



Break down the barriers to your success

So you can design and achieve the future you want

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Hi there,

My name is Suzanne Mercier. I help talented women – entrepreneurs and leaders or managers like you – overcome the deep-seated feeling of not being good enough. Also known as the Imposter Syndrome, this feeling can be a barrier to the success you dream of.

You have the talent. It's likely you would achieve the success you dream of anyway. When I look back, though, I sure wish I'd known then what I know now. I would have achieved my dream business a lot sooner.

This E-book will help you understand why the Imposter Syndrome is a key barrier to success and give you some ideas on how to move past its grip.

You're talented. You know what you're doing. You're going to be successful anyway. But if you experience the Imposter Syndrome, it's slowing you down ... perhaps even derailing you!

A short-sharp background to the Imposter Syndrome

What is it? It's a rigorously researched phenomenon. The Imposter Syndrome relates to the feeling of not being good enough. People who experience it feel like fakes or frauds when they're in the midst of an 'episode'. They dismiss their talents and successes. If they're successful, they believe they've got everyone else fooled into seeing them as more capable than they believe themselves to be. They focus on their weaknesses and failures. The irony is that they need to be successful first in order to deny their role in that success.

The tendency to feel like an imposter is set up by **nature** (personality factors) and **nurture** (perfection, criticism and labels received as children).

They don't experience the feeling of not being good enough all the time. It comes and goes, depending on what's going on around them and whether those situations create a feeling of personal uncertainty.

Back to you. You may present yourself confidently. When you're feeling like an imposter though - which can happen at the most 'inconvenient' times - you react. It may be mild or it may be a meltdown (internal or external).

Here's the impact it can have on you. When it comes up, you could experience fear or self-doubt, you may second-guess your great idea and/or the value of your services.

It is common in the moment you experience the syndrome that you lose contact with your capabilities, perhaps even your ability to speak (yes, that actually happened to me at a speaking engagement). * You may hold yourself back because

you're not perfect yet. * You could find it challenging to sell yourself, your idea and/or your product or service.

* You may undervalue your offering. * Applying for VC funds or pitching your idea could cause you to freeze.

* Perhaps you don't put your ideas forward in a meeting.

* Saying No! could be a major challenge for you.

* Charging (or earning) fair money for the work you do and the value you give could be difficult.

The list goes on. The key message here is that the Imposter Syndrome could be getting in the way of your success, triggered by situations that create personal uncertainty.

Decisions are made in a moment leading to the path your life and career takes ... although you may not realise it at the time. Pulling back when opportunities to stand up and be counted show up can be a devastating decision.

There's heaps of advice that will tell you to take small steps, build your confidence and you'll be able to handle the impact of the Imposter Syndrome. To a degree, that's true – at least in the short-term.

Let me ask you this. Do you want to remove the challenge in the moment only? Or do you want to really knock it on the head? How much faster could you move in your entrepreneurial business or intrapreneurial endeavours if you trusted yourself, stopped second-guessing your insights and decisions and really went for the business or career success you're dreaming of?

On the following pages are seven ways you may be undermining your success if you experience the Imposter Syndrome. Importantly, I've outlined the first steps in the path forward.

You dream of being successful. When will you be ready? If not now, when?



1. The Imposter syndrome hits us in our self-worth!

When I talk to clients about barriers to their success, they say “lack of confidence”! That’s the symptom, not the problem. The problem is a case of ‘mistaken identity’.

You need to feel confident when you’re putting yourself and your great idea or offering to those you need to buy-in.

Lack of confidence comes across in the tone of your voice, the clarity with which you communicate your idea, your ability to handle questions and pushback.

And research shows humans tend to interpret lack of confidence as lack of competence.

Yet, the feeling of not being good enough has nothing to do with whether you are capable. It has to do with the way you see yourself, your self-view, your sense of self-worth, your identity. When you see yourself as not being good enough, it is typically a case of mistaken identity; an inaccurate belief.

Change that and you change both your confidence and other people’s perception of your competence.

Consider who you believe yourself to be

In the context of work, success and the legacy you want to leave, what do you believe about yourself? Who do you believe yourself to be? How do you show up?

Get feedback from others if you get stuck on this.

Check in with your beliefs and challenge them for their validity and usefulness.

Consider who you admire and what they ‘must’ value and likely believe about themselves plus the world around them that they are successful’. What can you learn from them?



