

Episode 4: Struggling with Impostor Syndrome?

Format

→ Storytelling, discussion, Q & A

Focus

- In this episode, we are discussing strategies for increasing your overall confidence and addressing Impostor Syndrome.
- “What if I make a mistake?” “What if they find out I am not any good?” “What...” I often hear this concern from my students as they are uncertain of how to make the leap from knowing what they have in their heads and really owning it. It is like they are at the edge of a deep chasm, leaning over, looking down and doubting their skills. For a variety of reasons, they are uncertain how to be the expert they want to be.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can I overcome Impostor Syndrome?
2. How can I feel more confident as a therapist?
3. I am afraid of people finding out I really don't know what I am doing. What do I do?
4. How do I get to be like those great SLPs that I see on YouTube or meet at conventions?

Challenge Of The Week

- Recognize one sabotaging thought a day this week and turn it into a positive thought. Recognizing those negative thoughts will soon become easier and turn into a healthy habit.

Quote of the Week

Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do. Benjamin Spock

Tip For Success

- Successful people have had challenges as well but have learned to overcome their challenges. Spend 15 minutes tonight learning tonight about someone you look up to and what they did to overcome their challenges. Learn to emulate those you admire and respect.

Downloads

- Download the worksheet with this episode.

Upcoming Topics

- SLP Scripts



Thank you for listening to *The Missing Link for SLPs* podcast! **If you enjoyed the show, I'd love you to subscribe, rate it and leave a short review.** Also, please share an episode with a friend. Together we can raise awareness and help more SLPs find and connect those missing links to help them feel confident in their patient care every step of the way.

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*Do you have a question you'd like answered on the show?
Send a picture of a Post It note or message to Mattie@FreshSLP.com!*

In this episode of *The Missing Link for SLPs* podcast, **I want to talk about imposter syndrome**, and how to build your confidence as a speech language pathologist.

Why this topic?

A lot of Post It notes that come up to me at the end of class or get slipped under my door around, **“how can I feel more confident?”** I understand this question coming from students because they're learning a new skill. *And* I understand this question coming from those of us who don't feel as confident in who we are or what we're doing, even with years of experience.

When I stepped out of my medical setting, and into the academic setting as an assistant professor, I struggled a little bit with imposter syndrome myself because I have a master's degree, and I almost said I only have a Master's degree, but then I am working on changing my way of thinking. I have a master's degree. I don't have a PhD, but I don't need a PhD. Nor do I necessarily want a PhD. But for some reason, when I was stepping into the academic field, and the academic setting, I just felt like I was stepping into the land of giants. There are so many PhD speech pathologists out there, and I thought my word, I'm never going to live up to them. **But I realized that I can live in my own genius. And I'm good at what I am good at.** And I'm not pretending to be a PhD. I am pretending nothing. I'm just being me at my master's level.

Stepping into the internet doing these podcasts is also hard because it's just me sitting here talking to a microphone. And it's, I think to myself, am I telling people, am I sharing stories that really have merit to them? And sometimes the speech pathology world is not such a friendly world. And I don't want to get ripped apart and I don't want to get, you know, hate mail and all of this stuff. But then I realize that **I've got to step forward and be brave**, and I'm not an imposter doing anything. **I'm not pretending to know things that I don't know. I'm just being me.** So I understand where the lack of confidence can come in sometimes, and where sometimes we can feel like imposters. So that's why I chose to talk about this today.

Changing Our Thinking

I want to discuss **ways to improve our overall confidence and to change your way of thinking.** So a lot of times people who struggle with imposter syndrome will have questions that run through their heads like little mice. “What if I make a mistake? What if they find out I'm not any good? What if? What if? What if?”

Research shows - when I was preparing for this article, I looked up research - **research shows that 70% of us have some difficulties with our confidence.** So the thoughts that you have of not being overly confident are not unreasonable. In fact, as a clinical supervisor, **I would rather have a student that comes to me not as confident than somebody who's overly confident** because somebody who's overly confident, that tells me that she may not be thinking things through all the way, she may be making decisions that are possibly not in the patient's best interest. So the fact that you're not overly confident, is probably a good thing. **I don't want you to be under confident either.**

So let's talk about ways to get your confidence at a good healthy level. The best way to stop feeling like an imposter is to stop thinking like an imposter. And yes, it's as easy as that. Neuroplasticity is the new buzzword out there. But this is neuroplasticity at its best. If you keep thinking the negative thoughts of, “I'm not good enough, I don't know enough they're going

to find out about me," those negative pathways in your brain will be reinforced. So you've got to change those feelings. To stop feeling like an imposter, you've got to stop thinking like an imposter. **So the first thing to do is change the way you think.**

Separate your feelings from fact, recognize when you should feel fraudulent and when you shouldn't feel fraudulent. Rewrite your automatic negative thoughts and let go of that perfectionism. You don't have to be perfect. In fact, no one is and no one does have to be perfect. **Accentuate the positive, develop a new response to failure and mistake making. Realize you don't have to know everything.**

