A close-up, sepia-toned photograph of a woman's face. She has dark hair and is looking directly at the viewer with a contemplative expression. Her right hand is resting against her cheek, with her fingers partially hidden in her hair. The lighting is soft, creating a warm, intimate atmosphere.

Say goodbye to "
the Imposter Syndrome
And claim the success you dream of

Suzanne Mercier



Hi –

My name is Suzanne Mercier. I help female entrepreneurs and business women develop the self-esteem and confidence to commercialise their innovations and change their world.

I guide them to dismantle the mindset barriers, build the necessary foundation to handle the uncertain journey more effectively, to recognise their own immense value, find their Purpose and make the difference they alone are capable of.

This short paper will provide critical steps on the most exciting journey of them all ... the journey who you really are.

Time to step out from behind its shadow!

The Imposter Syndrome may be a constant companion or an occasional visitor. Either way, it stands between you and your dream business or career.

The challenge with the imposter syndrome is that it surfaces when we find ourselves in circumstances that create personal uncertainty – which is different for each of us, depending on our early experiences and the meaning we gave them. Then it disappears again. We return to feeling confident and capable ... until the next time.

If you have a tendency to experience the Imposter Syndrome and it raises its ugly head more than once in a blue moon, you know the impact it has on you. Decisions are made in a moment leading to the path our life and career take ... although we may not realise it at the time.

When we're triggered into feeling like imposters, it's as though a switch to our logical brain flicks off and something far more primitive switches on. We seem to lose

connection with our own capabilities ... even with our ability to articulate our thoughts or ideas.

This triggered reaction certainly gets in the way of us performing to our peak. We may be consumed with self-doubt and keep second-guessing ourselves. We may pull back from career and even life-changing opportunities because we feel we're not yet perfect. We may withhold our ideas in fear of someone else judging them. We may be entrepreneurs with great dreams of changing the world yet either fearful of putting our ideas out there, or unconsciously sabotaging our efforts.

I've worked with hundreds of female entrepreneurs and businesswomen. They typically show up with similar challenges. So, here are the top 7 challenges they experience and how to deal with them. Resolving these and other challenges led to my total approach, outlined below.

DISMANTLE LIMITATIONS

- Map perceptions and Success DNA™ to identify specific limitations
- Recognise triggers that activate the syndrome
- Identify & remove underlying beliefs
- Unpack & address coping behaviours
- ...

DEVELOP FOUNDATION

- Develop personal wisdom
- Counteract imposter self-fulfilling prophecies
- Reclaim strengths, successes and their value.
- Unpack your own response to events
- Build resilience and positivity
- ...

DESIGN YOUR FUTURE

- Find your Purpose and Identity: your Why and who you are at your core
- Get clear on your Vision ... really clear
- Develop your (personal) brand and positioning
- Ensure Purpose, brand positioning and sales message (USP) aligned
- ...

DELIVER YOUR VISION

- Deliver your Vision ... change the world
- Take action, sooner vs. later (MVP)
- Establish feedback loops for market and learning
- Apply tools to limitations as they arise
- Promote with Clarity and consistency
- ...



One of the key concerns I get from clients is about confidence. It deserts them in times of need.

1.

They lack confidence

Confidence comes from healthy self-esteem ... not vice versa

Genuine confidence is humble. A confident person, man or woman, doesn't need to prove anything to anyone. **It's not about ego.** It's about knowing and accepting their own value and understanding that **everyone** has value.

Genuine confidence flows from a healthy self-esteem (our identity). However, the reverse isn't true. We can have areas of confidence, yet experience the state of low self-esteem.

When someone experiences the Imposter Syndrome, they have a limiting belief about who they are. I call it a case of 'mistaken identity'. They see themselves as not being good enough which, unfortunately, becomes the prescription for the lens they view the world through. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and impacts whether or not they can see their own capabilities and value.

Confidence without self-esteem is hollow and precarious

When we feel we're not good enough, the last thing we want is someone else to figure that out. So, we won't ask for help. We won't admit we don't know something. We'll bluff our way through before we'll expose ourselves to judgement and rejection.

The trouble is, if we tend to experience the Imposter Syndrome, even when we show up looking confident, it's not deep-seated.

Scratch the surface with the right kind of uncertainty (an area we're sensitive about) and our confidence vanishes. Self-doubt creeps in and we go into react mode to protect ourselves from discovery as not being good enough.

So, confidence that is based on bravado, ego, and not on solid self-confidence is like a house built on sand.

Build Self-Esteem. Confidence will follow.

Healthy self-esteem is the foundation of everything good in our lives.

It's not about ego or faking it til we make it.

It is about seeing who you truly are and accepting yourself fully - the glory bits and the gory bits. It's about constantly growing, not because you're not good enough, but because learning increases our intelligence. It's about helping others and celebrating their wins because they show what's possible. It's about recognising what we bring to the table and finding a way to use it in service of others.

