

UNMASKING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

A working woman's guide to breaking free

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Imposter syndrome is a psychological phenomenon arising from the unshakeable feeling of inadequacy, where individuals doubt their abilities and achievements, despite evidence of competence, capabilities and experiences. Sufferers tend to internalise and credit their success to being in the right place at the right time. It is a very common experience for people at all levels in the workplace and can be especially debilitating for women new in their careers. In this article, I will delve into the causes of imposter syndrome and sketch out a few possible strategies that

them and decreasing the leeway for any error. Under such scrutiny, when they do end up achieving amazing things, the feeling that they won't be able to live up to expectations kicks in. In every key moment or milestone such as a promotion, a new role or a new career, women tend to experience imposter syndrome. Men can find so many other successful male role models, that they very seldom question their competence.

Like any other deeply ingrained patterns of overthinking, imposter syndrome too can be very challenging to overcome. But here are a few steps to help manage it:

this. This will make you realise that you too are probably someone others deem aspirational. Talking to other women will give you a better perspective on strategies that worked for them and encouragement to map out your own.

Seek mentorship

A mentor is an advisor in your career, who has a good understanding of your career goals, strengths and weaknesses and uses their own experience to provide guidance. A seasoned mentor can equip you with robust tools that will help you outrun negative self-talk. Ask for constructive criticism and they will help you separate the syndrome from actual areas of improvement you should focus on.

Own your accomplishments

It's very easy to dwell on failures and shortcomings. Whenever you sense that you're about to have a bout of self-doubt, write down 5 things you have done in the past that you're very proud of. Remind yourself how good you are at what you do. Celebrate your successes, big or small. Own your accomplishments, no matter what you hear others saying in the grapevine. Practice self-empathy. Be understanding of yourself whenever you make a mistake like you would for others.

Channel self-doubt into positive motivation

This is easier said than done and should be the last step in your journey to managing imposter syndrome. Once you have been able to bring down your self-doubt to healthy levels, use it as a push to make incremental improvements in your skillsets. But don't let it consume you. Instead of focusing on what you can't do, work out what you can do. Set realistic goals, embrace failures, and embark on your journey of personal growth.

Finally, to conclude, it's important to remember that while it is commendable for women to take charge of building their confidence, the onus doesn't lie on them alone. Corporate leaders must contribute to creating an inclusive culture for women that addresses systematic biases and foster an environment where feedback isn't synonymous with negative feedback only, but also include positive affirmations and appreciations. Leaders have a huge role to play in making women feel valued enough to manage, if not overcome their imposter syndrome.



ILLUSTRATION:
ZARIF FAIAZ

may help women tackle it.

Let's start from the very beginning. In most households, young girls and boys are raised quite differently. Boys get validation for the simplest things like making a meal or tidying their own rooms, while for girls it is expected that they will naturally do these. These make boys grow up to be more confident with the tiniest feats and girls grow up with self-doubt with the tiniest failures. All these lead women to constantly hold themselves against impossible standards, increasing the pressure society inflicts on

Recognise how common it is

The first step is to acknowledge its ubiquitous presence; most people experience it at least at some point in their lives. It's comforting to know that even the most accomplished and powerful people in the world have experienced self-doubt.

Talk to other women

Talk to your close friends and trusted colleagues about your common triggers and the situations where you feel like imposters. You will be surprised to find that someone you deem perfect and aspire to be more like possibly also suffers from



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