

Episode: Imposter Syndrome



With Natalie Bacon, JD, CFP[®], Certified Life Coach

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Welcome to the Design Your Dream Life podcast where it's all about designing your life on your terms and now your host, Natalie Bacon.

Hey, there. How are you doing today? I am so happy to be with you. I loved researching and getting ready for today's episode and I've been looking at my stats for the podcast and I'm so excited that it's gaining some traction and you guys are loving it and you're telling me and it really feels like this last year has been amazing. I have a small favor to ask.

I know it's kind of annoying and it requires a little bit of effort on your part, but I would love it so much and it would mean so much to me if you would write a review of the podcast on iTunes, all you need to do is open up your podcast app and then scroll down to the bottom and then it says like write a review under the podcasts. So you tap like the five stars and then you write a review and you submit it.

iTunes doesn't make it super easy to do, but it's really, really helpful to me because it will help iTunes know that you're enjoying the podcast, which means it will show the podcast to more people, which means that I can help more people. So I really would appreciate it. Thank you so much in advance.

Okay, we are going to talk about imposter syndrome. This is a topic that I came up with because so many students in Grow You are talking about it and wanting coaching on it. So anytime there is a common thread I really want to, you know, do research on it and bring you a solution. So that's what we're going to talk about today. Super fun. In my research. I found this really great definition of what imposter syndrome is because when I hear imposter syndrome, I have an idea of what it is and you might have an idea of what it is, but it's kind of like this vague thing that we know doesn't feel good and we don't like it, but we haven't really defined it I don't think.

And we just kind of throw it around cause it's kind of trendy to talk about or to think that we have it, but it's going to be so useful if you actually understand exactly what's going on and what's causing it so that you can change it. So the definition of imposter syndrome that I really liked was it's a psychological term referring to a pattern of behavior where you doubt your accomplishments and you have a persistent often internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud.

I love this because it addresses really what's going on is like you're having thoughts that what you are doing isn't valid and it's causing you to feel self doubt. It's causing you to feel fear. It's causing you to feel an adequacy or shame. So just note that it's a thought that you're having, right about you as a person or your accomplishments.

Often it's your accomplishments and that thought is causing you to feel a certain way. So imposter syndrome is a label and something that I teach with labels is that if it's not useful, just don't use it. I like to think about how people just like make stuff up all the time, right? And as an entrepreneur, I really understand this more now. I didn't really understand it as much when I was an employee, but kind of running your own business, you just see like people are just winging it and it gives you so much more freedom when you really understand this. So whenever there's a label, like I just like to think, well someone just made that up, right? Like we for sure have this

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definition that I just gave you and like you for sure might be having thoughts that cause you to feel a certain way.

But I think that it might be more useful for you to think about it in terms of the thoughts and the feelings that you're having so that you can change it versus constantly thinking something like, Oh, I just suffer from imposter syndrome. Right? So whenever a label isn't useful, I just want you to drop it. That tip alone is worth this entire podcast episode, I've done that a lot in my life, but now I'm just digressing. So just note that while I want to help you solve this problem of imposter syndrome, I kind of also want you to drop the label that you're like suffering from imposter syndrome because if you keep repeating that, you'll keep looking for evidence of it.

So now let's dive into what it even is and like what feelings you may have about it or kind of some examples cause I think that'll be really, really helpful. I think that imposter syndrome is when you have this story in your head about why you've achieved what you have and it's validated externally instead of attributing it to yourself. So it's like there's some external reason why you have what you have or why you've created the results that you have. And that reason is for sure not you. So it's like saying like, let's say you got into college and you went to college and you would say, well, I only got in because I was on a sports scholarship. So you know, it really wasn't based on my merit or because I wasn't smart enough or something like that. So you're always looking for the reason outside of you to explain why you have the results you have, right? It's like saying I run my business full time, but you know that doesn't really count because my husband contributes a lot financially to the household, right?

So you basically don't acknowledge what you've created and you attribute it to someone else and it is always, always, always based in this like self doubt and having a low self confidence. Now remember your self worth is set. It's a 100% worthy as a human being. We all are 100% worthy, every single human. But your opinion of yourself is that self confidence and what you think about yourself might be something like I don't deserve this or I didn't create this or the reason why I have this is because of something outside of me. And so like you're doubting yourself and it's basically believing that you don't deserve what you've created and you feel like constantly afraid that the other shoe is gonna drop. So you don't even allow yourself to be present with what you've created and you end up pushing it away or self-sabotaging because you don't know how to be with it.

And it's always this sense of that it's going to leave you, it's going to go away. You know? So I have some examples for you that I think on some level, fully you'll be able to relate to or think about it in your life. Right? So the biggest one I have is when I became an attorney, I literally could not even comprehend it. I took the Ohio bar exam, I passed the bar, and I became an attorney. And like, I really thought for sure someone was going to like find out that I did it in some way that was like illegitimate, but like there was no illegitimate way, right? Like I studied really, really hard. I passed like I did everything right. It's not like I lied or something on my resume or on the test or something. So there was no imposter syndrome or reason for me to doubt my ability, but I couldn't believe that I was an attorney.

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Right. So I created the result. I worked really, really hard to become an attorney. I created that result. I was an attorney, but it was so new to me that I didn't know how to have that new identity and that's what I want you to think of it. Like it's like you create this result that you want and then you just have to learn how to have it and when it's new, it's really like taking on a new identity.

I love the analogy of trying on a new outfit that's totally outside your comfort zone because this is like a really superficial example so we can all kind of relate to it. Have you ever thought like, okay, I'm going to go for it and just wear this new and different outfit and it's really like just not something you would normally wear and you're just like, Oh my gosh, everyone's probably looking at me like this is really different. You know, you, you like wear it in your house first and you have the courage to wear it out and then you're like, okay, like the whole world didn't just end up looking at me and pointing fingers at me like I thought they would so maybe I can keep wearing it.

And then you like wear it again and you wear it again and then you're like becoming this person who wears that outfit. And before long you don't even think about it because you have that new identity. It's just like that. But on a much deeper level. And I say deeper meaning like about things that we care more about.

So I have another example that I just went through that's sort of like in between the outfit and becoming an attorney. So I joined this new gym and it's actually a club. It is a fitness club and they, you know, don't just have fitness there, they have a spa there, they have a salon there, they have two restaurants there, they have a rooftop pool, they have events there.

It's, it's kind of like a mini country club and it's in the middle of the city. But you know, a lot of people just go for the gym and I go to workout classes there and I have to tell you, because of the reputation of this club in the city, it's got a very high end reputation. I felt like such an imposter going there and it was fascinating. Like I created it right? And it's not even like it was outside of my budget or anything like that. Like I had created this result for myself being a member at this new club and for about a month I didn't know how to have it. Like I felt very uncomfortable going there. So instead of me just thinking, I don't belong here, this isn't for me and sabotaging it. What I did instead was I just noticed my brain, you know?

And I noticed what it was thinking and I noticed how I felt. I felt a little bit nervous, you know, I felt a little bit inadequate and instead of approaching it as beating myself up and thinking like, Oh, this is stupid. It's just a gym. It's a club. Other people go here who don't make as much money as I do. Cause as soon as you start comparing yourself to someone and someone's better than you get into trouble. Right?

So we're all worthy. Okay. It has nothing to do with it. You don't need to deserve to go to this club or to be an attorney or anything else. You can just have it. So I just noticed that my brain was doing something that brains do. Right. I was very uncomfortable with this. I felt like I didn't deserve it and I just decided I would practice having it and little by little, just like wearing the outfit more and more as I went to the gym more, I took on the new identity, I learned how to have it. I learned how to be a member at this club K without beating myself up and just allowing it to be there without doing anything or trying to fix it or hurrying or rushing. Right.

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That's always a sign if you're like forcing it or coming from scarcity, you're trying to like fix it. It's a, that's a sign that you're doing it wrong and you need to slow down and learn how to have it and just notice what you're thinking and what the emotion is versus just saying, Oh, I'm an imposter, or I feel totally inadequate here. Or have imposter syndrome or something like that. Pay attention to what the thought is and what the feeling is. Okay. It's really, really, really useful.

Another small example I have from my life is another superficial one. I think sometimes it's helpful to come up with these superficial ones because they're a little bit lighter and easier to solve, right? It's like going to the club I can figure out versus being an attorney that I could have really sabotaged and sabotaged my career. So if you suffer from or you think that you are an imposter, which by the way, we all do, and it's not just women. I know tons of male attorneys who feel this way as well. It's just part of the human experience. You are creating something new, you're going after your goals and then you're getting it, but you haven't taken on that new identity yet. So you need to learn how to be with it.

So the other superficial example I have is when I got hair extensions the first time I remember sitting in that chair after they were in and I was like, what is happening? Like I didn't know how to be with it. I felt like really fake. Like I didn't deserve it. Like I couldn't have them. And I remember my stylist at the time being like, this is how everyone feels just, I'm not going to cut it. I'm not going to do anything for like a week. And what she was saying was as soon as she would do someone's hair and give them extensions, they immediately wanted her to cut it a lot shorter than they would have wanted it if she waited a week with them. So what she told me, and what she tells her clients is I'm going to put them in and I'm not going to cut it for at least a week and you can come back and if you want it shorter then, then I will do it.

And it's such a small example. But what she was doing is she was teaching me how to have my new identity. And then if I wanted it shorter from a place of having it, I could do that. But if I wanted it shorter, right when I got it feeling unworthy of having it right, it's kind of like get rid of it from a place of undeservedness, right? And a place of inadequacy versus, Oh, I just want to cut it from a place of loving it and having it.

It's a small, but it's really, really important for you to understand. So I want you to think about your life and think about what you're creating in your life and think about where you feel inadequate or where you have that self doubt. And it will likely be in an area of new results. And I want you to notice that you not only need to figure out what's going on, what your thoughts are, what your feelings are, but understand why it's happening.

So there could be a combination of things, right? But basically you're having an identity crisis. It's like you're becoming this new person. You haven't learned how to have it. And it could also have to do with other factors like how you were raised or you know, where you've placed your self worth if you haven't placed it intrinsically in you as a human. If, um, you were always taught that you should achieve more and be really smart and go after goals and like your parents probably thought this was really useful and it was right. It's like a good thing. But if you place yourself a worth and your accomplishments, then you can kind of add this sense of suffering

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because you don't think you're worthy as a human just in your humanness. So I want you to think about why it's happening, but also know that it could have to do with not only your upbringing but social conditioning and just the fact that you're growing and your brain is going to freak out because you're trying to do something new and different and it's a whole new way of being.

Now I think about this a lot with respect to where I'm going. So I don't really talk about debt and student loans anymore because of my beliefs and my feelings about abundance and money and creating more from a place of having, so I, I don't know, just paid off another loan. Basically I only have one loan left and I'm going to be debt free really soon and I am a little freaked out about it. And so I am practicing being someone who has no debt and who makes a ton of money, right? And it's a tiredly a new identity. And I have to be very mindful of the fact that my brain has identified with someone who struggled so long with money that even though I feel really worthy as a person, and I love creating money from a place of having enough, I haven't been completely debt free before and it's coming and it's coming like really soon.

My business is scaling and like a lot more money's coming really soon and it literally like, it's hard for me to feel, so you'll know you're doing this right if you practice having it ahead of time because you will feel so excited and it is a freaking trip. So I think to myself, and I practice visualizing my new identity as someone who you know, makes seven figures and has no debt and I'm like, Oh my gosh, I have to be this person knowing that it doesn't make me better than anyone. And also knowing that I am enough to have it and just be with this new identity, right? Just like going to this new gym and it taking a little while or wearing the new outfit, that's totally something I would have never worn before. It's really at the heart of it is becoming this new version of yourself.

So I want you to have a few steps for you to take away and actually practice. And I've kind of gone through them throughout so far, but I just want to lay them out in number form for you. So the first thing I want you to do is I want you to identify the thought that is causing you to think that you're an imposter. So imposter syndrome is kind of like the label. It's the term. But I want you to identify the thought causing it. So it might be something like, I'm not good enough. I don't deserve this. Someone's going to find out like I'm a fake. I don't belong here. Why me? Whatever the thought is, I want you to identify the thought. Okay, I want you to notice it. I don't want you to push it away. I want you to have compassion for yourself and be aware of the thought and why your mind is defaulting to it.

