



CHAPTER 21: COMMON PITFALL #3: IMPOSTER SYNDROME

It's not uncommon for women to blame themselves when things go sideways, and to chalk it up to luck when things go well. Imposter syndrome is real. It can be defined as the inability to believe that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved as a result of one's own efforts or skills.

In college, I was a *summa cum laude* student, and I was proud of that, but a part of me felt like an imposter because I majored in European cultural studies. I secretly cringed with the thought that European cultural studies wasn't a "real" major, and if I had majored in something "legitimate," like science or math, I would've had terrible grades. So with my *summa cum laude* status, I felt like a fraud. But if I ever got a disappointing grade on an exam or paper, I was quick to blame myself for not studying harder, for not being smarter.

Fast forward twenty-five years to the present, where many times I've experienced sales growth of 30–60 percent, and yet underneath my pride and satisfaction lies a slight but persistent thought that I've just gotten lucky all this time. A nagging question and negative thoughts linger in my mind: When will they find out that I'm not really a salesperson? I'm an imposter. A fraud. And now I'm writing a book about sales! Who am I to write a book on sales? I hardly know what I'm doing.

Can you relate to any of this? I imagine you can, and that's actually one of the reasons why I am writing this book. I've come to accept that this is a normal feeling, especially amongst high-achieving women. If we don't shed enough light on the imposter syndrome, it festers underneath the surface instead.

The truth is, we're all learning as we go, and we never feel like a complete expert at anything. Parenting is the best example of this. The only training we get is being raised by imperfect parents. Then we grow up, have a child of our own, and we figure it out as we go. As soon as we get a handle on one issue (such as how to get the baby to sleep through the night), the next issue comes up (like the terrible twos), and we're back to being a rookie again. As a mom, I feel like a complete imposter, and when I have proud moments of recognizing that my daughter is a healthy, happy, well-adjusted kid, I marvel at how it has happened. I don't feel like I can take any credit for it.

Overcoming imposter syndrome

So, you could say that the antidote to imposter syndrome is to list all the reasons why you're good, and why you deserve the recognition you've gotten. In other words, you can use logic and evidence to counter the self-doubt that comes with the imposter syndrome. This can be helpful, and it's certainly important to own and celebrate your strengths and skills.

On the other hand, countering your self-doubt with evidence and reason misses the deeper truth: none of your success, and none of your failure, is truly yours anyway. Loving consciousness is continuously co-creating your world with you. You do have your gifts and talents, but it's ultimately your connection to loving consciousness that will bring about fortuitous events, serendipitous meetings, big wins, and small steps forward. All of it is a manifestation of the good fortune that loving consciousness wants to bring you, if only you connect to it and allow it. You're never an imposter if you do what you do with love and passion. When you have a winning streak and dismiss it by saying, "I just got lucky," you're denying and dishonoring the magnificent work of loving consciousness, and your own connection to it.

Even temporary roadblocks and "failures" can be the work of loving consciousness using those hurdles to guide you in a different direction. Rather than blaming yourself for that failure (as high achievers are apt to do), you can take solace in knowing that it was part of what loving consciousness wanted to for you, for reasons that have yet to be revealed.

Your success is not really your success, and your failure is not really your failure. This statement can be extremely liberating if you really take it to heart. Does this mean you take no ownership for making mistakes? Not at all! Does this mean you don't get any credit for making a big sale or closing a big new client? Not at all! It's extremely important to take personal responsibility for what you can control and to take pride in your hard work and accomplishments.

Yet the events that transpire as a result of your actions, gifts, talents, decisions, and even misgivings are all determined by loving consciousness. This means you can release attachment to any outcome—whether it's a success or a failure. The emotional attachment to success and failure—and how you allow it to define you—is what creates anguish, including the self-doubt of feeling like an imposter. If you allow your emotional attachment to take over, you will be cut off from your connection to loving consciousness.

As the wise spiritual adviser Erin Reese says, “Success and failure are only perception. Everything is always in perfect alignment. Relax into it.”

And yet, it's only natural to seek success in your sales career. Attachment is something I experience regularly, but then I remind myself to let go. If I let go of attachment, I can let go of the tortuous stories that come with claiming the “success” and “failure” as being “mine.” There's something much bigger at play in your sales career. It's not all about you. You're co-creating with loving consciousness. This means you can avoid the trappings of clinging too tightly to your success. You

don't have to wonder if you deserve your wins, nor do you need to blame yourself for your losses.

Reframe your success as gratitude

While it's important to celebrate your successes, you should do so from a place of gratitude. Gratitude is the best practice of all, and it will bring more abundance, and more success, without limitation. Loving consciousness is ultimately what brought you that success, so you can celebrate the success as a co-creation with it. When you reframe your success in this way, the imposter syndrome naturally falls away.

Let's say you just won an award for top sales growth in your company. Outwardly, you're thrilled, but you're secretly plagued with self-doubt, feeling like you don't really deserve the award or you just "got lucky." If you take a moment to recognize the role that loving consciousness played in your success, it validates your thought that the success wasn't really yours. Yet the reframe shifts your attention away from yourself (your ego) and into a state of appreciation for the benevolent power of loving consciousness. It immediately removes the emotional attachment that would have led you to dismiss your success as pure luck.

There is so much suffering in letting success or failure define you. Emotional attachment to success means that as soon as the success slips away, you're no longer the "success" you identified with. And letting failure define you is pure suffering, for obvious reasons.

It's a wonderful feeling of freedom when you embrace the idea that your success is not really your success, and your failure is not really your failure. When you stop fretting over whether you are an imposter, or what your success or failure means about you, your energy is freed up to use your gifts and talents to the best of your ability. Most of all, shift your attention away from your self-doubt, and instead, focus on how you can serve your clients and bring them value. It's not about you. It's about how you can show up for others.

Have I completely released attachment to success and failure? Nope. But I'm well aware of the deep contrast between the freedom I feel when I release attachment to success and failure, and the angst I feel when I revert to my old pattern of letting these things define me. I'm sharing this with you precisely because I'm not a master, and I experience the contrast of these states frequently.

You may be wondering why I've written an entire book on how to achieve success in sales if I'm now telling you that the success isn't really yours. There's a bit of a paradox here, to be fair, especially in the statement that "success and failure are only perception." Does this mean we should just give up on trying to win the sale or reach our goals? Not at all! We can experience desire, set goals, work hard to achieve those goals, engage our gifts and talents, and delight in the "win" of achieving those goals—all while remaining aware that none of it is purely determined by our own doing. By surrendering your emotional attachment to the outcome, while joining forces with the awe-inspiring, benevolent loving consciousness, your

path to success will be accelerated like a gentle but fast-flowing river. You will be able to enjoy prosperity, ease, and joy, all while being of service to others.