

Ep #10: Overcome Imposter Syndrome



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This week, we're talking about imposter syndrome and how to overcome it so that we can leave it behind in 2020.

You are listening to Love Your Job (Before You Leave It), the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving womxn who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all. I just got back from a brisk winter walk. I like to take a walk in the afternoon because I think it kind of clears my head and just gives me some energy for the second half of the day. And I'm going to tell you all the truth. I looked out the window and it was raining.

I live in Seattle, so that's not uncommon this time of year. And I almost didn't go on that walk because let's be real, I didn't want to get rained on. But I'm so glad that I went ahead and bundled up and did it because it actually wasn't raining that hard. It was still a very pleasant walk. I have rain gear obviously, since I live in Seattle.

And I just feel so good having done the thing that I wanted to do. So that's just something for y'all. I know this time of year, we all want to be cozy and it can be easy to end up just curled up all the time, and there's nothing wrong with that either. But sometimes it's nice to go out for a little walk, even when you get a little rained on.

So this week, we're talking about imposter syndrome and I'm pretty excited to discuss that with y'all because I think it's so important. And I'm ready for us to leave imposter syndrome behind. Let's just leave it in 2020. Why bring it with us? We do not need it where we're going.

This is something I see impacting so many people and creating so much pain and suffering at work that's just not necessary and not helping us. So we're going to get into that in a minute. But before we do, I want to read a podcast review to y'all.

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As you probably know, I am trying to get to 50. Actually, by the time this airs, I might be at 50, fingers crossed. Because I'm trying to get there by the end of the year. But we shall see. But today I'm going to read a review from PinkReviewGal and the title of the review is, "Just what I was looking for."

And it says, "COVID burnout is real, or at least I thought I could blame it on COVID until I started listening to Kori's podcast. After just a few episodes, I feel like I'm starting to take charge of my burnout and I'm trying to produce positive change at work. Thank you, Kori, for changing my perspective on life at work."

You are welcome, PinkReviewGal. Thank you so much for the review. I'm so delighted that you are going to be able to have a much better work life experience without the outside world having to change at all, since the outside world isn't changing.

And that's such a thing. So often, we want to change what's happening in the outside world, and when we can do that, there's nothing wrong with trying. But knowing how to manage things by changing our perspective is so powerful because sometimes we can't change the outside world, like during COVID.

Anyway, now we're going to move on and we're going to talk about imposter syndrome. So like I was saying, 2020 is drawing to a close and I want to revisit this topic because I want us to just leave it behind in 2020. This year, it has 100% felt like the world is on fire, and perhaps imposter syndrome isn't necessarily top of mind for everyone.

But for some of y'all, I know that this year, you're feeling like more of an imposter than ever before. So while some of y'all have been too busy to feel like an imposter, with all that's going on, I also know that some of y'all are struggling right now, more than you did before 2020 has its way with you, which is to say before you were trying to juggle kids at home and extreme health anxiety and finding a new job during a pandemic and things like that.

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So let's just start with the basics. What is imposter syndrome? Imposter syndrome is a specific collection of interrelated thoughts, often centered around the idea of not being good enough or not fitting in. The thoughts often go something like this.

"You're not good enough, you're not qualified, someone is going to find out that you don't know what you're talking about, you don't belong here." You might experience these thoughts in first person, like I'm not good enough, I'm not qualified, someone is going to find out I don't know what I'm talking about, I don't belong here.

In my own head and with my own clients, I experience both the first person and the second person. But I actually experience the second person, the you, a lot more, which I think is fascinating. So either way that they show up, that is kind of the story. The story of not being good enough, not being qualified.

Sometimes these thoughts can be even more subtle too, like, are you sure about that answer you just gave? What if you make a mistake? Maybe you don't deserve that promotion after all. Or even no matter what you do, you'll never fit in here.

And just like the other ones, you might experience these in first person. During 2020, they can also take on a different tone. They might sound something like this. "There's no way you can do your job and parent your kids without hugely fucking up one or both," or, "Sure, you're normally okay, but there's no way you'll be able to network and find a job right now, so why try?" Or, "You're kidding yourself by believing that you're doing enough to protect yourself from the COVID virus."

Usually, I teach that imposter syndrome basically comes down to two ideas; not enough, and not belonging. And this is true, but right now in 2020, it can also come with a side of this is different. And this means that many people who never felt imposter syndrome before may be feeling it now, and those who felt it all along may be feeling it even deeper or more extreme level.

