**How Imposter Syndrome is Holding you Back in Your Career**

In this presentation we are going to be looking at one of the most pervasive forms of self-doubt in the world today. I am talking, of course, about Imposter Syndrome. I’d like to shine a light on what Imposter Syndrome is, as well as a few of the ways it can hold you back in your career.

First coined in the 1970s by psychologists Suzanne Imes and Pauline Clance, Imposter Syndrome’s defining traits are a fundamental disbelief in one’s own qualifications for being where they are.

The sufferer of Imposter Syndrome will have a definition of success, a criterion of worthiness for their own station in life, which they do not fulfill. This is absurd, obviously, since if they did not fulfill the requirements for their station in life, then they would not hold their station in life.

This is a pretty big incongruency between perception and reality. Thinking that the world *should* work one way when it, in fact, works in a different way is not healthy thinking.

Usually, people develop this line of thinking in a way which is beneficial to them: “I shouldn’t have gotten rejected,” they think, “I am deserving of acceptance, and my rejection is evidence that the world is wrong.”

People with Imposter Syndrome have it the other way around. They think, “I shouldn’t have been accepted. I am deserving of rejection, and my acceptance is evidence that the world is wrong.”

Both statements have a few things in common. For one, they are both highly preoccupied with what one “deserves”. They both appeal to some invisible judge, and they both assume to know the metrics by which this invisible judge metes out all their rulings.

This kind of thinking holds you back so much. To begin with, making a habit out of weighing what you “deserve” will go one of two ways: Either you will decree yourself deserving of too much, or too little.

Imagine you find $20 in an elevator, and then you immediately ask yourself, “Do I deserve this?” The very act of asking the question poisons the situation, because it forces you to say that you either deserve more or less than what you have.

It’s a habit that will lead you to eternal dissatisfaction, as it causes you to always be looking somewhere else for your satisfaction than where you are.

Another way Imposter Syndrome holds you back is in the esteem you cultivate, both in yourself and in others. One big symptom of Imposter Syndrome is vocal self-critique, wherein the sufferer gives themselves a hard time for making mistakes or missing opportunities.

If people see you as someone who self-critiques often, they are going to be unenthusiastic about working with you. It does not matter if your self-critique is well founded or articulate, people are going to be afraid of what happens if and when you finally turn that criticism onto others.

The last way Imposter Syndrome holds you back is in the mentality it fosters. What would a sufferer of Imposter Syndrome get if they finally “made it”? If they finally got where they wanted to be and felt like they earned it? I do not think it would make them more kind. In fact, I think it would turn them cruel.

Sufferers of Imposter Syndrome believe themselves to be inferior to their ideal selves. They allow themselves to be debased and punished by this Ghost of Christmas Future that they imagine as holding the final word on their self-worth. Would that image of superior be kinder if it actually existed? Or would it be crueler?

Imposter Syndrome is never a reasonable response to your situation. It won’t be easy, but you have to do away with it soon, or it will soon do away with you.