

Evict your inner imposter

Wading deeper into a new year of opportunities and professional aspirations, many of us are hitting the gym more and focused on physical fitness. Yet, we can't deny that our endurance is also exceedingly dependent on a happy, healthy mind. In particular, confidence and positivity are critical to every manager's success in the workplace. If we are mentally weak, then we must train our brain, much like athletes train their bodies.

As *Runner's World* reports, "For a century, researchers have focused on the role of the heart, legs, and lungs to explain the limits of human endurance, but they've ignored the brain. Turns out, that was a mistake. It's not ... your muscles that force you to slow down, it's how your brain interprets those signals. The effort of running is only as hard as your brain perceives it to be."

To a degree, it's normal for feelings of self-doubt to creep up on us. Award-winning poet Maya Angelou acknowledged her own vulnerability to self-doubt, stating, "I have written 11 books, but each time I think, 'Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.'" However, when they persist and affect our daily living, negative thoughts are akin to self-sabotage, poisoning our life and career. To address this behavior, we must pull back the curtain and confront our inner imposter.

In 1978, American psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes identified the concept of Imposter Syndrome, affecting people of every demographic and described as a feeling of "phoniness in people who believe that they are not intelligent, capable or creative despite evidence of high achievement."

When suffering through something, it's comforting to know that you're not alone. According to a survey by Vantage Hill Partners, Imposter Syndrome is prevalent among CEOs and executives, who confess their No. 1 fear was "being found to be incompetent."

The personal ramifications of such insecurities are alarming, leading to increased fatigue and anxiety, and straining our ability to accept compliments from others, speak up in meetings, share knowledge and try new things. Our team pays a price, too, as these feelings trickle down to them, undermine relationships, sap morale and erode trust. The potential for high achievement is damaged all around.

Extinguishing the flame of self-sabotage, Tara Swart, a leadership consultant, neuroscientist, and medical doctor, explains that positive thinking exercises have the ability to "reprogram the neural pathways in the brain and prevent automatic shortcuts to negative thought patterns."

In other words, train yourself to think differently. This requires steady work; some may even compare it to the dedication required when learning a new language. Be patient—even if you don't immediately quiet down that critical inner voice, it will lose control over you.

Practicing positive daily affirmations, journaling, meditating, going out and having more fun with family and friends, taking a class in something that interests you and builds confidence, reflecting on your achievements, caring for your body as well as your mind ... whatever steps you take toward reshaping your mindset, you will get there. And when you do, give that imposter a swift kick in the "you know where."

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