True confidence comes from knowing you are a worthwhile human being. You have a difference to make and you can only do that when you recognise you ARE good enough.



2. They DISMISS their value

My clients tend to dismiss their talents and capabilities, disregard their successes or fail to see their value!

We create a self-fulfilling prophecy of not being good enough

Feeling that we're not good enough arises from a belief about who we are and how worthy we are. It has become part of our identity.

We filter our experience through our identity. Who we believe we are influences our expectations which drive our behaviours, impact our results and reinforce our belief. We set up self-fulfilling prophecies that keep the feeling of not being good enough on a loop when the 'right' circumstances occur.

Self-fulfilling prophecies reinforce that we're not good enough. **And that feeling torpedoes your confidence.**

We can't see or value our abilities, so we're can't contribute

Our state of low self-esteem influences our ability to recognise and value the qualities, experience, capabilities we bring.

We unconsciously tell ourselves "*If I can deliver XYZ at a high level, and I'm not good enough, then what I can do can't exactly be rocket science!*"

We dismiss our own immense value and are then unable to see the unique contribution we could make. We don't experience the fulfilment from making a difference. And the world around us misses out.

Reclaim your Value

Take 2 blank pieces of paper and draw a line down the centre of each.

On the first piece, label the left side "Strengths & capabilities", and the right side, "Value" "(or the benefit of those strengths & capabilities). Complete it as far as you can. Then ask a trusted colleague or friend who knows you well, to contribute to your list.

On the second piece, label the left side "Successes" and the right side "My role". Again, complete it as far as you can then ask for help.

Now sit and connect with your results.

3. They look to others for validation



They tend to have an external frame of reference - meaning they give power to others to define who they are.

When we feel we're not good enough, we look externally for validation

Our frame of reference reflects how we determine our needs, desires and evaluate our successes. Where do we place authority? Who provides permission for our actions and decisions? What feedback do we need to know how well we have performed?

When we feel we're not good enough, we commonly place that authority, permission and source of feedback in the hands of others. It's called an external frame of reference (**EFOR**).

This is an important area for me to address with my clients. Why? Because the ability to decide for oneself is the basis of self-motivation, self-regulation and confidence.

We compare our insides to other people's outsides

We compare ourselves – the 3 a.m. version where we doubt ourselves, the world and our place in it – with the seemingly confident facade of others.

We don't realise they're probably doing exactly the same thing.

You see, around 70% of people experience the feeling of not being good enough (also known as the Imposter Syndrome) at some stage in their careers.

And because we all put the very best version of ourselves forward, it's an invalid comparison. It only serves to confirm that we're not good enough. We need to shift frame to a predominantly Internal Frame of Reference (IFOR)

Validate yourself!

We all start out with an EFOR so we can learn about the world. Developing an IFOR occurs as we mature. However, whether and when this happens is strongly influenced by culture. Try this out on your role. If you are to recruit someone, what would you look for?

1. Develop a checklist for a particular area of responsibility in your role.
2. Once you have that list, check in with yourself as you go through each element on the checklist. How well are you fulfilling that area? Score out of 10
3. We can be tough on ourselves, so get someone you trust to give you feedback so you can create realistic expectations.



4. They take things too personally!

It's a fine line between emotional engagement and taking things personally!

We want to be engaged with our work. Not emotionally plugged in!

Being emotionally engaged can be a very positive aspect of our work. It often comes from knowing and living our work Purpose.

Emotional connection through Purpose leads to high levels of employee engagement – the pot of gold for the entrepreneur, employee and the business.

However, there is a difference between being emotionally engaged and taking things personally or being emotionally plugged in.

When we're too emotional, we can find it difficult to make effective decisions. We may interpret situations in an emotionally loaded way - feeling betrayed when someone doesn't do 'the right thing', rejected when they disagree, or defensive when given feedback.

Taking things personally can be a sign of low self-esteem

When we take things personally, we may be sensitive to the words and actions of others and interpret them in a negative way.

For example, someone who is usually pleasant snaps at us. If you take things personally and experience the feeling of not being good enough, you would probably feel hurt and wonder what you did to create that reaction. You would then be likely to avoid that person for a period of time.

Someone else with the ability to be objective when required would be likely to identify other factors that could have contributed to the unusual bad temper. They are unlikely to see themselves as the cause.

Expand the possibilities

We need to break a pattern. To do that, we need to open up the possibility that there were other possibilities.

1. **Unpack the situation:** Event - what objectively happened. Interpretation - what did you make that mean? Response - how did you respond. The key is to recognise your response is related to your interpretation, not the event itself. How else could you interpret the situation? By doing that, you're opening up possibilities.

