



Imposter Syndrome and Thoughts on Managing It

Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern where people doubt their accomplishments and worry about being considered not good enough, lacking or not having what it takes. This may be because they have not practised the skill for some time, and other times, despite clear evidence of their competence, they still need to be convinced. If you're dealing with imposter syndrome, here are some strategies that may help you overcome it and put it to rest:



Am I the only one that has ever had these thoughts?

Start by acknowledging that imposter syndrome is a common experience and that many successful individuals have and still do deal with it in areas of their lives. Understand that your feelings are real but not necessarily accurate reflections of your lack of ability, but more a nagging doubt that you need to manage.



How do I deal with negative thoughts?

If you have self-doubting or self-critical thoughts, challenge them with evidence of your accomplishments and capabilities. To help you do this. Make a list of the positives you know you have. These do not have to be record-breaking, just positivity around this area/skill. Remind yourself of the skills, knowledge, and experience you possess that have led to your achievements. Remember that any great manager/leader will remind you that most people have such thoughts.



Should I compare myself to others?

Comparing yourself to others can fuel imposter syndrome. Everyone has unique strengths and weaknesses, so comparing your journey to someone else's is not fair or productive. Focus on your progress and growth. If you're going to compare yourself to others, don't just compare what you perceive are your weaknesses; also, compare what you do well or exceptionally well. This will help you understand that you are better at some things than others. This enables you to achieve a more balanced and fair perspective.



How can I manage setbacks or what I perceive as failures?

Setbacks and failure are a natural part of learning and a valuable opportunity for learning and growth. Instead of viewing them as confirmation of a shortfall, reframe them as stepping stones to your success. Embrace the lessons learned from your experiences and put the learning into practice.



Is it a skill or a process?

If you want to improve on a skill, for example, delivering a presentation, then build it slowly, add your learning points as you develop it, and practice, practice, practice. If you want to compare yourself to others who seem brilliant at this, speak with them, take ideas from them, and practice those skills or aspects. You can bet a week's pay that they did the same thing as they developed their skills.





How do I process my feelings (emotions) and thoughts?

Do **NOT** only process these internally! Share your self-doubt with trusted friends, mentors, or colleagues who can provide encouragement and perspective. Often, they can provide reassurance by reminding you of your strengths. They will usually give you hints and tips on how to improve, too.



How can I build my confidence?

Acknowledge your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem. Record your successes and revisit them when you're feeling any self-doubt. Learn to respect and praise yourself, not just others. Recognise that you have earned your achievements through hard work and your unique abilities. Self-praise and recognition that is deserved are healthy.



Is there a plan for how to approach this?

A key point is moving your focus from your end goal to valuing the learning journey. Embrace a growth mindset where you see challenges as opportunities for improvement and believe in your capacity to learn and develop. Decide where you are and where you want to get to (just like a journey), and then mark mini objectives and what you need to do (and get from others) to achieve these.



Am I being realistic?

Perfection is unattainable, and it's okay to make mistakes or not know everything. Set **realistic** expectations for yourself, and remember that growth and progress take time, effort, and a few knocks. Ask anyone about their first experience of learning to ride a bike, ice skating, or presenting. Stick to the facts about you and not the fears your doubt creates.



What else should I focus on?

Your physical and mental well-being. Recognise when you are exhausted and need to rest. Engage in activities that help you relax, reduce stress, and boost your confidence. Prioritise self-care practices like exercise, mindfulness, and spending time on hobbies you enjoy. This also helps you return to what you are working on, re-energised and with a fresh look.



Who else can help me?

If imposter syndrome significantly impacts your life, self-esteem, or mental health, seeking support from a mental health professional or a professional of the skill you are trying to master might be beneficial. They can help you work through underlying issues, develop strategies for overcoming imposter syndrome, and recognise your true abilities that you should be proud of.



Overcoming imposter syndrome takes time and effort. Be patient and believe in YOU.

**“People rarely reach perfection in anything,
but if we are always working towards it,
we’ll be as close as we can be.”**

Mac Macdonald - 1999