

9 Ways To Overcome Your Inner Critic...



*"Tackling Imposter Syndrome & Improving Your
Mindset. A Short Guide to Empower, Educate &
Motivate Dental Care Professionals"*

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What is Imposter Syndrome?

We all have that inner voice, right? Our inner critic! But is yours really starting to take over? Imposter syndrome, is a pretty common phenomenon in which people doubt their skills, talents, or accomplishments. It's usually persistent, but can affect you at any time and stage in your life and/or career. Originally, the concept of Imposter Syndrome was thought to apply mostly to high-achieving women. Since, it has been recognized as a more widely experienced. It can affect anyone, no matter their social status, work background, skill level, or degree of expertise. It affects us Dental care professional's too! it can affect our job satisfaction, our performance as a DCP's and most importantly our mental health, and lead to burnout.

Recognising the Signs & Symptoms:

- An inability to realistically assess your competence and skills
- Attributing your success to external factors, even luck!
- Chronic self doubt- Never feel good enough
- Over thinking, anxiety, reliving work events- analysing very detail.
- Feelings of isolation
- Find it hard to take credit & praise for your accomplishments
- Berating your performance
- Fear that you won't live up to expectations
- Feel like your a fake, that you shouldn't be here!

Can you identify with any of these?

1. Identify the feelings – name the feeling:

- The first important step is to recognising that you are experiencing these feelings. Awareness is the first big step to bringing about a change, if you are aware of it and how you are feeling, you are opening yourself to different possibilities of handling it, and accepting that things can change...

2. Share it – share how you are feeling:

- You are not alone, you won't be the only one feeling like this, there may be many other DCP'S who share the same fears as you. So don't be afraid to speak up and seek support from your peers.

3. Re-evaluate the context of the situation:

- I think this is super important! Often, situations exist in which you may not feel 100% confident, but ask yourself:

- "Do I always feel this insecure and uncertain?"
- "Is it because it's a new situation or a new task?"
- "Are there any contributing factors to remind yourself of new equipment... A new surgery... A new clinic?"
- "Has there been a time when you felt on the contrary?"

These questions will help you identify the circumstances in which you did feel in control and what steps you took to ensure the same. Try applying, the same tools and strategies in situations and scenarios where you feel less confident.

- Think of a time when you were truly confident. Maybe your graduation day...
- Go back to that day..
- What did it feel like... Look like? Really visualise it, feel it, feel that confidence and feelings of accomplishment.
- Remember the good stuff and really connect with it. We often go over not so favourable events or memories in our head, so try re living the great stuff.

4. Celebrate your Wins & Strengths:

- Accept your success and be kind to yourself. Celebrate your win, big or small, and use it as fuel to keep pushing forward. Celebrating a win can be important in reinforcing positive behaviour and building motivation. So, don't shy away or dismiss compliments. Own it! When you feel unconfident or doubting your ability, then remember previous accomplishments, compliments and positive feedback. Positive patient feedback or positive comments from your peers! Recount the people whom you made a difference to, how have you improved your patients, mouths, thus health. Who have you helped today? Who did you take the time to listen to?? This will help assure you that nobody belongs here more than you do. Celebrate your professional success & well as personal and remember it doesn't have to be perfect to celebrate. Reaffirm your self-worth.

5. Stop comparing yourself to others:

- Comparison can be lethal. Something I too have struggled with over the years, and it's so easily done. Never compare other people's highs to your lows; in reality everyone is facing a unique set of challenges and struggles, known only to them. We all start at a different point, too! Learn to value your own strengths and once you start respecting your own potential, you will soon realise that you have to offer.

6. Remember, it's ok to get things wrong:

- It is okay to be wrong, to fail or to not know everything! None of us are perfect, and we never stop learning. Occasionally, being wrong or not knowing something doesn't make you fake or non-deserving. Remind yourself that you will learn more as you progress. Whether that's progressing in your career or improving your skills. We all have to start somewhere. Evaluate the impact of what could go wrong by asking yourself: "what's the worst that can happen?" & "What could go right?" It's all about reframing your thoughts. This will help prevent the fear. Most importantly, reframe the failure as an opportunity to learn. "What can I learn from that? What can I do different next time?" Also, always remember, no one really knows the outcome, you just have to trust yourself.

7. Keep going:

- The best way to beat impostor syndrome is to continue taking action, irrespective of how you feel. Keep getting up and showing up! After all, you can never really know how much you can accomplish if you don't try and if you are really struggling get some external help. You can't always solve a problem, in a problem!

8. Combat the imposter!

- Use CPD to invest in yourself. As registered DCP's we have to do a certain amount of CPD, and certain core subjects. Further training, further personal development is such an important thing, not just to tick boxes, but to aid confidence. We never stop learning. Develop & invest in subjects that you find particular challenging!

9. Get some help:

- Get some external help, if you feel that it really is affecting your every day work as a DCP and the quality of your life, then it may be time to seek support. If you are newly qualified, or new to a role, these feelings may fade as you settle in and get familiar with the role. Sometimes, though, they can get worse – particularly if you fail to receive support, validation, and encouragement from your supervisors or peers.

Lastly, just because you worry you are an imposter, it doesn't mean you are one. Your feelings are not facts and remember, no one can make you feel inferior without your consent! When overcoming imposter syndrome, you must first and foremost believe in yourself. You are just as capable, amazing and talented as everyone else, and don't let yourself or others convince you otherwise.