2. **Distance yourself.** Sometimes we get too close to a situation - literally - and we can't see what's going on. Bring the situation up in your mind. If you look around in your mind and see that you are part of the unfolding scene, step out of the picture and watch it as an observer. This will reduce the level of emotional arousal and enable you to see the situation more objectively.

5.

Personal boundaries are your limits and rules within relationships

They indicate what's OK with you and what isn't.

Learning to set healthy boundaries is necessary for maintaining a positive self-concept or self-image.

Boundaries are your way of communicating to others that you have self-respect, self-worth and won't allow others to define you.

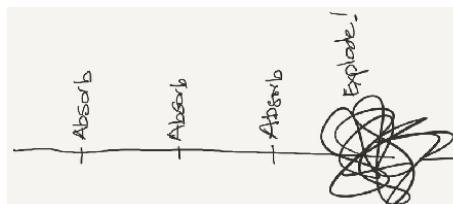
Personal boundaries are the physical, emotional and mental limits you establish to protect yourself from being manipulated, used or violated by others. They allow you to separate who you are, and what you think & feel, from the thoughts and feelings of others.

Their presence helps you express yourself as the unique individual you are.

The absence of healthy boundaries can create resentment

The lack of healthy boundaries can mean it's very hard for you to say 'No' even when you really don't want to do something.

Not knowing what's OK with you and what isn't can lead to very strong reactions to seemingly innocent situations.



You may feel put upon, manipulated, used and disregarded ... resentful. Others can be confused by your reaction. They don't know where the strong reaction came from. It feels excessive.

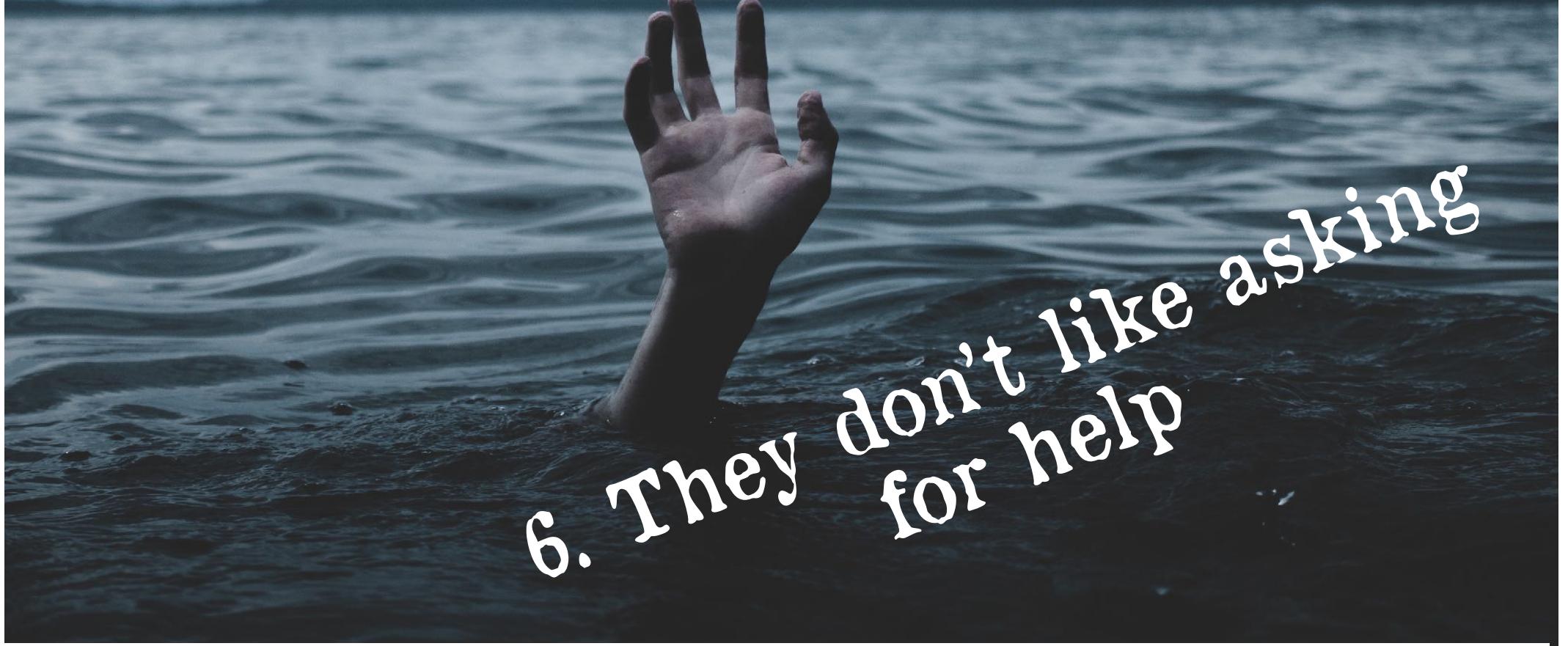
Reclaim your boundaries"

If you don't have healthy boundaries now, it's likely you never developed them. You would only know your boundaries have been crossed when you experience the belated emotion of anger or resentment (for example).

