

How to be a functioning
adult without screaming

NOBODY PANIC



From the creators of the hit comedy podcast
Tessa Coates and Stevie Martin

How to Overcome Imposter Syndrome

Imposter syndrome strikes us all down at one time or another. We progress higher and further than we think we deserve, convince ourselves we got there by mistake and then we tie ourselves in knots waiting to be found out.

TESSA: I once won a writing competition and told everyone I had won 'due to a clerical error'.

STEVIE: I once told someone I wasn't a real journalist while I was interviewing them for a magazine I worked for as a journalist.

It's estimated that around 70% of the population feel like they don't deserve to be where they are,¹ so let's see – are you an imposter?

Question 1: How did you get this job?

A) I saw it advertised and I applied. There was an interview but I think I made myself appear way more qualified than I am.

B) I intercepted the advertisement before it could go in the paper and

1 Sakulku, J. 'The Impostor Phenomenon', *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, Vol.6, no.1, 1, pp.75–97.

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changed the phone number so no one else could apply. Then I placed a number of prank calls so my ex-wife would lose hope of ever finding someone suitable, bought myself a latex mask and bodysuit and infiltrated my own family home posing as a nanny.

Question 2: When you feel like people are going to ‘find you out’, what do you mean?

- A) They’ll realise I’m not very talented, and they’ll admit they should never have hired me.
- B) Following an incident at a cursed fairground attraction where I wished to be big, I appear to be 30 but am in fact a child in an adult’s body.

Question 3: What is your biggest worry at work?

- A) I’ll overhear someone judging my work or laughing at me.
- B) An enemy defector will walk into my office and reveal that I am a Russian sleeper agent operating undercover. I will be forced to kill several of my colleagues and flee.

STEVIE: What film is this?

TESSA: *Salt*. Angelina Jolie plays the sleeper agent and at one point she takes her knickers off to put over a CCTV camera, when she could have used literally anything else, and then you can’t focus for the rest of the film because she’s running all over the city and you know she hasn’t got any pants on.

Question 4: Did you have any inside knowledge or feel that you were given a leg-up?

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- A) A friend recommended me, which helped me get the job. I feel so weird about it.
- B) My estranged twin I didn't know I had prepped me on a working knowledge of our mother's home.

Question 5: You are offered a very exciting career progression. How do you feel?

- A) So overwhelmed because of course this is a great opportunity, but I'm convinced I'm going to mess it up!
- B) Nervous because no woman has ever infiltrated the Chinese imperial army pretending to be a man before. Plus, the talking dragon that sounds like Eddie Murphy keeps getting me into trouble.

Question 6: Why do you feel like an imposter?

- A) I guess I'm just self-sabotaging, but it's so hard to feel like I truly deserve to be here!
- B) I am in witness protection pretending to be a nun.

If you answered B to any of the above questions then yes, you're a legitimate imposter. If you got mostly As, you join nearly three-quarters of the adult population who secretly worry they're not worthy of the job, position or life that they're leading. Success makes people uncomfortable, and there's no easy fix.

The big secret to adult life is that no one has any idea what they're doing. Everyone is winging it, and some people are just styling it out better than others.

Every time you pause before applying for that job, remember a

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study conducted by Hewlett-Packard that we read about in the *Harvard Business Review* –

TESSA: We're always reading the *Harvard Business Review*.

STEVIE: I can't stop.

– revealed women only applied to a position if they fulfilled 100% of the requirements, while men applied for the same position when they fulfilled just 60% of them.² Sure, there will be lucky breaks and leg-ups, but that's life. Everyone else is getting leg-ups and lucky breaks too! Back yourself! You've got the job, someone believes you can do it, so unless you're three children standing on top of each other wearing a trench coat, there's no reason to feel you don't belong in this room full of adults.

2 Internal report at Hewlett-Packard, cited in the *Harvard Business Review*: <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified>