,

Change this to something more positive, e.g. a coach talking to a prospective client:

- NEGATIVE "I might be able to help you with that. I'm fairly sure I've done something like it before."
- POSITIVE "Yes, I'm confident I can help you. I've had success with other clients with the same issue."

Stop Comparing Yourself

It's easy to compare yourself to others and find yourself wanting

- Comparisons do nothing for your self-esteem
- It's your uniqueness that creates your value
- Stay focused on measuring your own achievements
- Stop looking at people's 'highlight reels'
- Focus on being a better version of yourself each day
- Tell yourself "I'm great as I am!"

Lesson 2: "I'm a fraud"

Learning Objective:

Explore methods to combat feeling like a fraud

People with imposter syndrome often feel like a fraud inside

The fear of being unmasked can lead to this internal dialogue:

- I'll get found out
- I'm a failure
- I don't want to be noticed
- People believe I know what I'm doing, but I don't
- I give the impression I'm more competent than I really am
- I'm afraid my colleagues will discover how little I know

Here are ways to alleviate these effects:

Understand What's Happening

True frauds are not afraid of being caught out

If you're worried that you're a fraud, you probably aren't!

Try these ideas:

- Be aware of your feelings and handle situations that arise
- Recognize the familiar thoughts or feelings as they come up
- Prepare for the imposter feelings crop up and be ready to respond
- Separate out emotions from reality to rise above them
- Practice mindfulness

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Handle Criticism

Criticism is problematic for people with imposter syndrome

It can fuel their current search for perfection

Past criticism expressed disapproval or withdrawal of affection

You can relearn your response to criticism and alleviate the effects:

- **Step 1:** Decide whether this criticism is valid or invalid
- **Step 2:** Use these techniques to answer the criticisms:
 - Valid –
 - It's a true statement. No point arguing.
 - Learn to say "Yes, you're right. I am/I have XXX"
 - Acknowledge the truth of what the other person is saying
 - Invalid –
 - This is not true of the current situation, so refute it.
 - Reply in a calm and unaggressive way
 - Say it with conviction, not apology
 - Add in the word they used to lessen its impact on you

Stop Focusing on Perfection

Imposter feelings and perfectionism often go hand in hand

They hide away so their 'flaws' and 'shortcomings' can't be seen

Perfectionism can control you e.g., you put off a project because you can't complete it to your high standards

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Here are some tips:

- Accept that nobody is perfect.
- Don't label yourself a "perfectionist."
- Develop new habits for success
- If you strive for perfection, you'll end up disappointed

You place stress on yourself and find action difficult

Aim for 90% 'perfect' rather than waiting for 100%

Don't waste time and energy struggling for the impossible

Delegate More

Wanting to control a situation or task can feed perfectionism

It's hard for those with imposter syndrome to delegate

- Let go of your need to control everything
- Trust your peers and their ability to deliver excellent work
- Free yourself up to focus on the tasks you care about most
- Delegate with checks built in
- Accept it won't be done the same way

Surrender Your Expectations of Others

"Imposters" have unrealistic expectations of themselves

Don't transfer these to others and set them up to fail

- Scale down your expectations of others
- Stay positive and realistic

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- Be open to unexpected outcomes
- Don't pre-judge situations because of a negative past experience

Expectations are often based on the past

Try the exercise to increase your self-awareness and see what's influencing you from your past

Lesson 3: "I'm the only one"

Learning Objective:

Develop a support system for getting help when you need it

Self-Care is Crucial

Feeling that you're the only one can keep you apart from others

Make sure you are looking after yourself

Learn to Manage Your Stress

Use stress-busting tools to defuse anxious feelings and regain your calm

Only you will know what works for you Here are some tips:

- Identify the activities that help you keep calm
- Don't wait. Schedule them into your regular routine
- Journaling is helpful for imposter syndrome

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Recognize the Value of Time Off

Perfectionism may lead to working well beyond 40 hours a week

You end up prioritizing your work life over your personal life

Here are some essentials:

- Make time for yourself
- Cut down your hours
- Allow for downtime
- When you return, note how your business survived without you

You're Not Alone

By finding others who feel like you, the world will feel less lonely

You'll realize how common and typical your feelings are

Recognize that you *don't* have to do this on your own

Create a Support System

You need help from others to thrive at your optimum level

Talk to people you trust to get things into perspective

- Set up support for times of stress
- Ask them in advance and explain the type of support you need
- If you belong to a support group, ask if the group will help you
- Tap into this support network the moment you need it

