



Mobley's Musings: Imposter Syndrome

I sometimes hear people tell me they feel they aren't good enough. In spite of evidence to the contrary, they think their successes have been flukes and fear they're going to be exposed as incompetent. It is surprising that the people who are most accomplished seem to suffer from this malady, known as Imposter Syndrome.

What makes people think they are frauds? Sometimes they compare themselves to other accomplished people and feel they fall short. Comparisons are rarely helpful since someone is always going to be smarter, wiser, richer, or more accomplished than you. And that doesn't invalidate your own achievements.

Trying to figure out why you feel inferior isn't as helpful as figuring out what to do about it. Begin by establishing a baseline of reality with objective data on how you are doing in your position. A coach can conduct 360-degree interviews to gain insights. You could also take an assessment that offers normative data from other professionals.

Second, realize that you and your abilities are unique. They don't have to be on par with someone else's. Put more attention into bringing your abilities into the world to make a difference. When you focus on yourself you become self-absorbed. But when you focus on helping others, your ego takes a backseat and you're likely to find your achievements more satisfying.

Third, reframe your attitude about making mistakes. Don't think of it as failing, but rather as learning. If you never make mistakes you may be playing too small and not taking enough risks. Most entrepreneurs make multiple mistakes before becoming successful. Instead of thinking they've screwed up, they look at their failed attempts as experiences that lead them to success.

Lastly, stop beating yourself up about what you aren't. Unless you have a mental problem, I suspect you don't go around intentionally stepping on nails and hitting your head with a hammer. Constantly minimizing your abilities prevents you from making the impact you're capable of achieving. As Reshma Saujani, founder and CEO of Girls Who Code, declares, it is more important to be brave than to be perfect. So let go of perfection and focus on making a difference.

Sandy



Ask Sandy

Speaking about race and inequality

Recent social unrest sparked by police brutality, especially toward the Black community, has shaken many of us. We may feel angry yet powerless to help. We may have a heightened understanding of inequities in our organizations and feel compelled to express our concerns. Where

can we go with our anger, anxiety, and disillusionment without pushing other people away?

Many of my clients have found success by offering people the opportunity — either virtually or in small group meetings — to share their experiences. They keep the conversations on track by making sure everyone has a chance to speak and by asking others not to judge or challenge others' comments. In these sessions, people feel heard, and often that is all they're asking for. But when someone is experiencing egregious behavior in the workplace, the conversation is moved to a private space to seek more information and identify possible solutions. If no solution is available, the matter is referred to the human resources department or employee ombudsman.

In these conversations, leaders need to avoid making seemingly innocuous comments like "I know how you feel." While we can certainly be empathetic to someone's experiences, we can never truly know how they feel. Trying to equate what they are going through with our own situation diminishes their story and may lead others to resist sharing.

And as much as we may try not to, we may still say something insensitive when discussing race relations. In that case, the best course is to apologize rather than defend. Be vulnerable and admit that dealing with these issues is new for you and that you want to understand and learn. You may also want to enlist others in guiding the conversations. While some of us may be less than eloquent on the topic, staff will appreciate the effort and genuine interest in taking the initiative to pursue these conversations.

Learning for Leaders: Step into sensitive conversations with openness and curiosity. Invite others to share their perspectives without judgment.

Coaches Corner: Support your clients in their efforts to hold conversations about race and inclusion. Provide guidance on making the conversations safe for all involved.

If you have questions you'd like Sandy to address in future newsletters, email them to sandy@learningadvantageinc.com

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Norms: Supporting the Four Stages of Group Development

In most organizations, very little gets accomplished without teams. Productive teams lead to better decision making, stronger working relationships, happy clients and satisfied staff. But effective teams don't just happen.

When team members all share a similar background, their working relationship may be harmonious, but group think can take over leading to stagnation and less creativity. On the other hand, when people with diverse backgrounds, unique styles, distinct preferences, and cherished idiosyncrasies come together, creativity may flourish but team members may stumble trying to figure out how to work with each other.

The key to effective teams is the shared understanding of the standards, processes, and goals governing their work. And there are well-known stages of group development that teams go through to become effective: forming, storming, norming, and performing.

In a team's forming stage, each person brings with them the standards and processes of their previous teams. For example, one person may come from a culture where team members vigorously challenged each other's ideas to arrive at the best solution. Another person may have come from a gentler culture where team members politely questioned but never attacked each other's ideas. You can imagine how such different approaches can lead to conflict. Team members may hold back, behave politely, and watch to see how everything shakes out while objectives, roles, and responsibilities are clarified.

As the team identifies its goals and procedures to achieve them, operating norms emerge that guide how members work together to build shared agreements. Norms that emphasize respect among all team members allow people to feel safe when presenting their points of view and to accept team decision making. The norms become agreements that help individuals know how to behave on the team.

Forming can be iterative: Each time someone joins a team or someone leaves, the team goes back to forming to ensure everyone is still on board with a shared view of objectives, norms and operating approaches. Norms may be revised in these iterations to ensure new members' work approaches are considered. For example, a new member might explain that in her last company important decisions always required two meetings. In the first meeting, ideas were offered and team members advocated for their favorites. . In the interval before the second meeting, people considered the arguments they heard and then made a final decision at the next meeting. This norm was especially helpful for introverts who prefer time to think before responding.

Once the initial forming issues are addressed, teams enter the storming stage where individuals have become comfortable in their positions and may test norms.

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