

8. Focus Point: Dealing With Impostors (Social Inflaters)

Authority can be faked and appearances of power manipulated.

This creates an interesting phenomenon of social dynamics: the impostors.

Impostors fake authority and power they don't have to get the same benefits of those who do actually have that power and authority.

[David Brooks](#) calls them “status inflaters”.

I prefer “impostors”, but we will also use “status inflaters” as it provides more immediate clarity to what their game is about.

How To Spot Impostors

Here are the signs you're dealing with

1. Give you task without having authority
2. Explain to you things you didn't ask to have explained
3. Explain obvious things you already knew
4. Act as if they are your mentors when you haven't elected them as mentors
5. “Encourage” you when you needed no encouragement
6. Tell you to “man up”, “cheer up” or “be confident” in all kinds of situations it was uncalled for

Sometimes they are very close to you and obnoxiously easy to spot.

It's the friends who tell “I told you so” when you share a problem.

“I told you so” is trying to impose intellectual dominance over you -just when you need it the least-.

Dangers Of Impostors

Impostors are usually not socially weak, but also far from being powerful people.

And that's *exactly* why but they can be a major threat to your status.

They are a threat to your status because with their shenanigans they are trying to position themselves above you.
And since they are not very high-up themselves, they end up pushing you *really* down.

Needless to say, you want to avoid that.

Dealing With Impostors

How do you deal with these people?

It depends on whether they add value to your life or not.

Since they do take value out of you, to even consider keeping them in your life they *must* add some sort of value to you.

And if that's the case, you can neutralize their power moves on an ad-hoc basis, like this:

1. Prevent it

Prevent it first and foremost by not telling them any issue you're having as that would invite their mentoring.

Say everything is always good.

2. Neutralize Their Power Moves

Make them feel like they're a mentor from time to time, but without allowing them to take a status slot 10 rungs above you.

Instead of direct counter-attacks which would destroy their paper-thin ego, I recommend you sterilize their dominance attempts on a case by case basis by minimizing it.

Here is an example:

***You:** Bro, I tried my best but they went for another candidate. I'll have to keep looking.*

***Impostor:** Damn bro, you went in there unconfident, I told you to go there guns blazing. What you must do is...*

See what he's doing there?

Here he is taking the position of your career coach.

You deal with this by accepting *part* of what they have said and rejecting the most socially-threatening part.

Then you redirect them away from their self-assigned mentoring position.

And finally, you close the exchange by asking them something as *an equal*.

An example:

***You:** I could have been more aggressive maybe, yes. You never stop learning. I think the major issue was the experience because they were looking for seniors. Frankly I don't care, I really wasn't into it... The sparkle was missing.*

But tell me about you, how have you been.

First, you accept part of what they say to avoid confrontation, then you are basically saying "*it's not exactly like you say (so stop being a mentor if you don't know shit)*".

Then you wrap up the topic so they have no more room to dispense “suggestions”.

And then you move on by taking the lead and rebalancing the power relations.

3. Baby Them

If they launch in a tirade cut them short with a “ye-ye” and then change the subject or go somewhere else.

Similar to how Matt Dillon does in this Rumble Fish scene:

<https://youtu.be/35MxqYq1HRI>

4. Drop Them

If they don't add any value to your life, immediately drop these people from your circle.

They take value from you, they're masters at asking without giving and they rarely go anywhere in life.

You don't need impostors in your life.

Life is too short to have crappy people around.

Get real people instead who appreciate the value of a win-win without trying to short-change you.

There is a very good discussion on this topic in the customer's forum. Check it out here:

- [**Status inflaters and social climbing**](#)