



You're not an Impostor



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You're Not an Impostor. You Are a Work In Progress.

Maybe the deepest work of education is the inner work of believing we are worthy of doing it.

A Quiet Confession

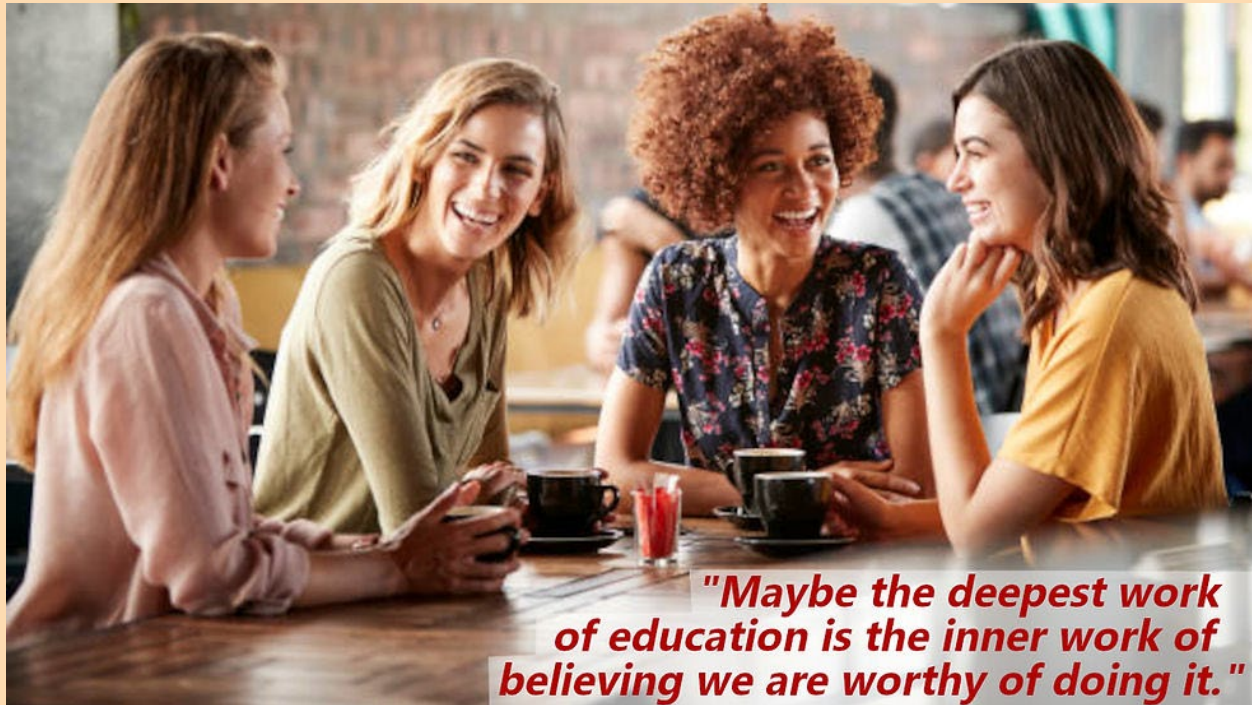
A short while ago, two of my most respected colleagues - both seasoned, thoughtful, widely admired educators - shared with me, somewhat sheepishly, that they struggle with "impostor syndrome."

Their confessions left me gobsmacked. These are people whose work I reference in my own teaching. People who shape policy, guide rising professionals, and publish with clarity and purpose. And yet, beneath all of that, they sometimes feel as if they're living some charade. That they are pretending.

Those confessions have stayed with me - not only because they were so surprising but also because they were so familiar. How many of us, regardless of how long we've been in this profession, have looked around and wondered if we truly belong in the rooms we've entered or in the circles we influence?

These are the symptoms of the subtle, stubborn, sometimes paralyzing power of impostor syndrome.

But perhaps they are also the signs of something beautiful.



The Doubt Means That We Care Deeply

In education, we carry enormous responsibility. We care deeply for our students and their families, for our colleagues, for our communities, and for the future we're shaping every moment, every day. With that depth of care often comes deep self-scrutiny: Am I good enough? Am I ready for this? Have I been fooling myself in thinking I have what it takes?

What if we reframed that? What if the very presence of doubt means we care deeply enough to be worthy of trust? What if we feel like an impostor not because we are one, but because we are growing, stretching, and showing up in spaces and situations that ask more of us than we've asked of ourselves before?

