



THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME -

WHY WE'RE FAKING IT TO MAKE IT

(AND HOW TO BEAT THE IMPOSTER BLUES)

ARE YOU FAKING IT? I AM. I'M TOTALLY, COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY FAKE

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I'm sure many would disagree, but there is this little voice constantly whispering - reminding me, goading me.

You're going to get caught out soon. They'll figure it out. They'll know.

I'm a phoney. A pretender.

An imposter.

THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

The term 'Imposter Syndrome' emerged in the 70's when two psychotherapists studied over 150 highly successful women and found that, despite the external evidence of their success (whether it be obtaining a PhD, being recognised as a leader in their field or even receiving an award), many viewed their accomplishments as a result of luck, good timing or unintentional deceit.

Fast-forward to 2015, and the syndrome is more alive than ever. Everywhere I look I see women making excuses for their success, women who are uncomfortable taking a compliment, and

women who seek constant reassurance from others that they are 'doing OK'.

Are you a phoney? I am. Big time.

I question myself constantly. I read ravenously, but can never learn enough to be 'in the know'. I wonder at what point a client will call me out, recognising that I'm winging it. I question why clients choose me, out of all of the brilliant copywriters out there, and even though I am often booked out months in advance I tell myself it's because I have a 'pretty brand'. I've got a list of publications, checklists and blogs I want to write that is as long as my arm, but I hesitate in case someone out there has done it or will do it better.

'Cause I'm obviously not the real deal. At least, that's what my head tells me.

Why? Part of it is that we have been conditioned to think this way. But part of it is also, I am sure, that we are women working for ourselves and this in itself makes us question our relevance and validity.

AS WOMEN, WE SET INCREDIBLY HIGH STANDARDS FOR OURSELVES WHEN IT COMES TO CLAIMING OUR EXPERTISE IN A PARTICULAR FIELD.

When is it OK to call ourselves an 'expert'?

As women, we set incredibly high standards for ourselves when it comes to claiming our expertise in a particular field. Whereas men can push aside the superhero complex, we seem to think that we need to be the "be all and end all" in order to lead the way. But it's not the case – despite what our head tells us, we don't have to provide all the answers. No-one has them, anyway! We just need to take the first step and put ourselves out there.

Why?

Because women are under-represented in most industries, and that needs to change.

Because we need diversity of opinion.

Because if you don't do it, someone else will.

And because you are doing yourself an injustice – if you have repeat clientele, then you're doing it right. So build that profile.

How to overcome the Imposter Syndrome

It's taken me a bit of time, but I've started to chat back to that little voice in my head (not in conversation, more in terms of telling it to shove it). I'm still a little fearful that my success has just been the result of a run of good luck, but a few things have driven me to re-evaluate.

If you're faking it, I recommend you crack open a bottle of Moscato, toast yourself and do the following.

1. Identify one of the greatest strengths in your knowledge base – start communicating – talking, blogging, writing, presenting – and as your confidence increases, widen the circle of information you share.

2. Talk with your competitors and colleagues – the support you provide one another will be amazing. You're facing the same challenges and undoubtedly share a few insecurities (I shared mine at a recent industry event and cannot believe how much better I feel knowing that I'm not alone!).

3. Find a friend or mentor who will pull you up and call you out – I have one who is absolutely brilliant, and every time I downplay my sheer awesomeness she stops me right there. Questions me. And raises her eyebrow until I agree that I am pretty bloody brilliant.

And is this the Moscato talking? At one point I would have said yes.

But now I say hell no.