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So it's the sort of combination of I'm not good enough and even if some people do okay, I might not be. And then kind of add in like, this is very serious, as well as maybe I don't deserve to be okay. So it's this conglomeration of thoughts together.

Not just one thought at play here, but many thoughts, and I think that's why it's called imposter syndrome. Not imposter thought. It's not just one thought. It's a collection. And one of those thoughts I was just mentioning that is coming up for people right now in 2020 was, "This is a very serious situation."

And to that, I want to say yes, it is a serious situation, but that's exactly why it's worth it to examine our thoughts about it and make sure that they're helping us show up the way we want to, rather than keeping us from showing up well, or keeping us from showing up at all.

And this is a really critical point. Often, clients think that when things are serious, that means they need to worry and imagine potential worst-case scenarios, and sometimes even be really mean to themselves about all the tiny points in life that led to them being wherever it is that they are.

They think that being stern with themselves will help, but it doesn't, and instead, it actually takes our best energy away from a task at hand. Think about it this way; imagine you're trying to untangle some very tangled yarn. I'm a knitter, can you tell from this example?

And the whole time you're trying to untangle the yarn, someone is standing next to you criticizing you and second guessing you and insisting that you don't have the skills to get the yarn untangled. Would that person be helping you? Not so much.

And yet, that's what most of us do ourselves inside our own heads all the time and we call it like, just being realistic, or other bullshit like that. And you might be asking like, what does this have to do with imposter syndrome? But that's, in a lot of ways, exactly what imposter syndrome is.

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We're trying to do something like untangle yarn, except for it's like, do a really good job at work, or take care of our kids, or manage the health anxiety we're feeling during the COVID times. And our brain comes in with a lot of criticisms that it's pretending are useful or valid ideas that are really just us questioning our worth and questioning if we can do it, and questioning if we fit in and all that.

But let's dig into it. Our brain wants to say sometimes that these thoughts are just being realistic, but is it actually more realistic to insist that we might fail? I'm going to offer you that it's not. What if it's actually more realistic that we're going to figure it out? After all, haven't we figured out everything else we've ever faced?

And I can already hear y'all saying like, well yeah, but it was really terrible and I never want to do that again and I made a bunch of mistakes, and yes, it may be true. Well actually, it's definitely true that we know more now than we used to, and it may be true that if we were going to handle some of that stuff again we might make different choices, but we became the person who might make different choices now by having lived through the past and having learned everything we learned.

And we did figure it all out. We didn't always figure it out in the way that now as the people we are, we imagine would be the "best," but that takes away from the fact that we did figure it out. We got here. We became the person that we are.

And that doesn't mean it was all super enjoyable at the time. A lot of it probably wasn't. Much of it we might not want to repeat, but what it does mean is we figured it out and we handled it, and I think that is such a helpful lens to take into this situation where we may be struggling right now.

Even if we didn't enjoy the way that things happened in the past, and even if we would do it differently now, that doesn't mean we didn't handle it. Many of us grew up with this idea that we're supposed to enjoy everything, we're supposed to look at our past and be happy with how we handled everything or feel happy all the time.

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But I don't think that's a helpful idea. We live in a world with a pandemic and with systemic racism and with death and all kinds of other stuff. Sometimes things happen that we don't want to be happy about and that's okay. We can face these things, not feel happy, and also still figure it out and take care of ourselves.

So when we're looking at our past and we're looking at how we figured it all out, yes, we might have some critiques of how we figured it out in the past and we might want to approach it differently now, but that actually kind of adds to the case for our capacity to figure things out now.

Even if they're things we've never figured out before, when we look at the past and we look at what we've gained, we look at our own knowledge, I think it actually is more realistic to imagine that we will figure it out and we will learn things, and then yeah, in the future we'll have new insight that we'll look back on what we did right now with, but that doesn't mean that the way we handle it now is wrong, or that it's bad, or that we can't handle it.

So many of us are trying so hard to do life perfectly, to do all the things perfectly all the time. And when we're trying to be perfect, we're all imposters. Because we're all humans, which means we're not going to be perfect. Not today, not ever.

I'm going to say that again because I think it's kind of a mind-blowing idea. So many of us are trying so hard to do it all perfectly, and when we're trying to be perfect, we're all imposters. But that's okay because the reality is, we don't need to be perfect to figure it out. We don't need to be perfect to try and try again. We don't need to be perfect to do what we can and keep learning as we go.