You need to tune back into your internal response: what you think, feel and how you respond internally.

At first, your recognition will be after the event. I suggest to my clients that they deal with it then so that they are starting to set their boundaries.

Over time, your awareness of your personal, physical emotional and mental boundaries will increase and you'll recognise it in the moment. IN that way, your response can be appropriate to the situation, rather than a suppressed over-reaction.



6. They don't like asking for help

Help lets others know I'm not coping and therefore I'm not good enough!

If I deserve this opportunity, I should be able to do it without help

Have you heard that before? Have you ever thought it or said it?

Many of my clients feel that they're admitting failure when they ask for help. If they got the opportunity, they 'should' be able to do it.

It's one of the reasons women don't go for jobs unless they have all the specified competencies. "*I need to be able to be productive and valuable from day 1.*" They don't allow themselves time to get up to speed.

We can be tough on ourselves. You too? Often we don't give ourselves a break. We judge ourselves and our achievements too harshly. We let falling short of perfection mean that we don't measure up, instead of realising that perfection is NOT POSSIBLE.

Asking is a behaviour. It's not about who you are.

When you ask another person for help, your act of asking is a behaviour that arises out of a lack of understanding, skill or capability in a particular area.

Your need for help has nothing to do with your worth as a human being; about whether you're good enough.

It doesn't mean we aren't intelligent or good enough. It means that we don't know what needs to be done ... yet.

When we ask, we are giving others an opportunity to be of service. Most people love to be asked for help and will accept your request if they can.

Practice vulnerability ... ask

You may not always get a Yes. It may be that the other person is not in a position to help, so you have to be OK with getting a 'No'.

It is not personal. It is not about you or your worth. It is about what you requested. and whether they can help.

If the other person is unable to fulfil your request, he/she may negotiate what they can do, the timeframe or one of the other parameters of the request.

Practice asking for help and listening to your emotional response to theirs. It's great information on what you believe about yourself. You can then challenge the belief if it no longer serves you.



7. They compete rather than expand the pie

So many women see their opportunities as limited and we think we have to compete with each other to get ahead

The representation of women declines further 'up the ladder'

On entering the workforce, the number of men to women are roughly in balance.

It's only as we move up the ladder that we see the number of women dropping off and the percentage of men climbing.

The gender balance issue is a wicked problem - one that actually defies explanation. There are so many moving parts that there is no one solution. All we can do is take a step-in the right direction, check to see how the problem is showing up after our actions, and then look for the next step.

Women's attitudes and behaviour towards each other is one of the glass bricks

If you're anything like my clients, you may see the current playing field as the framework for your entrepreneurial business or career moves.

You may see so few women on boards, and believe that one or more have to leave before another woman will get that opportunity.

You may realise how few women actually secure funding for their great ideas and think you're competing with other women for the dollars.

You may see another woman's successes as limiting your own and fail to celebrate her win.

Every win expands the pie

Part of our challenge is that we have so few role models and many of those have had to fight like h*ll to get there.

If they're generous, they'll hold out a hand to help others step up. If not, they can make life very difficult for those who come after them.

Do your best to be generous and supportive of each other. Celebrate each other's wins and see them as reducing the barriers you have to face.

A key to being generous is to realise that each of us is on our own journey with its unique challenges. It doesn't serve you to compare yourself or your achievements to those of another woman. Celebrate her win. Learn from her. See if you can walk in her footsteps. And then win the battles in front of you!

Make the decision for YOU!



'Decision' is a word that's taken way too lightly. A true decision is a complete commitment.

I trust that you've seen that there is a path to Beyond The Imposter Syndrome. Feeling not good enough now doesn't need to cost you opportunities and your future.

You are talented and worthy. There is no-one else quite like you. And the world is a better place when you see your own value humbly and without comparison to others. In that space, you can be generous, recognising that their value doesn't detract from yours, opening the way to embrace diversity and collaboration.

Not only does moving beyond the Imposter Syndrome help you bring your innovation to life, to achieve your career or business dream, it spills over into other areas of your life.

All it takes is a decision - not a wish - a decision for you!

*Thank you, thank you, thank you for coaching me.
I wouldn't have had the courage - or even the thought - to step up as a manager if it weren't for you and the work we've done together over the last 6 months.
I realise I'm in new territory now - and you're the best compass around!*
**Senior Manager,
Leading Australian Insurance Company.**

Let me know if you'd like to know more about "Dare to be Successful™" so you can enjoy the business or career success you really want!



Imposterhood
Step beyond Limitations

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