

Beyond Imposter Syndrome

2: Attitudes to success and failure

Many Imposters have similar attitudes to success or to failure and these may have been learned in childhood or as part of social conditioning. There are often notable differences between the experiences of failure for boys and girls.

For example, if a girl experiences a setback or failure, she is more likely to be cared for, protected and her 'hurt' soothed. The message here is that failure hurts, that it is something to be avoided, and that it is something to be hidden and not talked about. In other words, it's something to be ashamed of.

By contrast, a boy experiencing a setback or failure is likely to be picked up, brushed down and thrown back in to have another go. The message here is that failure is a natural part of life, is to be expected. Hide your pain, be strong and work until success is achieved.

These differences may, at least in part, account for some of the different ways men and women react to imposter feelings – women tend to be risk averse and avoid the potential shame of failure while men, even those experiencing imposter feelings, are more likely to engage in risky behaviours to prove they are good enough. Because boys are often socialised to "be strong", men will not show or acknowledge their imposter feelings as readily as women. These attitudes amongst both children and adults, whether arising from nature or nurture, often have long lasting effects in our adult lives as they colour our reactions to success and failure. When men or women behave in ways that don't correspond to the expected gender-rules, there are penalties in social judgement or stigmatisation.

In this worksheet, you'll start to uncover the roots of your own imposter feelings so you can begin to deal with them. This is not a psychological test, simply a tool for reflection.

Your turn

Use the questions below to help you recall instances of success and failure when you were a child.

**Can you remember any early experiences of success or failure?
If so, describe them here:**

Describe what you recall about the impact of this experience on you at the time.

At that time, can you recall what you were:

Thinking?

Feeling?

Saying?

Doing?

What beliefs have you formed that might be contributing to your imposter feelings in adulthood?

Look at the statements below and tick the ones that are most relevant to you.

Is it important to be

- Good enough?
- As good as you possibly can be?
- The best?
- Perfect?

Failure is:

- Acceptable as long as you tried?
- An opportunity to learn?
- To be avoided if at all possible?
- Shameful, especially in public?

Intelligence and ability are:

- Innate or natural?
- Things that grow through trial and error?
- Something to develop through practice in private?

People who are affected by Imposter Syndrome often feel anxious and either avoid situations where they are evaluated or work extremely hard to over-prepare for such evaluations. They are often convinced they will perform poorly yet surprise themselves by their success. Secretly they may be disappointed in their own performance if they don't excel in an assessment or a task. Fortunately the beliefs and behaviours that lead to intense imposter feelings can be changed.

Do visit my website <https://MargaretCollins.com> to explore the options available to you or to download the full workbook.

You can also visit Amazon to buy my book:

[Beyond Imposter Syndrome: Proven strategies for building confidence and finally feeling 'good enough'](#)

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