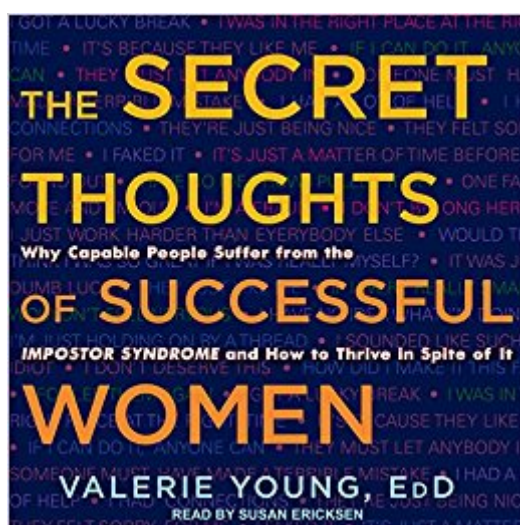


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# The Secret Thoughts Of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer From The Impostor Syndrome And How To Thrive In Spite Of It



## Synopsis

It's only because they like me. I was in the right place at the right time. I just work harder than the others. I don't deserve this. It's just a matter of time before I am found out. Someone must have made a terrible mistake. If you are a working woman, chances are this internal monologue sounds all too familiar. And you're not alone. From the high-achieving PhD candidate convinced she's only been admitted to the program because of a clerical error to the senior executive who worries others will find out she's in way over her head, a shocking number of accomplished women in all career paths and at every level feel as though they are faking it--impostors in their own lives and careers. In *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women*, Valerie Young explains what the impostor syndrome is, why fraud fears are more common in women, and how you can recognize the way it manifests in your life. With her empowering, step-by-step plan, you will learn to take ownership of your success, overcome self-doubt, and banish the thought patterns that undermine your ability to feel and act as bright and capable as others already know you are.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Questions for Valerie Young What is the impostor syndrome? The impostor syndrome describes the countless millions of people who do not experience an inner sense of competence or success.

Despite often overwhelming evidence of their abilities impostors dismiss them as merely a matter of luck, timing, outside help, charm--even computer error. Because people who have the impostor syndrome feel that they've somehow managed to slip through the system undetected, in their mind it's just a matter of time before they're found out. Your book is about

women--do men feel like impostors or is this a female issue? Initially psychologists suspected it was something experienced primarily by women. That has proven not to be the case. Men are attending my seminars in increasing numbers, and among graduate students the male-female ratio is roughly fifty-fifty. I've heard from or worked with countless men who suffer terribly from their fraud fears, including a member of the Canadian mounted police and an attorney who argued before the Supreme Court. In the end, I decided there were more reasons than not to focus on women. For starters my early doctoral research looked specifically at women. Second, 80 percent of my speaking engagements come at the request of women for their female employees or students. More importantly, I aimed the book at women of because chronic self-doubt tends to hold them back more. Can men who experience the impostor syndrome benefit from this book? In a word--absolutely! All the more so if they are a man of color, have working-class roots, or identify with any of the other "at-risk." Similarly, if they know, teach, manage, mentor, parent, or coach a male or groups of males who are susceptible to the impostor syndrome, they will gain greatly from this book as well. What would be one piece of advice from you to women entering the workforce (or academics) at any stage, with regards to impostor syndrome? Impostors, and women especially, have seriously misguided notions about what it takes to be competent. Bar none the fastest way to kick the impostor feeling is to adopt what I've dubbed the Competence Rulebook for Mere Mortals which has as its cardinal rule, competence doesn't mean you need to know everything, to do it all yourself, or to do everything perfectly or effortlessly. Instead competence is being able to identify the resources it takes to get the job done. Do you think it's ever too late to become a "successful" woman? Grandma Moses didn't start painting until she was 80 years old and that, of her over 1,500 paintings, 25 percent were produced when she was past 100. As Mary Ann Evans, better known by her pen name, George Eliot, once said, "It's never too late to be what you might have been." It's also never too late to be the confident, self-affirming person you were meant to be. Just remember to define success on your own terms. What's one mistake that you've seen even the most experienced women make? Whether it's male bravado, denial, or, as some have argued, brain hardwiring, men generally don't hold onto their failures and mistakes the way women do--at least not with the same intensity or longevity. Women can turn the same scene over and over in their mind. Depending on the magnitude of your alleged offense, an incident that took all of ten seconds to occur may take you days or even months to get over. Unfortunately it's easy for women to take a man being less rattled to mean he's more competent--or at least more confident--which to the untrained eye is often mistaken as one and the same. What is one easy

thing we can do to overcome that voice inside our heads? Separate feelings from fact. For example everyone feels stupid from time to time. In fact I can pretty much guarantee that sometime in the next 24-48 hours every person on the planet will have an opportunity to feel stupid. In these moments you need to remember, just because you feel stupid, does not mean you are stupid.  
--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“Young’s extremely perceptive and action-oriented solutions shine . . . A can’t-miss primer for businesswomen everywhere.” ---Publishers Weekly Starred Review

