



3 MISTAKES

MAKING YOU FEEL AS AN IMPOSTER



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3 mistakes making you feel as an imposter

Feeling as an imposter is one of the most stressful, frustrating, and overwhelming situations! It creates so much anxiety that we develop defense mechanisms like procrastination, staying quiet, or avoidance. The sad news is that we then end up playing small and sabotaging our talents.

The good news is that it is entirely workable to get rid of that imposter syndrome progressively and recover our self-confidence to the point that we get appreciated by others.

For that, we need to avoid typical mistakes and embrace best practices that we will share here.

1st mistake: Focusing on our differences

What makes us feel as an imposter is how **different we are from the rest** of the group. The stronger the gap between them and us, the more we feel out of place, marginalized, not entitled to speak up and easily dismissed.

And what we focus on captures so much of our attention that we unconsciously train our brain to give it increasingly more importance until it becomes the absolute truth.

Example: As soon as you know you are expecting a baby, you notice any pregnant lady and toddlers shops to the point that you truly believe there is a baby-boom. Check the statistics and it actually was not, but your brain focused on anything related to your current situation.

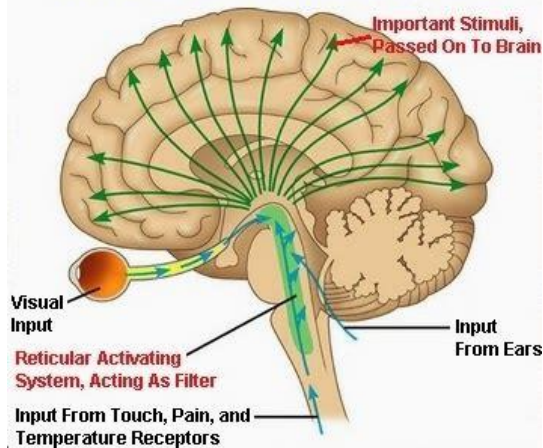
Let's experiment!

Look around you and find 15 red things.
Stop reading and actually do that, it's an amazing realization!

*You will definitely notice 15 red things around you, which makes quite a lot.
It seems that red is the predominant color around you, as these would confirm!*

Yet, 10 minutes ago, you had not even noticed these 15 red things despite their being present for a while. If you were doing the same exercise with green color, you would also notice 15 green things, same for blue and so on. Hence, we cannot conclude that red is the predominant color.

The Reticular Activating System



How does our brain function?

Our brain receives signals from all our senses: visual information, auditory ones as well as external sensations from our skin and internal sensations from our internal organs too.

The number of information being gigantic, the brain uses the **reticular activating system (RAS)** as the critical element in charge of filtering all information around us so we can function without being overwhelmed.

Learn more about RAS [here](#)

Hence, if we focus our attention to something specific, our reticular activating system will take for granted that we need to get all similar information to function well. And we get fueled with confirmations of the initial observation.

How to use our brain for our benefit?

The more I focus on how **different** the people in this group are from me, the more differences I will bring to my brain and the wider the gap towards feeling included. And the opposite is true!

To avoid feeling as an imposter, I need to focus on what I have in common with the people of the group I aspire to belong.

Among this group, who may use to struggle or still struggles with politics?

Among this group, who may have experienced a sleepless night recently?

Among this group, who may wish for more appreciation?

Among this group, who may be passionate as I am for this specific topic?

Among this group, who speaks the same language as me, who dresses in a similar style, who works in the same office, who has about the same age, who... like me?

By paying attention to the similarities, my brain will keep fueling me with all information confirming that we do have things in common. It will then feel less risky to dare approaching others for a conversation as we have a common anchor.

And as soon as we have a few allies in the group, we no longer feel as an imposter.

Worth giving this new focus a try and start a few enriching conversations to consolidate this!

2nd mistake: Waiting for invitations

When we feel as an imposter, we do not dare to speak up or intervene even if it would be needed.
We often wait for someone to ask for our contribution until... it does not come.
We often wait for the right time to speak until... it does not arrive or has passed.
We often wait for support... which does not get granted.

Passivity is disempowering

When we wait for others to take the initiative to bring us along, we place ourselves in a dependency state, we no longer are in control of the situation, and we lose our influence.

Since we do not see our desire to happen, we can grow anger against the people from whom we expected support, which we may express with criticism, bitterness, cynicism. And this widens the gap between them and us, this sabotages our chances to actually get their support later on.

Let's reflect on ourselves

Imagine you belong to a group in a professional setting for several years and you are very comfortable in this group. Then a new person arrives and for the next several meetings stays quiet, very discrete and not engaging with people around.

How often would you make a special effort to include someone?
How often would you notice a quiet person and invite them to speak up?
Chances are, even if we are sensitive ourselves, we rarely do.

Especially because people prompt to criticism or bitterness could be harsh against everyone and we prefer to protect ourselves.

If people are not always giving a hand, it can be that they did not notice it is needed as it may not have been expressed either, it can be that they used to help, and it turned out bitter earlier and it can be that they are not in a position where they can easily do so.

The only best option is to take charge

If we cannot wait for invitations, we need to proactively seek for opportunities.
As soon as we mention *taking charge*, it triggers fears!!!

Yet, we can always do this progressively, so we gain confidence step by step.