So let's separate feelings from facts. Sometimes you will have these feelings of "I didn't do a very good job at that", or something where you're just not complimentary to yourself. Is that a feeling? Or is that a fact? Feelings are not always accurate. Facts are. So question yourself when you have those feelings. Is that feeling accurate? Did you really not do a good job? Were you really wrong? Were you not prepared? Or did you just not do the best job that you wanted to because you're a perfectionist? So **rewrite your automatic negative thoughts and let go of perfectionism.** You don't have to be perfect. You do want to do your best and that's okay. If you're in this field, you're more than likely a high achiever in being a high achiever. Achievers find being an overachiever and a perfectionist is not such a healthy thought pattern. So let go of some of those separate feelings from facts. When you don't feel that you've done your best, or you've done something not perfectly, let it go.

And be kind to yourself and accentuate the positive things that you did do. You did a good job with something that you did - focus on those things and develop a way of rephrasing your negative things into positive things. Accentuate the positive. **If and when you do have a failure or make a mistake, develop a new response to that.** We all do something wrong. It happens to every single one of us and instead of kicking ourselves around the block, saying, "Oh, you know all these terrible things about yourself. "Rewrite what you say to yourself. Say, "yes, I made a mistake. But next time I'm going to do this..." Realize **everybody makes mistakes, and how you respond to those mistakes, and those failures determine much of your mindset and success for the future.** And realize, you don't have to know everything - nobody does. **Let somebody else be the expert in another area, and you'll be the expert in your area.** So the first thing to do on building your confidence in changing imposter syndrome, is change your thinking.

Collect Positive Experiences

Second thing to do is collect your positive experiences, as that's going to help change your way of thinking. Those little thoughts, those little awards that you get at work. Those little Post It notes that people send you, the thank you notes, the positive things people say about you. Write those down, keep them in a file folder, pin them on your bulletin board at your work behind your desk...keep track of those things. There's a lot of people who will see good in you. Look at your education and your training.

I was talking with a student the other day, and she's like, "you know, I just don't feel like I know what I'm doing." Which is, which is fine. That's okay. But trust, I asked her I said, "Well, did you do good in school?" She had. And I said, "well, then trust that your professors taught you well, and that you know the material." Students are interesting, because you're learning to, you've got this

knowledge up here, but you're learning to apply it in the clinical setting. That's what this podcast is all about. It's about taking what you know, and applying it in the clinical setting.

So when you struggle with feelings of confidence or imposter syndrome, rationally talk to yourself in your mind and say, "You know you did a good job at school, and you've done well with your grades and your professors have said you've done well." **Look at those positive experiences and trust in that.** Trust in that. **Listen to what your professors have said. And listen to what your colleagues say. They are going to pull out some positive things about you.**

If you are unable to grab some of those things, go to a trusted colleague, and say, "**I'm struggling a little bit right now. Can you help me identify some areas of strength that I have?**", and then build on those areas of strength.

Visualize Your Success

And the third section, after changing your thinking and collecting positive experiences, is to **visualize your success.**

One of my favorite quotes is, "*success comes not to those who deserve it, but to those who work hard for it.*"

Building your confidence, overcoming impostor syndrome, is something that you have to work hard for. It does not come naturally; overcoming. **You have to discipline your thoughts, problem solve solutions and develop contingency plans when your thinking is not optimal, but it's worth it.** And you have the power to change the way you think you have the ability to build your confidence and do away with imposter syndrome.

Now, that being said, I am but a medical speech pathologist, and sometimes confidence and imposter syndrome issues go deeper than a podcast. **I'm a big big proponent of mental wellness. If you feel that you would benefit from a non-biased third party, seek out the help of a counselor.** Listen to uplifting podcasts, find other resources out there on the internet to help build your confidence. I am a confident speaker, but I have not always had this confidence. As I mentioned at the beginning, I had to learn how to be confident in a brand new setting, mainly a campus setting recently, and I've had to learn how to be confident here on the internet. **It's taken hard work, but it's definitely worth the rewards.** So I encourage you to step into that confidence and go be the best you can be.

Challenge of the Week

At the end of every podcast, I'll include a challenge for the week. And the challenge for this week is to **recognize one sabotaging thought a day this week and turn it into a positive thought.** Just one a day. Recognizing those negative thoughts will soon become easier and turn into a healthy habit.

Quote of the Week

Quote of the week is "*trust yourself, you know more than you think you do.*" That's by Benjamin Spock.

Tip for Success

Remember that successful people have challenges as well, but they've learned to overcome their challenges. Spend 15 minutes tonight learning about someone you look up to and what they did to overcome their challenges. Learn to emulate those that you admire and respect.

Upcoming Episodes

Your download for this week is the show notes and our very **next upcoming topic is SLP scripts**. This upcoming topic is a hot topic with the students that I work with. And **SLP scripts are what to say for those crucial conversations and how to start those conversations keeping them lean, agile and effective**.

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