

# How to Beat 'Impostor Syndrome'

## Exercise 1

### Warm-up

Have a short conversation based on the questions below.

1. Who's the most confident person you know?
2. Would you describe yourself as a perfectionist? Why? Why not?

## Exercise 2

### Vocabulary

#### 1. **impostor**

Noun

**im'pɑ:stər**

a person who pretends to be someone else in order to deceive people, especially to benefit themselves

She felt like an **impostor** when starting her new job, but her confidence grew over time.

#### 2. **fraud**

Noun

**frɔ:d**

a person or thing meant to deceive people

He claimed to be an expert in property law, but turned out to be a **fraud**.

#### 3. **perfectionism**

Noun

**pər'fɛkʃənɪzəm**

the quality of not accepting any standard that is less than perfect

Overcoming **perfectionism** is crucial for achieving a healthy work-life balance.

#### 4.villain

Noun

**'vɪlən**

a bad or evil character

Darth Vader is my favorite movie **villain** of all time.

#### 5.brilliance

Noun

**'brɪljəns**

very great talent or intelligence

Mary's creative **brilliance** was evident in her paintings.

### Exercise 3

## Reading Practice

Take turns reading each paragraph.

### How to Beat 'Impostor Syndrome'

Have you experienced **impostor syndrome**? It's that feeling that you might be a **fraud**, that you don't belong, or that you're not as good as people think you are.

Maybe you got a promotion or won an award, but instead of celebrating, you feel like you really just tricked everybody — and someone might find out.

Estimates have found that about 70% of us experience impostor syndrome at some time in our lives. It might be just for a few weeks in a new job, or it could last a lifetime.

Former first lady Michelle Obama has openly admitted to having impostor syndrome. So has *Harry Potter* actor Emma Watson.

In 2013, Watson told *Rookie* magazine that it felt like the better she did, the more inadequate she felt. "Any moment, someone's going to find out I'm a total fraud, and that I don't deserve any of what I've achieved," she said.

According to communications expert Lou Solomon, anxiety, **perfectionism**, self-doubt and fear of failure are the symptoms of impostor syndrome.

She says it's like having a **villain** in your ear saying things like, "You don't deserve to be here — these people are really smart." Or they might say that even though you succeeded once, you might not be able to do it again.

But once you recognize your villain, you can fight them. You might even give them a name. Solomon calls hers "Miss Vader," after Darth Vader from *Star Wars*. She has also imagined a hero — "Betty Lou" — who challenges Miss Vader every time she says something negative.

Experts also suggest exchanging negative thoughts for positive ones by celebrating achievements, thinking about past successes and keeping a record of positive feedback from others.

Solomon agrees that impostor syndrome isn't something you fight alone. It's also important to pay attention to friends, family and coworkers, and be sure to let them know when they're really good at something. "Listen for **brilliance**," she says.

## Exercise 4

# Discussion

Have a discussion based on the following questions.

1. Have you ever experienced impostor syndrome?
2. Why do you think so many people experience impostor syndrome?
3. Do you find it surprising that Michelle Obama and Emma Watson have experienced impostor syndrome?
4. Which of your past successes or achievements are you most proud of?
5. When was the last time you got positive feedback from someone?
6. Which of your coworkers would you say is the best at what they do?
7. Do you find being praised at work is necessary for good motivation?