



FEELING LIKE A FRAUD?

With Rhiannon Bush

INTRO

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 5, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins- and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

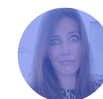


WHY

Imposter syndrome... Loosely defined by Harvard Business Review as doubting your abilities and feeling like a fraud.. Like you shouldn't be there, like you aren't worthy of being there or of this position or status or accolade. Imposter syndrome self-talk looks like this. "I shouldn't be here". "I don't belong." "I'm not good enough." "I'm not worthy." "What do they see in me?" "How did I get here?" It feels like a lack of confidence. Overwhelm and confusion. In over our heads. Feeling like the other or others are higher than us, or better, or more valuable. Hierarchical.

Basically, you don't deserve it – whatever "it" is.

Psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes developed the concept, originally termed "imposter phenomenon," in their 1978 founding study, which focused on high-achieving women. They posited that "despite outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, women who experience the imposter phenomenon persist in believing that they are really not bright and have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise."



This episode may not apply to you, but if it doesn't apply to you directly because this is not something you experience a lot of yourself, I'd ask you to stop and consider whether this applies to anyone in your life – your colleagues, superiors, peers, staff, spouse, kids... If you just had a lightbulb moment, stay with me here because there's something here for you too.

I remember listening to a podcast with a coach who said "imposter syndrome isn't something I've experienced much" and I was shocked. I considered it a very interesting comment to make as a coach, in my eyes. My ego in this instance said "well he clearly hasn't stretched himself enough". My compassionate side said "lucky him, he's done well considering" but the main thing that statement made me ask was "why?" How haven't they suffered from imposter syndrome? It's a very normal thing to experience because growth and striving for something new comes with feeling uncomfortable and feeling like you're maybe not supposed to be there, because you never have been.

It's unfamiliar, it's uncomfortable and as a coach, even though I know that logically, it doesn't prevent me from feeling it.



My biggest experience feeling imposter syndrome was when I began a new role where for the first time, I'd negotiated hard on salary. I'd greatly increased my salary from my previous role through the vetting process and when I arrived on Day 1, a little nervous, a little excited, and a little anxious... it was the start of a much larger and more serious problem. Underlying all of that, I didn't feel like I deserved the role due to my beliefs around money and I also began questioning whether I was qualified enough to be there.

I remember for the next 6 months feeling like a deer in the headlights, like I was going to be found out and fired and I also felt unbelievable pressure to perform way above what was expected of me.

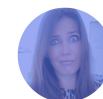
Where was this pressure coming from? Myself. Nobody else was putting this pressure on me. There was an expectation that I would perform, absolutely. And obviously, the role had key performance indicators I needed to meet. But the angst and frustration and perfectionism I was experiencing was, in hindsight, more of a hindrance than a help but it was coming directly from within me.



WHY

Not all imposter syndrome comes from an internal place and if this is a feeling you're all too familiar with, the first question to ask yourself is whether the voice telling you you're not worthy, good enough or capable... or whatever your version of that is, is your voice? Or is it somebody else's voice? Pay attention because it's important for remediation to know whether it's you generating this story or somebody else.

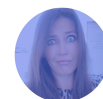
If it's **not** your voice – for example, it's coming from your work environment in the way of managers, colleagues or clients, then a conversation needs to be had and fast. While they're still emotions you're feeling and it's important to listen to the self-talk you're experiencing around that to ascertain whether that self talk is factually accurate or not (spoiler alert- it won't be based in fact, it will be based in fear and if you do an exercise like brain dumping or see a life coach, you'll see for yourself that there is little, if any, evidence to support what story you're telling yourself), it's also important to realise that if these messages are coming from external sources, there is a bigger picture here and steps need to be taken to adjust the environment to make it a safe place for you to perform. This can also be known as discrimination, amongst other things. There's never a good excuse to belittle someone, ever.



WHY

A meme popped up on my Facebook page last night and it said “a bottle of water can be 50 cents at a supermarket, \$2 at the gym. \$3 at the movies and \$6 on a plane. Same water.

The only thing that changed its value was the place. So the next time you feel you're worth is nothing, maybe you're in the wrong place.



WHAT

If it is your voice, there are steps you can take to begin to manage your mind and improve the story you're telling yourself. If you're in a bad way, and imposter syndrome has been creeping into your life more and more, please take a minute to ask yourself if you do need help in the way of a therapist, or coach. Feel free to reach out to me on my website and I'll help because imposter Syndrome is also progressive.

It's a seed that starts very small. It starts as a little bit of nervousness, or a little bit of 'ohh I'm not sure if I can do this'... and without conscious awareness and focus on the world around us, we will find evidence to support those little bits of self-talk. With more and more evidence and our interpretation supporting those fears, that seed grows into a full blown oak tree and not only inhibits us but is highly detrimental to our overall wellbeing and relationships.