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Get Further Help if Needed

Psychologists acknowledge that imposter syndrome is very real

If your feelings are intense, the effects can seriously affect your life

- Try self-help tools
- Seek help for more long-term support
- Don't be embarrassed to seek professional help
- Help from a therapist could be the answer

Module 3 – Build Your Confidence

Learning Objective:

Employ practical methods to raise your confidence

How to Build Your Confidence

Self-confidence helps combat feelings of imposter syndrome

When you're self-confident, you can be your best

Exercises can help, whatever your severity of imposter syndrome

Try out the exercises and see which ones work for you

Your Confidence Check

Everyone is confident in certain situations or certain roles

Your comfort zone is where *you* feel most confident

Staying in that zone limits everyone's growth

Move out of that zone and expand your boundaries

No-Lose Decision-Making

Business owners regularly have to make major judgement calls

If you fear decision making you might freeze and do nothing

Your internal dialogue is telling you you'll make the wrong decision

Accept that for each negative outcome, there's a positive one too

Practice this in the **No-Lose Decision-Making Exercise** in this module.

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A-Risk-a-Day

Every challenge is an opportunity for personal growth
With practice and experience, we can achieve a level of confidence
Your challenges will be personal to you
Do something each day that expands your personal comfort zone
Challenge yourself but don't push too hard
Complete the **Risk-a-Day Exercise**.

Morning Power Questions

Your first thoughts will program your brain for the day
Anxiety and pessimistic thinking will bring negative outcomes
Make sure your first thoughts are energizing and positive Make a habit of this and see how things change for the better You'll find a list in the **Morning Power Questions Exercise**.

Star In Your Own News Report

Imagining you're someone else can free you from habitual feelings
Imagine you're reporting on your own success
That will get your brain working to achieve the outcome you want
The brief for this in the **Star in Your Own News Report Exercise**.

Module 4 – Plan for Your Success

Learning Objective:

Create a plan to consistently work on managing imposter syndrome

Implement Your Management Techniques

The more you practice any technique, the better it will work

Aim to make these management methods a part of your life

Develop a Daily Practice

The most successful people have a regular daily practice

It strengthens intentions for the coming day

Include activities that you like and will stick to

It might be challenging to fit it into your day, but find a way

The results will be worth it

Allow a minimum of 20 minutes a day

Your daily practice could include:

- An exercise from the course
- A physical activity, like yoga, running, or deep breathing
- A mindfulness exercise, meditation, or guided visualization
- A clearing activity like journaling
- A relaxing activity in nature

Plan out the session with your chosen activities

Follow the practice for 30 days and then evaluate its effect

Overcoming Imposter Syndrome

Set Goals

You need an action plan for consistently working towards your goals

Use this plan for at least 6 months, then reevaluate

Take a step by-step approach so it isn't overwhelming:

Step 1: Pick your main goal i.e., a challenging situation affected by your feelings of imposter syndrome

Step 2: State why this is a challenge for you

Step 3: Identify why this goal is important to you

Step 4: Write down the benefits you want to experience

Step 5: Define how you intend to work towards your goal

For example:

You have a presentation coming up on a topic you're not overly familiar with. This makes you nervous, as you're doubtful you can deliver it to the standard you expect of yourself.

- **Goal:** I want to run a valuable, informative session on X topic that attracts attendees and entices people to buy my new program.
- **Challenge:** I always over-prepare and never ask for help. I believe I have to be perfect!
- **Importance:** My striving for perfection holds up my team up and we don't have time to waste. I get frustrated with myself, and my virtual assistant gets frustrated too.
- **Benefits** of achieving the goal: Save time and less stress all round. I'd also see that I don't have to get it 100% perfect for it to be a success.
- **How** to achieve the outcome: Identify what I need to do to feel more confident delivering the webinar e.g., research/preparation, relaxation exercises. Delegate some specified tasks to my VA and don't micromanage.

Module 5 – Next Steps

Learning Objective:

Consolidate and implement your learning and plan future action

Track and Measure Success

Most people remember what went wrong and how they failed

“Imposters” can’t recognize the role they had in their success

Therefore, keep track of your wins and your personal triumphs

Keep a digital or handwritten report of your progress

Record all that has gone well from your daily practice and weekly plans. Review your progress regularly.

What You Learned

What have you learned about overcoming imposter syndrome?

What difficulties have you encountered?

How do you plan to address these?

What further steps can you take to become totally comfortable with the process?