Don’t Let Imposter Syndrome Derail Your Business

Thinking you’ll be ‘found out’ and judged viciously is the hallmark of imposter syndrome.

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Imposter syndrome is real. It tends to affect high-achievers more than any other psychographic – especially women – and includes creatives like inventors, founders and entrepreneurs. When it hits new business owners, the effects are both subtle and powerful, causing them to doubt their accomplishments and preventing them from taking necessary risks.

Left unchecked, imposter syndrome can derail your entire business.

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Signs of Imposter Syndrome

If you’ve ever had a nagging feeling that you’re just not qualified to be in your position or that someone is going to come along and expose you as a fraud, it’s likely you’ve experienced imposter syndrome. It sounds a lot like a petulant little voice inside your head that whispers things like:

- You’re not good enough.
- You’re not fooling anyone.
- Who do you think you are?

- You can’t possibly pull this off.
- You have no business doing this.
- They’re going to discover that you have no idea what you’re talking about.

Thinking you’ll be “found out” and judged viciously is the hallmark of imposter syndrome. The truth is, that nasty little voice is a bully, and it’s been lying to you your entire life.

How to fight Imposter Syndrome

1. Recognize it for what it is

At its core, the imposter phenomenon is a desire to confirm your self-concept by keeping you entrenched in your comfort zone. Your sense of who you are and what you’re capable of is formed early in life. When you accomplish things after the bulk of your self-concept is formed, you tend to discount those accomplishments because they don’t match what you learned to believe about yourself early on.

Because of this, you might discount the things you accomplish as adults because they don’t fit with the adolescent version of yourself. Simply put, imposter syndrome is a way for your mind to match what you do with who it thinks you are.

Related: Everyone Has Imposter Syndrome

2. Engage it directly

Like a demanding toddler, it will only get louder if you pretend it doesn’t exist. Instead, simply acknowledge it exists and move ahead in spite of it. Each time you hear its words in your head, reply using one of these words or phrases:

nevertheless, noted, however, perhaps, maybe, if you say so or in any event. For example, “Yes, I’m not as experienced as my competitor, nevertheless I’m doing it anyway.”

Other responses might sound like this:

You’re not good enough.
Perhaps, but I’m good enough to start.

You’ll never be good enough.
If you say so, but that’s not going to stop me.

You can’t possibly pull this off.
Nevertheless, watch me.

They’re going to discover you have no idea what you’re talking about.
Noted. I’m saying it anyway.

You’re going to fail, and everyone is going to laugh at you.
Maybe but this is totally happening.

3. Assume an alter ego

Todd Herman, author of *The Alter Ego Effect*, describes a technique to overcome fear and self-doubt. He asks his readers to try assuming the identity of someone they see as fully capable in order to achieve great things. It’s a powerful counter to the imposter phenomenon because it allows us to step outside of ourselves and behave “as if” we had embraced our accomplishments instead of diminished them.

Related: Here’s Why We Need to Talk About Imposter Syndrome

4. Think back to when you were a kid

Let’s face it, as a child you were a heretic. Your job was to

push all the boundaries, question everything, be ridiculously curious, ask “why” a lot and not take no for an answer. Every time you give in to the lies of your inner imposter, you lose your ability to fulfill your highest potential. As a business builder, it’s critical you identify when imposter syndrome takes hold so you can stop questioning your abilities, counter it effectively, and move forward with confidence.

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