The key is to focus.



WHAT

Let me clearly state that imposter syndrome is a feeling that arises from a thought. Imposter syndrome is not reality and there are so many things to discuss, in this episode. I'm excited!

Imposter Syndrome is perception. Your perception, whether coming from internal or external sources. Just like time is perception. People always say to me "gosh, kids grow up so fast" and yes, in hindsight it sometimes feels that way. But each and every day when you have young kids feels quite long and like you pack a lot in... it's pretty magical.

A minute scrolling Facebook flies by, but a minute in a plank position in a gym feels like a lifetime, am I right? So this is the beginning of understanding how Imposter Syndrome can be monitored and managed for you to excel even faster, despite the feelings you may have. It's great to understand the difference between the thought and the feeling – like the words "I don't know if I can do this" and the feeling when you tell yourself "I don't know if I can do this" or "I can do this" and even if you don't completely believe that you can do this, it feels slightly better. The difference is tiny but it's there and it matters. It's knowing something logically versus feeling like something is true.



SOME THINGS YOU CAN'T LEARN IN A BOOK

For anyone listening who knows someone or themselves never went to university and instead went straight into the work force and are successful – you'll know because they tell you that there are, quote “things you can't learn in a book”.

For any surgeons or nurses who draw blood or operate on people, there's a significant the difference between studying and learning from a text book, and actually taking that scalpel and making the first incision. They are NOT the same.

What you (or others) tell yourself, and what is actually, literally, factually true is the surgeon studying how to become a surgeon, versus performing the surgery. They're two completely different things. This is what I mean when I say that imposter syndrome is perception. And you get to make yourself an imposter, or instead grow into the new. You get to stop the transition from thinking you're an imposter (like someone studying to become a surgeon) to knowing and therefore becoming an imposter (like becoming an actual surgeon).



OUR REALITY

Imposter Syndrome can't be discussed without going into our comfort zone.

Our reality right now, as it stands, the amount of pressure we withstand, the accountability we assume, the control we have, the way we currently see the world... is exactly the way it's supposed to be.

What???? I hear you say. But yes. Your current, let's call them results, in your life are a direct reflection on how little or much you've been able to expand your comfort zone and continue moving forward. Yes, there are sometimes where this is not the case.

If we're dissatisfied - and let's be honest, most people are working on at least one section of their lives - the reason we haven't been able to shift it is because of our ability to withstand the amount of change it requires.



COMFORT ZONE

In life we fall into comfort zone after comfort zone. It's our brain's way of being efficient. Our primitive brain is motivated to do things with the least amount of energy as possible in order to conserve energy for emergencies, like running away from a predator (like a bear) or escaping from a flaming inferno. Caveman stuff. And despite our world evolving exponentially (just look at the new vehicles that are actually cleaning air as you drive them – amazing), our primitive brain hasn't quite caught up.

Think of our lives as children. Most of us go to primary school. Comfort zone. If we move schools, we go through a period of adjustment and transition beyond our comfort zone until we find a new routine in our new environment. And then, once settled, that becomes our new comfort zone. Then we transition out of that comfort zone into high school. Eventually, once most unknown elements are discovered and it's familiar, that becomes comfortable. Our new comfort zone. Then we leave high school and go onto a new endeavour, again we experience expansion of our comfort zone and the environments we know, there's a period of adjustment and when our new environment becomes familiar then that becomes comfortable once more. A new comfort zone.

If, during the transition periods, something drastic happens or we have something is of significant impact to us, we will typically (if possible) jump back into our previous comfort zone. It's our brain's way of protecting us and keeping us safe.



COMFORT ZONE - DIETING

A better and probably faster example of this is dieting. People who like to diet to lose weight will anticipate the upcoming commencement of the diet – whether it's new or a repeat. We gear ourselves up and we start. We commit. For the first day we're ok. We do well. We're focused and consciously aware of our decisions. Day two, we're tired, still committed and still focused on making it. Day three, our motivation is dwindling. We feel different (queue transitory period) where our bodies are adjusting, we're maybe feeling a little dizzy, lethargic, tired, hungry – we're outside of our comfort zone.

Day four, we're sick of feeling like this, this has not become comfortable or familiar and who knows when it will be, it's too much, it takes too much energy to maintain and we go back to what we were doing before we began the diet. Only to stay comfortably there for a while, until those same habits that we had in our original comfort zone reappear and remind us that actually, we were pretty uncomfortable before which is why we went on the diet in the first place, and off we go again committing to another (or the same) diet. See the cycle?



GROWTH

We've jumped too far out of our comfort zone, into this big and very different circumstance by doing something too dramatic. It's too greater-change and therefore causes too much discomfort to let our primitive brain adjust. So we jump right back into what we are familiar with, what we knew and loved and what was familiar before. Because this, to our primitive brain, is safe.

