

THREE WHAT'S



Imposter Syndrome

What

"I have written eleven 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."

Maya Angelou (quoted above), Tom Hanks, Michelle Obama and Serena Williams all have something in common beyond being globally known talents. They have all suffered, at some time, from what is known as Imposter Syndrome. Imposter syndrome is the underlying and persistent feeling that you are not good enough and that at some point you will be found out to be a fraud.

So What?

Imposter Syndrome is a personality trait. It's not an illness. Some individuals are continuously surprised by their success. They attribute it to factors beyond themselves – luck, circumstance, others not knowing their true worth. They assume that everyone else is better even in the face of evidence of their own hard work, qualifications, experience and the plaudits of others.

Those with Imposter Syndrome are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression and stress. They may be more disposed to 'catastrophise' with a habit of worrying unduly, especially about the opinions of others.

Research suggests women are more likely to explain setbacks and failures as resulting from their lack of ability, while men are more prone to blame outside factors. It's true that women lag far behind men in leadership roles in every metric, only 4% of CEO roles and only 11% of CFO roles, globally.

Now What?

The good news is that most of us will have suffered from Imposter Syndrome at some time and, if not, that's more worrying. Try these techniques.

- **Talk about it** – you will find others around you who feel 'limited' in the same way
- **Thought stopping** – when you begin to make unhelpful comparisons divert your thoughts
- **Befriend your 'Fraud Police'** – analyse your past and where this response might come from
- **Keep an achievements journal** – you will have done positive things which get overlooked
- **Role models** – consider how you and others like you are, and can be, role models of success
- **Suspend perfectionism** – adopt a 'good enough to get the job done' mindset and move on
- **Absorb feedback** – work hard on using feedback as essential food for your growth

Some journals suggest that as many as 70% of successful executives have experienced Imposter Syndrome. Try our ThreeWhats Playbook written for you and others like you.

www.threewhats.com