And then I want you to say that thought again in your mind and identifying the one word feeling without labeling it like imposter syndrome. So when you think the thought like, I'm not good enough to deserve this, or this shouldn't be for me, or whatever the thought is, say it to yourself and notice what feeling, what one word, feeling it causes you to feel. It won't be imposter, right? If you are unfamiliar with identifying your emotions, look up a feelings list. If you're in Grow You in our workbook, we have a feelings list in there, so look at that. But it might be something like afraid. It might be shame, right? Shame is I'm not good enough, I've done something wrong that's shame worried. It might be inadequate. And then if you really have gone through feelings and you just can't identify it, kind of my default feeling for if I'm coaching someone and they don't really like, they're really struggling to identify what the feeling is after I've suggested some

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uncomfortable is kind of like the last result cause at least uncomfortable gets you aware of what's happening in your body. So identify that feelings. You have the thought and then it's causing a specific feeling.

And then the third step is I want you to approach it with kindness and love and compassion. I want you to say something to yourself like it's okay. This is new. Nothing has gone wrong. My brain is just doing what brains do and it's freaking out. This will calm you the F down instead of, Oh my gosh, I don't deserve this. Everyone's going to find out I'm a fraud. And like when you think those thoughts and you perpetuate them, right? You create more of them, you create more of not enoughness. Instead you can notice the thought, right? Like I'm not deserving of this, whatever the thought is. And you can just approach it like, Oh my gosh, that's so interesting that I think this. Huh? I wonder why. I know I'm a human beings, so I know that I must be worthy, but I really don't feel it right now.

And that's okay. I'm doing some work on it. Okay. When you approach yourself with compassion and curiosity, you stop that spiraling and you just bring awareness to it. Everyone in Grow, You wants me to fix it right away. They want to jump to the new thought. And yes, you do need to come up with a new thought and practice it, but you can't do that until you've really understood what you're thinking and how you're feeling and know that you are not your thoughts and your feelings. Okay?

So after you've done that, then step four is to come up with a new, better and more neutral thought. You're not going to be able to jump to the most, a positive, abundant thought right away. I want you to come up with the more neutral thought that inches you forward, and you'll know that it's a neutral thought that you can practice if you feel it.

So if you jump to the thought, I'm 100% worthy and I know I deserve this and you don't really believe it, then you won't feel it. And practicing that thought isn't useful. That is why affirmations don't work. You can't just jump to the place that you want to be at the end result. You have to go incrementally. So whatever your thought is adding a qualifier to it is one way to move very slowly forward. So you might think the thought I'm not good enough, and you might add onto it, I don't think I'm good enough. And that's okay. Right? It just adds that softener to it and then you have to practice it. Okay? People come up with these neutral thoughts and they're like, Oh yes, I believe it. I feel it. I really do feel like it's possible. One day I could feel like this is my new identity.

That could be another one. I, it's possible I could step into this and be this new person. And then they come up with this thought, this neutral thought, and they actually feel it in their body, but then they go about living their life and they never do anything else with it, and then they wonder why nothing's changed. So your brain has formed a neuropathway of thinking it's not good enough of thinking that you should stay exactly where you are and that the results you have are exactly what they should be. So when you get new and different results, your brain freaks out and is like, something's gone wrong. I don't know if I can do this. I'm not good enough. Everyone's going to find out, right is totally fine, but you have to practice. It's like saying that you did a good workout one time and then wondering why you don't see results a month later.

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You're like, well, you have to practice that for 30 days straight. So I want you to come up with your new and better and more neutral thought that you actually feel a little bit better when you say to yourself, and then I want you to practice it every day. Okay? Practice it every single day. Write it down, put it on a little piece of paper and put it in your wallet and practice being that new person, right? It's like if I was going to the club and I was still doing this work, maybe I would say something like, of course I belong here. I created this for myself. And if that felt really good to me and I believed it, then I would say it every day when I go to my workout class. Okay? And eventually you will just become that person because you will have learned how to have it.

If you don't, you will push it away. You will self sabotage. Okay? So the last step that I want you to do here, step five is I want you to ask yourself who you want to be in, what you have created. So if I was an attorney and I just created this new career, I would ask myself, who do I want to be as this brand new attorney? Who do I want to show up as? Or if it's weight loss, let's say you've lost weight, this happens a lot, and literally your body is a different shape and you don't know how to be with it because you're so use to maybe obsessing over food or weight loss. It gets such a big part of your life. And now it's like you hit the goal and you have this new body and you just don't know how to be someone who doesn't struggle with weight.

