

# 5 Signs You Suffer from Imposter Syndrome (and How to Overcome It)

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Everybody feels inadequate on occasion. But if you constantly feel like a fraud or a fake at work, you may face imposter syndrome. Impostor syndrome is when you feel like a fraud and doubt your abilities. It can occur among high achievers who cannot internalize and accept their success.

## Telltale signs of imposter syndrome

### 1. You minimize your effort when others acknowledge it

Minimization usually shows up in your response to praise. For example, you might say, “I had tons of help on this,” “It was nothing,” or “I just lucked out,” or you point to outside factors as an explanation for why you did well.

These kinds of statements can be masked as humility. However, you usually don’t express gratitude when struggling with imposter syndrome. It becomes hard to say “thank you” because accepting what others say accurately requires you to dismiss your intense feelings of inadequacy.

### 2. You get lost in perfection

People with imposter syndrome often feel that mistakes will reveal their authentic, “incompetent” self to others. They hold themselves to an impossible standard and get stuck in details. You might find yourself pouring over assignments,

micromanaging, or taking longer than others to finish work because you want to ensure everything is “just right.” You also might not take on anything extra for fear that it could compromise the quality of other work.

### 3. **You have sky-high goals**

While setting stretch goals can push you out of your comfort zone in a positive way, if you deal with imposter syndrome, you might set challenging goals for yourself not because of what *you* want but because you feel like you need to put those goals to keep up the “false” story people see in you. Unfortunately, if you fail to achieve those high goals, you might take the failure as explicit confirmation of your inability. You get caught in a stressful cycle of feeling as though you have to work at a level beyond your capacity.

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### 4. **You make sure you fail**

Self-sabotage can seem contradictory to a perfectionist, but imposter syndrome also involves low self-confidence. Of course, you might take extreme care in the work you do tackle. Yet, because you don’t believe you should advance, you might also hurt your chances by ensuring that your work doesn’t get seen, taking a pass on networking with higher-ups or avoiding other self-promotion.

### 5. **You don’t ask for more**

The feelings of inadequacy involved in imposter syndrome can mean that you fail to negotiate for what you need or want. For example, you might not ask for a raise even when work has increased in quantity or skill level because you don’t feel like you deserve an increase or somehow would be a nuisance. You also might not speak up about simple, daily challenges like the room’s temperature or the fit of your desk. You might

tell yourself that you should be able to tolerate those inconveniences as everyone else does and that you'll be "found out" if you don't.

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## How to overcome imposter syndrome for good

Imposter syndrome brings up strong emotions you shouldn't try to brush under the rug. Find the support needed to overcome the issue. You are talking about those feelings. People will empathize with you more than you expect and give you added encouragement if they know you need it.

Imposter syndrome often happens when you compare yourself to others or to expectations you think others have for you. As you catch yourself making a comparison or acting based on the perceived pressure of others, challenge the behavior by asking yourself how that comparison or conformity benefits you. Work hard to compete only against yourself, and do that with clear boundaries and good preparation.

Reconnect to what makes you happy. This may take meditation, confiding in others, exploring new hobbies, facing past experiences, or doing other inner work. It also means looking at yourself objectively and not dismissing your options just because you have yet to do or learn something necessary to make those options work.

Let go of the idea that you need to advance or perform based on any predetermined schedule. Imposter syndrome often rears its head partly because you believe you should gain specific skills, achievements or experiences at a particular pace. If you advance too fast, you may feel like you haven't earned your accomplishments or that you somehow missed steps or cheated. That idea can rob you of satisfaction. The nature of

work has changed, and there are many paths by which you might reach the same goal.

Finally, once you know what energizes you and grasp that you can reach milestones whenever you desire, focus on your progress and track record. Identify the specific internal elements that helped you succeed. At the same time, acknowledge your weaknesses, plan to address them and track your growth. It doesn't matter if you have incremental progress, so long as you improve.

If you improve and know that you give your best every day with the resources you have now, your pace is just right and there's nothing fake about you.

**Related: Every Entrepreneur Has Imposter Syndrome. Here's Why We Need to Talk About It.**

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