Inside the concept of imposter syndrome, there's this idea that if we were only a little bit better, we wouldn't worry, we wouldn't stress, we wouldn't struggle so much, we wouldn't have all those critical thoughts about all the ways we handled things in the past.

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But that's not true. And here's the thing; even if we do get better, we take our stress and worry and struggles with us if we don't interrupt this thought pattern first. No matter how much better we get, it's never enough when we're looking at our life from this concept of we need to be better than we are.

That's why the solution isn't to get better. The solution is to realize that you don't need to. Now at this moment, I feel like I have to say yes, I am all about continuous growth. I'm a coach, I'm all about learning, I'm all about trying, I'm all about improving. But not because we need to in order to be okay as people.

When we tell ourselves we need to be better so that we can be okay, that makes our efforts at improvement really loaded and it actually slows us down, it makes it very fraught. But when we stop telling ourselves that we need to be better in order to be okay, we don't stop learning. We actually get to learn for the fun and the joy of it.

That's the irony, y'all. You will learn and grow and improve more and faster when you stop hanging your worth on it. So to review, imposter syndrome comes down to believing we aren't good enough no matter what our accomplishments are, and believing we don't belong no matter how hard we try.

2020 has added its own spin to imposter syndrome since so much of what's happening this year is different or feels higher stakes than the other years. When we are experiencing imposter syndrome, more accomplishments and more achievements won't help because we will just bring all of our anxieties with us and then we'll just feel like an imposter at the next level.

Many of y'all have probably experienced that in your own career. I know I have. You work so hard to get the next level, and then your brain's like, now, I feel like even more of an imposter, so it doesn't work. And focusing on what's not working or what could go wrong also won't help because it just makes us feel like life is really hard and it's pointless to even keep

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trying, and then often when we go down that path, we just stop trying for a while.

We just curl up with Netflix and a bottle of rosé. And listen, there's nothing wrong with that, but it's not going to help you get to where you want to go and it's not going to help you feel better in the long term.

Instead, the antidote to imposter syndrome is to change how we're thinking about ourselves, how we're thinking about how work, and how we're thinking about what we're capable of, however imperfect we may be as humans. Like I said before, we're all imperfect and that's okay.

We don't need to be perfect to do good work and we don't need to be perfect to overcome imposter syndrome. What we need to do is to embrace that we can be imperfect and still have value at the same time. We can be imperfect and still belong. We can be imperfect and still show up to 2020 and figure it out, even if it is different.

The way we do that starts with how we talk to ourselves inside our own heads. This will look a little different for everyone, but here are some examples to get you started. Instead of telling yourself where you're not good enough, tell yourself where you are good enough.

Instead of telling yourself you don't belong, tell yourself that ways in which you do belong, tell yourself the ways in which you can create your own belonging. And when your brain tries to tell you that 2020 is different, you can tell yourself maybe we can figure it out even if this year is unlike anything we've ever experienced before, and maybe we'll be stronger, smarter, and more resilient for our efforts.

And listen y'all, if you want some personalized help implementing this and unpacking this, I've got good news for you. To celebrate the launch of the podcast, I'm going to be giving away just a few deep dive strategy sessions with yours truly.

I want to be very clear that these are not consult calls. They are 90-minute sessions where we will unpack what's going on with you and your career,

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and then we come up with a point-by-point plan for how to get you where you want to go.

I know exactly what it's like to have an amazing day job and I know exactly what it's like to leave it and launch a six-figure business. I can walk you through your career journey, whatever that journey looks like for you, whether it's staying in your day job, leaving it to launch your dream business, I can help you out.

And I'm going to be giving away three of these sessions. In order to be eligible, all you need to do is subscribe, rate, and review the show on Apple Podcasts.

It doesn't even have to be a five-star review, although I of course hope you love the show. What I really, really want is your honest feedback so that I can create a show that will blow your mind and help you change your life every week.

You can visit korilinn.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I will be announcing the winners very soon on an upcoming show because we are almost at 50 reviews.

And if you just can't wait and need to get started changing your career immediately, you can head over to my website and learn about how to work with me. I've got spots opening in January. Alright y'all, have a great week. Bye-bye.

Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to korilynn.com for more guidance and resources.