Examples of leaders progressively taking charge

From the 900+ leaders I've coached, many had brilliant ideas to slowly take charge:

- Ask in advance for the next meeting agenda to focus on one single item where my contribution would be most valuable, then offer to the chairman in advance to share my expertise on this single item at the next meeting
- Prepare the meeting with a peer attending as well, getting ready with a few questions that would benefit most and agreeing that each will invite the other to ask these questions at the meeting
- Offering to the specialist of one single item to prepare the next meeting together and take turn to present at the meeting
- Asking my boss to add a specific point on the meeting agenda where I can contribute my expertise

What does typically happen then?

Once we find the courage to take charge and offer our contribution, it creates some good will and typically gets accepted. It then becomes a commitment, and the leader can focus their effort in preparing a short presentation on a topic they truly master.

As it is scheduled on the meeting agenda, there is a dedicated planned opportunity to present and since the leader knows its matter well, their contribution gets listened to and appreciated.

Since the leader managed to do this successfully once, they now know they can do it again.

After a few occurrences, the imposter syndrome just fades away.

They become the right person at the right place.

3rd mistake: Seeking for genius or perfection

We are very fortunate creatures that God granted with talents from our birth, each of us having some different ones. That makes us even more at ease doing certain things because it seems almost natural and effortless, whereas for other things we keep struggling.

Chances to use our talents at best

They are a few examples of people who use their talents at best and become genius whose names we remember for centuries. Mozart, Bach, Lully to name a few. However, beyond talents, what these people also have in common is their crazy level of practice! Hence what is the part of practice that contributed to their success?

No chance to become a genius, so what?

Despite being talented, most musicians won't be as prolific as Bach, Mozart or Lully. Looking at statistics, none of us has any decent chance to become a genius in their field. So, we might as well drop practicing, no matter how talented we are...

And yet...

Why do musicians still practice, despite knowing that anyway people will hardly remember them in centuries?

Why do musicians still practice, despite knowing they may work all their life and never reach perfect harmony?

Probably because they enjoy practice beyond their talent.

Probably because they noticed that with practice, they do come closer to mastery.

Probably because they understand that even if perfection was the aim, the journey is equally worth and rewarding.

And as a leader...

Some may seem as born charismatic leaders, yet the truth is: they would have some talent and they only have reached that stage with their fair share of practice entailing less than glorious days, humbling feedback and strong requests to take lessons adjusting towards improvement

Some may seem as born inspiring orators, yet the truth is: beyond their talents, they have rehearsed so many times in their heads and in front of audiences, they have taken some many showers while reflecting about the best way to communicate, they have experience disappointments before victories

How to avoid this mistake?

1. Remembering the humble beginnings

When we enter a board meeting with assertive orators and charismatic leaders, we can feel impressed and feel as an imposter who will never belong to that club.

Yet, each of these people started as a baby who fall down many times before mastering how to walk, run, jump and dance.

Yet, each of these people started as a fresh graduate, as a new joiner in the organization, as a recently promoted leader, as a first time manager and they went through challenges too.

2. Enjoying the journey

We have a chance to be at the level we aim to reach, though it may seem quite a gap, thanks to dedicated practice. It will require a clear vision, step-by-step path, self-discipline and encouragement. Yet, each step accomplished brings us closer to the goal and as long as we enjoy the journey, it becomes a fulfilling path of self-discovery.

3. Acknowledging the progress

While it requires effort to travel this journey, it will be much easier to avoid feeling discouraged and abandon if we notice our progress.

Tracking progress towards intermediary milestones helps to feel rewarded about partial accomplishments and savor each step of the journey way more.

It also grow the confidence that we have developed what it takes to reach the milestone so are equipped to reach to following one and following ones.

Overcoming the imposter syndrome requires a combination of relevant mindset and dedicated courageous action, supported by encouragement to progressively sees it fading away.

It is not an easy path to travel alone and I would recommend coaching as an excellent companionship towards your sustainable success.

Not sure how to move further?

We may understand all that and still feel like that it would be difficult to do this on your own. And you may well be completely correct. Often, we may have additional blocking mental schemes to handle or past disappointing experiences or a difficult context or doubts about self-discipline.

And we need a trusted competent third party to see things through with us, to clarify the action plans, to encourage, support, challenge when needed as well as to keep ourselves accountable.



My name is **Marianne Dupuis** and I've been coaching 900+ leaders since 2010, with a true passion for global leadership and cross cultural topics. This derives both from my own experience as a leader as well as for my adventurous little voice that led me to live 15 years in Luxembourg, then 11 years in Kuala Lumpur.

Coaching leaders across the globe, I've seen many instances where inclusion was not the norm but something one need to fight for, hence so many people experiencing imposter syndrome. Together, we have managed to help them successfully journey from feeling imposter to feeling the right expert or leader at the right place.

In this needs to be your journey too, feel free to **schedule a coaching session**, where we review together your situation and start to map out the best ways to bring you closer to the success you aspire to reach.

Coaching sessions provide insights on what is doable and how, so you are serene to move further.

Book your coaching session at
<https://marianne-dupuis-coach.bookafy.com/>



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"I am at your side to make your leadership journey both a joy and a success!"
Marianne