

Overcome the Impostor Syndrome

April 2019

“Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else.” Galatians 6:4 NLT

“Impostor syndrome describes a core belief that we’re not as bright or competent or talented as people think we are. That we’ve somehow managed to fool college admissions officers, hiring managers, clients, patients, the American public... basically, anyone who believes otherwise.” Dr. Valerie Young, internationally-known expert and author on the impostor syndrome.

If you’ve ever suffered from a lack of self-confidence, doubts about your abilities, negative self-talk, and just generally not feeling like you’re good enough, you’ve experienced the Impostor Syndrome. [Dr. Valerie Young](#) has spent decades studying this phenomenon and has developed this short quiz to see if you qualify as an Impostor.

- Do you chalk your success up to luck, timing, or computer error?
- Do you believe “If I can do it, anybody can”?
- Do you agonize over even the smallest flaws in your work?
- Are you crushed by even constructive criticism, seeing it as evidence of your “ineptness?”
- When you do succeed, do you secretly feel like you fooled them again?

If you answered yes to at least one of those questions, then this month’s topic is for you.

As Christian women, our hearts know that we should derive our value from our relationship with Christ. Each of us was created in God’s image and placed on this earth in His timing to carry out the purpose that He called us to do. The problem is that our heads get in the way. We get caught up in comparing ourselves with others, allowing negative messages from the past to influence our current thoughts and worrying about failure, and we become convinced that we aren’t good enough by the world’s standards.

Through her years of research, Dr. Young has identified five types of Impostors.

1. **The Perfectionist.** A Perfectionist is seldom satisfied with her accomplishments because she feels they could have done better. She sets excessively high goals for herself and when she doesn’t reach them, she considers herself a failure. Generally unwilling to accept “good is good enough,” the Perfectionist wastes valuable time trying to reach the unattainable, sometimes to the detriment of her success or that of her team.
2. **The Expert.** Dr. Young says this Impostor is the “knowledge version” of the Perfectionist, primarily concerned with what and how much she knows, never feeling like she knows enough. She is addicted to self-help books, she believes that one more certification will boost her career and she tends to procrastinate until she has more information, which seems to never be satisfied.

3. **The Soloist.** The Soloist doesn't share a task because she wants to be the "one and only" who completed it. She also believes asking for help would be a sign of weakness, as she *should* be able to do it all by herself. (See above!) The Soloist feels most accomplished when her role as the super-hero who saves the day is acknowledged, no matter how much longer it took to finish her task with no help.
4. **The Natural Genius.** This type of Impostor "cares mostly about how and when accomplishments happen." Her value is measured by the ease and speed in which she finishes a task and feels shame when a lack of knowledge or skill holds her back from getting it done right the first time. The Natural Genius doesn't like the idea of having a mentor or coach, so instead of challenging herself to learn something new, she avoids the opportunity to grow into who God created her to be.
5. **The Superwoman,** aka the multi-tasker. This Impostor measures her value based on how many roles she can juggle at once, making her seem (to herself) more competent. If she has an "important" career title, a busy social calendar and a happy home life (on the outside, anyway) she feels validated. The Superwoman may work long hours to prove her worth which often leads others to take advantage of her time, and she may have sacrificed her friendships or hobbies thinking they are not as important as her achievements.

Do you see yourself as an Impostor based on these five types? Most women do, so you're not alone. The solution is based in seeing yourself *as God sees you*, perfect in His eyes and not needing anything more to be worthy and loved. But that may be easier said than done.

To overcome the Impostor Syndrome, try these things:

- **Don't compare yourself to others.** God created you for your unique purpose, not theirs. He equipped you with the gifts, skills, and personality traits that you need to fully live as His beautiful creation, growing gradually over time according to His timing. You do not need what someone else has to be a success, so try to reflect God's character, not hers, and find success in His eyes.
- **Tune out the noise.** Every day, you are bombarded by thousands of messages from Facebook, Instagram and the media. What you generally see is the "Christmas card version" of life, hiding what's happening in the real world. When you are feeling "less than," turn to God's word, not social media.
- **Use failure as fuel for change.** Failing does not mean you are a failure! If you aren't failing occasionally, you aren't growing. Be willing to stretch yourself out of your comfort zone to experience new things as you improve by learning from your mistakes.
- **Define your true meaning of success.** In the grand scheme of things, what is truly most important? What do you want to be remembered for by those who are most important in your life? When you get right down to it, success is not defined by your title, financial status or looks as the world prescribes. It is defined by much deeper and longer-lasting things.
- Dr. Young says, **"If you want to stop feeling like an Impostor, stop thinking like one."** Don't wait until you feel confident to put yourself out there. Change your behavior—take risks and be yourself—and allow your confidence to build. "Now and then we all have to fly by the seat of our pants."

Discussion Questions

1. Do you identify with one of the five types of Impostors? What traits struck you as “That’s me!” Share your Impostor traits and how they manifest in your daily life.
2. How has living like an Impostor affected your career? Have you had an experience when you’ve been “unmasked?” What was the immediate result, and the lasting effect?
3. Do you ever feel like an Impostor in your personal life by being a Superwoman or Perfectionist? How does this impact your family, your friendships and your overall wellbeing?
4. Has being an Impostor ever been a positive factor in your life? How did “flying by the seat of your pants” help you take a risk and become more confident?
5. Do you have a friend or colleague who is an Impostor? What could you do to help that person change her/his views on self-worth and become more authentic?
6. If you need support in overcoming your Impostor Syndrome, how can your 4word Sisters help you? Do you need encouragement, accountability, prayer? Remember that having a circle of Christian women around you can provide a boost of confidence as they remind you of your value as a daughter of the King!

Growth Opportunity

Over the next month, use the attached chart to record at least two things every day that you like about yourself or that you want to celebrate. Complete sentences such as these:

- God has given me the gift of _____
- I am really good at _____
- I supported a friend by _____
- I helped my team at work by _____
- People compliment me on _____
- God used me today to _____
- I show love to my family by _____
- I learned from my mistake by _____
- I experienced God’s grace in _____
- I showed God’s grace to _____

At the end of the month, reflect on the good things you acknowledged about yourself, seeing God working in and through your life as you grew closer to Him. When you are doubting your abilities, look at this list and know that you are perfect in God’s eyes just as you are.

I See Myself Through God's Eyes

DATE	I appreciate these things about myself