



Gifts of Imposter

Unlock Confidence at Midlife and Beyond

Nearly everyone has imposter feelings. According to an MIT Sloan research study, **more than 70% of professionals self-reported having imposter feelings** throughout their career.

That number is likely much higher.

This worksheet is designed for mid-career over-thinkers and high-achievers who continue to experience imposter feelings, despite growing to senior levels in their careers.

Imposter feelings hold them back from their potential. They tend to stall their own growth, second guess their next career move, or lead them to burnout.

After completing this worksheet, you'll be able to step back into your full confidence and authenticity:

- Identify your Imposter Zones
- Read case studies how others overcame the Imposter
- Learn ways to support yourself in these zones
- Open the 4 gifts of the Imposter
- Reflect on your learnings and next steps



What is Imposter Syndrome?

Imposter Syndrome is when we doubt our intellect, skills, or accomplishments. This label is most common among high-achieving individuals.

As an executive coach, the word “imposter” appears when clients face these scenarios such as:

- interviewing
- negotiating a raise
- readiness for a promotion
- starting a business
- presenting and speaking on bigger stages

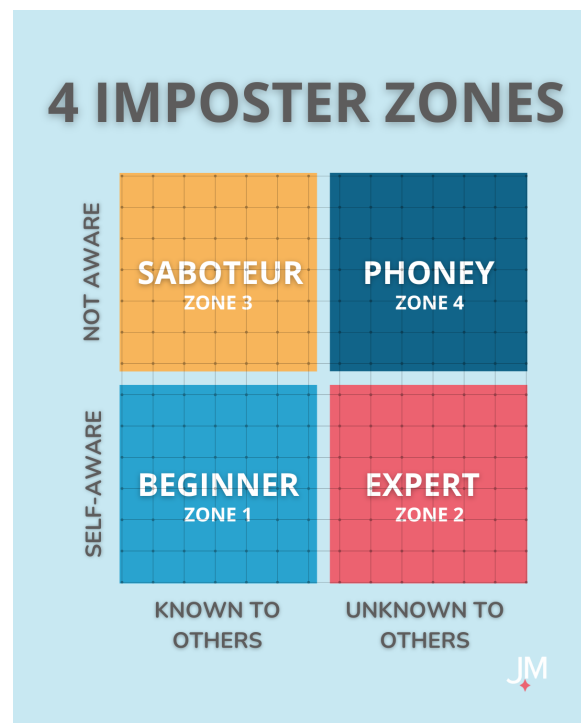
This worksheet challenges you to flip the script on imposter dialogue to return to full confidence. Let's get started.

Imposter Zones

Let's review the four Imposter Zones.

- Beginner
- Expert
- Saboteur
- Phoney

On the next few pages, learn the characteristics, along with ways to support yourself. I've also included a related case study to better illustrate each imposter zones.



Zone 1 The Beginner

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In this zone, imposter thoughts sound like, “*I’m new at this.*” You may have been recently promoted, or taken on a new project at work. The learning curve here is steep. Both Self and others recognize this as the beginner zone.



Ways to Support Yourself as The Beginner

- Stay curious and open
- Ask for guidance or help, and
- Reset unrealistic expectations

Case Study: Jessica the (Beginner) Jogger

When I tried jogging years ago, I would get so frustrated at petering out around the 3K mark. I told my Coach, and he observed, “It sounds like you’re trying to master something you’re new at.” He was right. I compared myself to others who had been running more than for a couple of weeks.

Wait, what about the phrase “Fake it til you make it”? Great question! The telltale word there is “Fake.” When you’re authentically stepping into your potential, you’re becoming. There’s no faking at all.

Zone 2 The Expert

Zone 2 The Expert

In this zone, a person sounds like, *"I might mess it up"* or *"I always get nervous giving that presentation."* You're a senior expert with a proven track record of success. There is no evidence to support you messing up or failing miserably. There's a disconnect between self-confidence and actual results. While the Self feels like an imposter, others see you in the expert zone.



