

READYSETGO SUCCESS & WELLBEING

Am I Experiencing Imposter Syndrome?

A Self-Awareness Guide

By Martine Gibson

Imposter Syndrome & Emotional Intelligence Specialist
Founder, Readyssetgo Success & Wellbeing

A note before you start

Imposter Syndrome is not a diagnosis, a weakness, or a sign that you don't belong. It is a pattern, a way of thinking and feeling that develops over time, often in high-achieving individuals. The fact that you're reading this suggests a level of self-awareness that is already a strength. This guide will help you understand the pattern more clearly. What you do with that understanding is where the real work begins.

What Is Imposter Syndrome?

First identified by psychologists Dr Pauline Clance and Dr Suzanne Imes in 1978, Imposter Syndrome describes the internal experience of believing you are not as competent as others perceive you to be despite clear evidence of your capability and success.

Research suggests it affects up to 70% of people at some point in their lives, with particularly high rates among high achievers, leaders, and those who are first in their family or community to reach certain levels of success.

Dr Valerie Young, one of the leading researchers in the field, identified five distinct types of Imposter Syndrome. Most people recognise themselves in more than one, but typically one type feels like home.

The Five Types – Which One Sounds Like You?

Read through each type. As you do, notice which descriptions land hardest. Put a mark next to the statements that feel most familiar. By the end, you'll have a clearer picture of how Imposter Syndrome shows up for you specifically.

Type 1: The Perfectionist

"It's not good enough unless it's perfect."

Signs you might be this type:

- You set extremely high standards for yourself and feel like a failure when you don't meet them
- You focus on what went wrong rather than what went right
- Asking for help feels like admitting weakness
- You procrastinate on starting things because you're afraid of not doing them perfectly
- Praise rarely lands — you find something to discount it

What this means for you:

Perfectionism and Imposter Syndrome are deeply intertwined. The Perfectionist uses flawless performance as protection — if everything is perfect, no one can find fault. But the bar keeps moving, and the fear of falling short keeps growing. The exhaustion is real, and it's costing you.

Type 2: The Superhero

"I have to work harder than everyone else just to prove I belong."

Signs you might be this type:

- You push yourself to do more than is expected or needed
- Slowing down or resting feels dangerous, lazy, or self-indulgent
- You measure your worth by your productivity
- You've built your identity around being the one who holds it all together
- When things go well, you worry it won't last

What this means for you:

The Superhero overworks as a way to manage the fear of being exposed. If you just work hard enough, stay visible enough, produce enough — maybe no one will notice the gap between who you feel you are and who they think you are. But no amount of output quietens the doubt.

Type 3: The Natural Genius

"If I have to try, it means I'm not really good at it."

Signs you might be this type:

- You believe things should come easily if you're truly talented
- Struggling with something is evidence, in your mind, that you're not smart enough
- You avoid new challenges where you might not excel immediately
- You feel deep shame when something takes you longer than expected
- You rarely talk about your efforts, only your results

What this means for you:

The Natural Genius judges competence by ease and speed, not by effort and persistence. This type often coasts early in life on genuine ability, then hits a wall when things get harder — and interprets the difficulty as proof they were never that good to begin with. The truth is very different.

Type 4: The Individualist or Soloist

"Needing help means I'm not good enough to do it alone."

Signs you might be this type:

- Asking for help feels deeply uncomfortable or embarrassing
- You prefer to figure things out independently, even when support is available
- You feel you have to earn everything on your own to prove it's really yours
- You struggle to delegate
- You minimise your achievements if they involved collaboration

What this means for you:

The Individualist or Soloist ties their sense of competence to self-sufficiency. Seeking support feels like failure. But no one succeeds entirely alone — and the belief that they should is the myth at the heart of this type. Asking for help is not weakness. It is intelligence.

Type 5: The Expert

"I need to know everything before I can call myself qualified."

Signs you might be this type:

- You constantly seek more qualifications, courses, or credentials before you feel ready
- You underestimate how much you actually know
- You feel uncomfortable calling yourself an expert, even when others clearly do
- You over-prepare for things as a way to manage the fear of being caught out
- You focus on the gaps in your knowledge rather than the depth of what you have

What this means for you:

The Expert is driven by the fear that there is something essential they don't know — and when that gap is discovered, they will be exposed. They can be deeply knowledgeable and still not feel qualified. More information is rarely the answer. The work is learning to trust what you already know.

Your Reflection Questions

Now that you've read through the five types, take a few minutes with these questions. There are no right answers — only honest ones.

Question 1

Which type or types felt most familiar? What specifically resonated?

Question 2

When does Imposter Syndrome show up most strongly for you? In which situations, relationships, or areas of your life?

Question 3

What does it cost you — in energy, opportunity, relationships, or wellbeing?

Question 4

What would be different if the pattern wasn't running the show?

This Is Not the Whole Picture

Awareness is the first step. But understanding the pattern intellectually is very different from dismantling it. Imposter Syndrome is rooted in deeper beliefs about worthiness, belonging, and safety — beliefs that were often formed long before your career began.

The good news? These patterns can change. With the right support, the right pace, and the right approach — they do change. I've seen it happen, and I've lived it myself.

Through Imposter Syndrome Unmasked, emotional intelligence development and therapeutic coaching, I help people move beyond self-doubt and build lasting confidence.

Ready to go deeper?

If this guide has helped you recognise yourself more clearly, the next step is a conversation. Book a free discovery call at rsgsuccess.co.uk or email info@rsgsuccess.co.uk — and let's talk about what working together might look like.

Martine Gibson

**Imposter Syndrome & Emotional Intelligence Specialist
Founder, Readyssetgo Success & Wellbeing**

rsgsuccess.co.uk | info@rsgsuccess.co.uk | 07591 819 189

Empowering People, Changing Lives ✨