So what's the answer then? I hear you ask. Well... The key to growth is understanding our own threshold for how much we can or can't (or don't want to) change at one time. Change, in it's most efficient form, is incremental. One baby step at a time. Navigating change piece by piece to let our higher thinking brain keep our primitive brain in check and on track to achieving what we ultimately want (I'll go into this in future podcasts, I promise, especially to talk about achieving goals).

By trying and testing incremental change, we can adjust and give ourselves a wide berth and compassion to deal with the emotions we experience as we experience them. Unfortunately we can't push our emotions aside and think they'll disappear. Our emotions are there to tell us something and by listening, processing and honouring that inner voice, we can consciously make subtle adjustments and changes.



GROWTH

To bring this full circle and back to imposter syndrome, I know when I've experienced it, it's because I've jumped way out of my comfort zone and am swimming in high-stakes water. That pressure, plus the pressure I put on myself and then also the meaning I give to what my colleagues and superiors were telling me at the time, meant that I was a ball of pent up angst and frustration and perfectionism.

It became about taking things day-by-day, even task-by-task if needed. If I was able to block out the noise (being my inability or incapability to do the task to anything other than a Guinness World Record-breaking standard) and focus on the task at hand, each time I completed a task and noted any feedback – both positive and constructive, I found over time and over-tasks, I grew in confidence. I was fortunate to never have destructive feedback and even though I've had that in other roles, that feedback is to be flat-out ignored. It doesn't deserve any legs at all.



4 TIPS TO DEAL

There are over 5 million solutions you can google to quote “fix” imposter syndrome. But I believe until you identify the root cause of the problem and why it’s occurring, you’ll never truly be able to overcome it and have authority over it.

These are tips I’ve personally found helped me to deal with imposter syndrome:

1. Remember you’re value –
 1. Keep a Wins list to remember all you’ve achieved
 2. Recall times when you overcame obstacles or barriers and really drop into the feeling when you overcame them
 3. Remember how you got to where you’re currently at – you’re there for a reason, there are lessons to be learned
2. Anticipate in advance, the worst possible outcome
 1. What is the very worst scenario? What could possibly go wrong?
 2. Then plan all responses to each of those scenarios ahead of time
 3. Write down at least 11 options for what you could do instead (just get to 11, it may be difficult but trust me, once you get to 11 you’ll be able to think of even more and it’s a great way to feel empowered in your ability to problem solve and know you’re not stuck or boxed in)



4 TIPS TO DEAL

3. Amy Cuddy It

1. Watch the 22 minute Amy Cuddy TED Talk – it's a must for all my life coaching clients and I dare you to actually give it a try – remember the surgeon?!?!?
2. I'm a big fan of Mantras and Affirmations but saying something out loud to yourself means nothing unless you embody it physically and emotionally. Drop into the sensation of the emotions those mantras or affirmations give you. Enhance it and embody it – really go there and let it serve you!
3. Stand Tall – even if you're somewhere where it's not appropriate to power pose, duck into the loos. Strike a pose and hold it. Feel all the feelings and then do what needs to be done.

4. Focus on the task/Work at hand

1. Remember that your primitive brain is like a monkey that's been let out of zoo. It's wild and unpredictable. So use your higher-order thinking to stay focused on one task. Just one. Make sure you put your phone in focus mode, close your inbox completely to avoid distractions, and focus on what you need to do
2. Any self-talk that enters your mind during this time and creates the distraction – write it out. By writing it down physical (pen and paper is preferred) you'll see it through a new lens and be able to work out whether it is actually, literally, factually accurate. And then you can begin, slowly, to discount it.



FINAL THOUGHTS

I'll leave you with this. When adding value to anyone or thing – whether it be your employer, organisation, hobby, sport, family, relationship or anything, the focus is on them. It's the same in coaching.

When I've coached, I especially remember a very senior client I had, male, caucasian, super important role in his work and I remember feeling so intimidated. But I quickly realised that if I kept feeling intimidated and listening to my negative self-talk and buying into my imposter syndrome story, that all my focus was actually on me. There was no room to serve, or coach, or hold space.

You're allowed to have moments of self-doubt. You're allowed to experience low self-confidence and low self-esteem and question everything sometimes but in the moments that matter, in the moments when you need to focus, and serve and add value to whatever it is you're doing at that time, you must ask yourself whether by continuing to focus on the narrative or by continuing to allow yourself to dwell in that... is it actually the very thing holding you back? Is there a purpose to feeling that way? Interesting questions to explore my friends. Have a great week and I'll talk to you soon. Bye for now!



OUTRO

Hey! Before you go, I always find reviews really helpful when looking for new information or insights...

If you've found this podcast valuable, please take a minute to write a quick review about what you've found most beneficial for you, so other people can benefit from your insights, and listen in too. I would LOVE that!

Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!





THANKS FOR LISTENING!