A wonderful book. A must to all, especially for women and adolescents to read. Vera Joffe, PH.D.  
ABPP Board Certified in Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, Licensed Psychologist in FL, NY

I’ve been familiar with Valerie’s work for quite awhile, and have heard her talk about the Imposter Syndrome several times. In both her academic and professional life, she’s spent a great deal of time researching its causes and the psychological/emotional toll it takes on those who struggle with it. Best of all, she’s written an excellent book with practical advice and tips on how to identify and overcome it. With a title like “The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women,” you may wonder why a guy like me would read it. Although the Imposter Syndrome affects women more frequently for reasons she outlines in the book, most men can identify with much of her material. It also provides great insights for men into what our sisters, wives, and daughters deal with on a daily basis. I underlined many ideas that hit home with me and will cite a few examples. Toward the beginning of the book, Valerie lists “Seven Perfectly Good Reasons Why You May Feel Like an Imposter and What to Do About Them.” Reason #1 is that we were raised by (imperfect) humans. As children, the withheld praise that we hunger for from adults can haunt us for a long time. But if we realize that perhaps our parents never received the approval they needed growing up, it makes it easier to forgive them and to move on. She also identifies self-destructive habits we develop to undermine our successes. If we procrastinate on studying for an important test and end up receiving a bad grade, we justify it by saying it really does prove we’re not as smart as others think we are. How we respond to mistakes and criticism factors into a diminished self-image for many people. Valerie reminds us that sometimes our critics are dead wrong. Did you know Walt Disney was fired from a newspaper for “lacking ideas?” Perhaps most

shocking to some readers may be the long list of famous people who confess to feeling like imposters. Tina Fey, Sonia Sotomayor, Meryl Streep, Kate Winslet and the late Andy Williams are quoted. But as mere average mortals, it's refreshing to learn that even those with world-class talent acknowledge their occasional doubts about how deserving they are of their fame. And it's interesting to see how they cope with it. Finally, after presenting the tools needed to overcome the Imposter Syndrome, Valerie presents an inspiring challenge.

"Everyone loses when you play small," she writes.

"There are people out there this very minute who want and deserve to benefit from your full range of knowledge, abilities, and skills. This is a brilliant book that belongs in every self-help library.

Dr. Young has so much wisdom to share. One of the most useful things about this book was that it helped me to identify when I might be unconsciously sabotaging myself, like procrastinating on pursuing challenge or recognition until the deadline had passed, and then using "I was too busy" as an excuse. Because I recognize these tendencies now, I have been able to overcome them. I've also heard the thoughts in this book expressed by friends, and as a result have given a few as gifts, always to rave reviews and appreciation. This book is useful to anyone, male or female, who suspects that they may be holding themselves back in any way, big or small.

Wow! I'm speechless. Finding this book was a blessing. Valerie's book touches up on the very thing that has been plaguing my mind for so many years. It's such a relief to know that there is a name for it and more importantly that I am not alone! I've learned a great deal here and know that when those awful imposter feelings try to take over my mind, I now know to recognize them for what they are and overcome them. This could not have come into my life at a better time and for that I will always be grateful. I'd highly recommend this for all women whether you have imposter feelings or not because if you are one of the fortunate ones who don't feel that way, there's a good chance you know another woman in your life that isn't so fortunate. By reading this book, you can better recognize this type of woman and suggest the book to her. We've got to help our fellow females :)

This book is not only informative, it's absolutely crucial to feeling like "you are not alone." Dr. Young is personable and intelligent, and I'm so glad I bought this book. Made me feel good to know I am not the only one who has struggled with these feelings during my personal and professional development!

I read through the pages often wondering - how did Dr. Young know so much about me? How did she know all my thoughts? She knew me, and the why behind so many things I do, and how I feel, and all the tricks I use. I'm so glad I read this book - because I now have a better understanding of impostor syndrome, and how I can overcome it. Because Dr. Young uncovered so many familiar behaviors, I'm able to recognize them when they pop up and do the necessary work to move forward. This is a must read for anyone who has ever had feelings of being an impostor. It will help set you free for sure :)

When I read the teaser for this book, I felt like someone was reading my mind and knew I needed to read it. It did not disappoint me. So many books of this type provide good information but then keep saying the same thing over and over to make it book length. Not the case with this book. The author presented the information in layers to build integrity and buy-in to why women can see themselves as an impostor, the various angles for how it manifests and very practical tips for overcoming. I highly recommend as any woman will find herself in the pages in some fashion.

As I continue to read this book, I continue to have incredible "aha!" moments! I didn't know ONE person could have so many! But seriously, this should be mandatory reading for senior High School or College Sophomore young women! I could have saved myself over 25 years of banging my head against the proverbial brick wall and wondering, gee, why isn't this working?! Teachers, put this on your reading list for your students; parents, read this with your kids or anybody, give a copy to your BFF. My copy? It's going right next to my Dictionary and Thesaurus ... just in case I need a "kick in the pants" to shut up that little voice inside my head!

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