So I want you to ask yourself, who do you want to be as someone who lost the weight and is in shape? Who do or what do you want to think and how do you want to feel as this new person? Same thing with money. Did you get out of debt and create a lot of money? Who do you want to be? I have to think that to myself. Who do I want to be as someone who makes seven figures and is debt free? It's super fun and exciting and terrifying to think about for me. Okay?

So it really, really matters who you are. And I want you to just notice that it's important for you to think about it intentionally. Otherwise you will push it away. Okay? And I kind of mentioned this in step four with coming up with your new and better and more neutral thought.

But the last step is really to practice your new thought and to feel it. It's not enough for you to practice it without feeling it because the feeling is what's going to create different action and different results in your life. Okay? So if you're thinking a thought over and over, even if you did feel it in the beginning, if that feeling is no longer there for you, you need to come up with a different thought. You will know if you're doing this right because it will feel better than whatever you were feeling before.

So if you have imposter syndrome and you are thinking a thought that someone's going to find out and you feel fear, whatever your new thought is that you're practicing will feel slightly better than fear. So if you're practicing it over and over and then whatever feeling that was for you, if it felt slightly better than fear, right, then you want to make sure that you continue to generate that feeling because that feeling is where that new identity comes in and then you take action from that place.

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It's all tying together what I've talked about in kind of becoming this next version of yourself from your future. Okay. I like to tell myself that I'm not an imposter. I'm just new. Right? It feels so much better to me to think that when you, I think I'm an imposter. It makes me feel bad. So I just stopped thinking that. I just think, Oh, I'm just new to this club. Of course, my brain's freaking out. Oh, I'm just a new attorney. Oh, I'm just new to losing weight. Oh, I'm just new to not having debt. It's totally okay that I don't feel worthy yet. I need to explore that and I need to have compassion so that I can move through it and learn how to have it and to be with it. Because if you don't do this, if you don't acknowledge your thoughts and your feelings and you don't resolve it, you will push away the very thing that you created.

You will push away your success. You will feel like you need to give it away from a place of undeservedness. Now it's a very different than giving it away from a place of abundance. The analogy of my hair, right? It's like getting the new hair that's really long and you immediately want to cut it cause you feel like you shouldn't have it. Versus being with it and having it for a month and then saying, I love it and now it's time for a trim. You'll know if you're doing this right based on how you feel.

If you feel rushed and forced and in scarcity, don't do anything. Do not push it away and do not self sabotage. Separate yourself from your thoughts. Notice your thoughts and your feelings. Always go back to that. Okay? I know you want to rush it and take action, but that's the very thing that you need not do.

You do not need to deserve anything to have it. Okay? You are 100% worthy. We all are as human beings, we all have different experiences you can have from a place of enoughness and then give it away, right? I love giving away money from a place of generosity. I love having my money from a place of having it not from a place of guilt. I love creating more money from a place of love and abundance. And you know if you're doing this right, based on how it feels, I see this a lot with people who get an inheritance or they win a lot of money. Anytime. Like a large sum of money comes in on expectedly and you don't know how to be with it because you haven't created that new identity. You need to just like do nothing and practice, just having it because you will give it away from a place of undeservedness.

So what I want you to do is not let imposter syndrome get in your way and really think about if that label is serving you and if it's not, then let go of it. And instead just say, what am I thinking? What am I feeling right? And then I want you to be kind to yourself and compassionate and step into this new identity. Then create a more neutral thought that you can practice while focusing on who you want to be in, what you have created. Okay? And as someone who is listening to this podcast, I know you personally are focused on growth, which means that you will create new results. It might not be necessarily today, but it's for sure coming. And if you've ever done this in the past, you can see how this has happened right before I was into all of this work.

I felt imposter syndrome when I was an attorney, right? So you might be able to look at your past and see an example of when you did this and you also might be able to look at your present circumstances and see how you're doing it now. You also will be able to see your future and

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what goals you're setting and what results you want to create. And I want you to know that when you create those results, you will be taking on a new identity of having those results.

And the more you can practice having those results without pushing them away, the more you will create abundance from your life and solve this kind of problem of imposter syndrome and just know that nothing has gone wrong and that we all feel this way and think this way because we have a human brain, including men, including really successful people. If you are growing and evolving, you will have a brain freak out moment when you think that your reality is bigger than what you think you're worthy of having, and it's total BS. Okay? So do this work and I promise you it will change your life. All right, I'll talk to you next week. Bye bye.

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