Ways to Support Yourself as The Expert

- Acknowledge your achievements
- Seek feedback
- Watch out for negative self-talk
- Watch out for old expectations (that no longer fit the expert you are)

Case Study: Egan the Expert

A client wanted to overcome self-doubts. He wanted to raise his hand more often and facilitate regular leadership meetings. In the beginning, he would wait so long that someone else would volunteer. Working through living his value of courage, he began raising his hand more often. Each time, he gained more confidence. Within a few weeks, his presentation style became the format the leadership adopted. He was the expert, best-in-show. Celebrating his success, he reflected that he now seeks "data instead of doubts."

Zone 3 The Saboteur

Zone 3 The Saboteur

This saboteur ignores the warning signs and may fall into roles that feel like “golden handcuffs.” In this zone, intuition is ignored to the point of poor health or burnout. There are feelings of betrayal, knowing that what’s happening is not the full truth of the matter. The Self hides imposter feelings. Others see self-destructive behavior.



SABOTEUR

Ways to Support Yourself as The Saboteur

- Create space for reflection
- Identify personal values
- Create healthy boundaries

Case Study Sam the Saboteur

A client knew his pattern of adopting a negative outlook when stressed. He would sabotage opportunities, overthink and overanalyze. We set goals and intentions to shift his mindset and help him reshape what’s possible. With small steps, he managed his stress and caught himself in the sabotaging behavior. Now, he makes different choices and eliminated the word “but” from his regular vocabulary.

Zone 4 The Phoney

Well, a person in this zone would not be reading this! They don't believe they have an imposter problem or don't care. In this last of the imposter zones, the Self hides and also others are not aware of it.

*The Imposter is a self-judgment mindset that
lets you know you're growing*

Four Gifts of the Imposter



Authentic leadership relies on being honest, transparent and aligned.

What you say is the same as what you do. There's no hidden agenda.

Instead of pushing imposter feelings aside, authentic leaders face the hard truths. Here's the four gifts of having imposter-like feelings.

Friction

- experiencing discomfort or resistance.
- Spending valuable emotional energy.
- Feeling like something needs to change.

Feedback

- Body knows before your head does.
- Experience increasingly louder “wake up calls.”
- Have setbacks you’ve never experienced before.
- Understand there's a bigger misalignment happening.

Framing

- Noticing who is using the label of imposter! You!
- Calling yourself out as inauthentic.
- Noticing areas where you're not congruent with what you value.

Foundation

- Declaring what you really want.
- Listening to your inner wisdom.
- Caring enough to take action to unlock your potential.

High achievers experience imposter feelings often because they are always reaching for their next level, not because they're inadequate.

To stay in your comfort zone when you want to make a bigger impact or change would be staying in the **Imposter Zone of the Saboteur**.

What are you aware of now? Answer the following questions to help with raising your awareness and key questions you can ask yourself.

Questions to ask yourself

What zones resonate with you?

- ☐ Beginner
- ☐ Expert
- ☐ Saboteur
- ☐ Phoney

What's happening in your life or career right now that makes these roles true for you?

Friction – Where do you find resistance?

Feedback – What setbacks or emotions are you noticing?

Framing – What's a possible positive outcome?

Foundation – Who are you becoming?

What are some ideas or actions you might take next?

Notes:

Congratulations, now you can see the gifts of the Imposter! I used to believe that feeling like an imposter was such a negative thing as a leader.

What I learned through my own journey and partnering in the journey with my clients is that it's a natural process. We learn, unlearn, relearn. We grow apart from ourselves to find ourselves again.

It's like when I changed careers, I remember feeling this capacity inside me that wasn't being harnessed. I was good at my job but I wasn't fulfilled by it. I didn't give my all to it. It was easy to hide the truth from myself. I ignored the warning signs and imposter feelings. I also ignored the self-doubt I felt staying in a high-paying job that didn't serve me. It was not what I wanted.. I suddenly realized I was burned out. Then, I worked with an external career coach to begin my next steps.

We feel imposter feelings when we are so close at the learning edge to finally breakthrough. That's where you are!

Join us at the next Live Masterclass

Look for the next live training to help you get out of your own way each month! [View the upcoming event calendar.](#)

Next Steps

For more weekly strategies to get out of your own way, subscribe to my newsletter for over-thinkers. [Subscribe now](#)

We often struggle at midlife with imposter stories. These stories keep us small, avoiding visibility and second-guessing ourselves. What if we could return to our full confidence and authenticity?

If this is you...

→ [Tap this link to book a call with me](#)



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