In my work with future and career educators alike, I've come to believe this: doubt is seldom a sign that we're failing but a sign that we are stretching.

You Are Not Faking It; You Are Forming It

Impostor syndrome incubates and proliferates in silence. It feeds and thrives on the idea that everyone else has it figured out - everyone but us.

But the truth is: so many of us feel this way. Maybe even some scared, silent majority of us do. If we can voice those fears, maybe we can loosen their hold.

What if we understood impostor syndrome not as a signal to stop, but as an invitation, instead, to slow down and listen to our truest inner voice who knows us and knows what we are made of - what we are capable of? Maybe if we reframed our thinking, we could consider our pangs of impostor syndrome as the growing pains of our improvement.

Imagine it. Not "I don't belong," but "I'm in the middle of becoming." Not "I'm pretending," but "I'm practicing."

We are not fakes. We are formers - forming our voices, forming our confidence, forming our leadership in real time. The stakes are high. They always have been. Fortunately, we teachers have always been courageous. We're not impostors. We're in progress.



"Doubt is seldom a sign that we're failing but a sign that we are stretching."

10 Questions to Recenter and Reframe Our Thinking

Here are some reflective prompts to help us move through our fear and doubt and back toward the center of our purpose:

1. What am I discounting or discrediting in myself that others consistently affirm?
2. What would I say to a colleague I love and admire if they shared these same doubts?
3. When do I feel most connected to my calling? What is happening in those moments? How can I enjoy more of them?
4. Who and what taught me that I have to be without flaw to be worthy - and can I give myself grace enough to let that go?
5. What does my definition of success sound like, and how does it differ from what's expected?
6. What brave risks have I taken in this work that prove I'm not a pretender?
7. Who is served when I stay silent in self-doubt - and who is empowered when I speak with self-trust?
8. Can I allow myself to be a work in imperfect progress and still be powerful?
9. Where might I find or build a community that affirms growth rather than mirrors insecurity?
10. What is one small, brave thing I can do this week - even with doubt close by my side?

Our Self-Talk Isn't Small-Talk

Because we're educators, we know that self-talk can be a powerful tool for shifting inner narratives. That includes the kind that can fuel or douse impostor syndrome. Mantras and affirmations aren't about denying our doubts - they're about gently re-centering ourselves in truth, worth, and intention. Here are some thoughtful, grounded self-talk mantras specifically for us:

For Grounding Ourselves in Our Worth

- "I belong in this room, even when I feel unsure."
- "My value is not measured by my perfection but by my presence."
- "Becoming better doesn't mean I'm not already good."

For Affirming Our Voice

- "What I know is enough to engage. I can learn more. Learning is lifelong."
- "My perspective is valid. My questions are valuable."
- "I trust myself to speak - even with a shaking voice."

For Celebrating and Centering Our Purpose

- "I am here because I care, and that is powerful."
- "I am not here to perform. I am here to connect, contribute, and serve."
- "My doubt is a sign of my depth, not my deficiency."

For Normalizing and Embracing Our Messy Growth

- "Everyone is learning - even those I admire most."
- "I don't have to know everything to be effective."
- "Uncertainty means I'm stretching, not failing."

For Reclaiming Our Agency

- "I have earned my place, and I continue to choose it."
- "I will not shrink to make others comfortable."
- "I release the need to prove myself. Instead, I am content to be myself."



- **Morning reminders:** Choose one to repeat each day before class, meetings or other important events.
- **Sticky notes or screen savers:** Keep visual reminders near your desk or teaching space.
- **Voice memos:** Record your favorite affirmation and listen when doubt creeps in.
- **Journaling prompts:** Expand on one - write how it feels, what it brings up, or how you want to unpack it more fully.

Parting Thoughts: You're Not Alone

If you've ever walked into a classroom or a staff meeting, up to a conference podium, or into a mentoring conversation and thought, "What if I don't belong here?" - I want you to know: you're not alone.

We can be imperfect and still make a lasting impact. In fact, our willingness to keep showing up, to keep asking ourselves the tough questions, to keep learning, and to keep leaning into the very hardest, messiest, most ambiguous work might be the most powerful leadership of all.

You're not an impostor. You are worthy. And you are becoming.

This Month's Resource:



The Self-Doubt Slayer Imposter Syndrome Workbook from Teachery is full of reflections and activities to help process those underlying feelings that you are somehow less than worthy of support, success and validation for who you are and what you do. Take advantage of this free download and move forward!