2. We lose sight of our strengths & value, leading to self-doubt

Believing you're 'not good enough' blocks your view of – and access to – your qualities, strengths, capabilities and their value.

The feeling of not being good enough is underpinned by a belief that who you are is fundamentally less than other people.

For some, self-doubt can motivate them to greater heights to prove they **are** good enough. For others, it can be crippling and cause them to pull back, missing out on opportunities.

It manifests as self-doubt. It can also block access to your strengths and capabilities, or cause you to minimise their value. “If I feel I’m not good enough, then xyz (my capabilities) can’t be exactly rocket science”.

Even when you have the capabilities, you are likely to find yourself doubting them, holding back, thinking you need one more degree, one more course, to read one more book, then you’ll have what it takes.

There may indeed be gaps in your capability - we can always learn more to develop mastery in our area of expertise. I doubt though, that’s what’s holding you back.

Reclaim your Value!

1. What do you believe you’re really good at. How do those qualities and capabilities create value at work?
2. Ask a trusted colleague or friend who knows you well, to contribute to your list. Contemplate their feedback to see if you can relate.
3. Keep a list of the testimonials, thank you cards/emails and other external feedback that you are valuable and appreciated. Look at it when you feel flat, to remind yourself of your worth.



3. We let others determine our value which can lead to a rough ride

When you rely on others to determine your worth or the worth of your idea, you're giving away your power

Your products and services are there to meet specific needs in the market. You definitely need an external focus (also known as an external frame of reference) to better understand your potential clients, their problems and pain in order to offer a meaningful solution.

However, when you interpret feedback on what might not be working and/or how you could improve your offering as confirmation that you're 'not good enough, you're allowing someone else to define your worth.

Venturing onto the market or putting your idea to stakeholders is an act of trust and vulnerability. To reduce that feeling of vulnerability, you need to be able to separate who you are from what you do.

And it's not about faking it til you make it. That's a coping strategy that simply delays the day of reckoning when who you are and how you're showing up become too different to be sustainable.

Take back your power

1. Unpack gestalt reactions. Meaning, go from big picture reactions - such as today was terrible - to understanding the nuances. Some things may not have been great. Something important may not have worked out. However there were good bits in there too, perhaps even things that were great. Make a note of them: the great / the good + what you can do to improve and the not so great + what I could do instead. In that way, you're positioning feedback as a positive experience and taking improvement into your own hands. It makes it so much easier to take feedback from others.
2. Make it about what you're doing, not who you are. Watch your language. I am stupid is very different to I did something stupid. One is easy to fix, the other reinforces the feeling of not being good enough.



4. Selling our idea or offering feels like exposing ourselves to the world!

Selling is making an offer that another party may accept or not. If we take it personally, it is an incredibly vulnerable experience.

You've come up with a terrific idea. You're so excited. You can't wait to share it. You're happy to talk about it to any who will listen. The minute you have to package it up, position it to solve a key problem for the target market you have in mind, and put it out to market (or to your stakeholders), though, something happens.

Suddenly it's real. By committing yourself in some form of media, you're giving others the opportunity to review and judge what you're doing.

That vulnerability can bring up all sorts of self-protective behaviours designed to reduce vulnerability and restore some semblance of control. We may believe if we 'build it they will come' even though we know the market can be quite crowded. We could keep revisiting what we've come up with, seeking to perfect it. We might even sabotage our best efforts, all to reduce the likelihood that someone else may confirm our worst fears ... that we're not good enough.

It's time to flip the game.

Reposition Selling in your mind.

1. Recognise Selling is like matchmaking! You're not perfect for everyone. And that's OK!
2. You need to work out the problem and resulting pain that you can help relieve or remove. Then you need to find the people or groups who experience that pain.
3. Next, figure out why we can solve that pain better than someone else.
4. Then ... and here's the flip ... It's not about you, it's about them and being of service to them. When you take the emphasis off yourself and put it onto your clients and your Purpose for being in business, you are able to put your product or service out there, knowing that the right target market will pick it up.



5. It's harder to differentiate between being emotionally engaged and taking it personally

Engagement requires us to be connected at an emotional level. That's not the same as taking things personally.

One of the amazing strengths of women is our need and ability to be emotionally engaged with the work we do in order to find meaning and fulfillment.

Emotional engagement is very different to taking it personally.

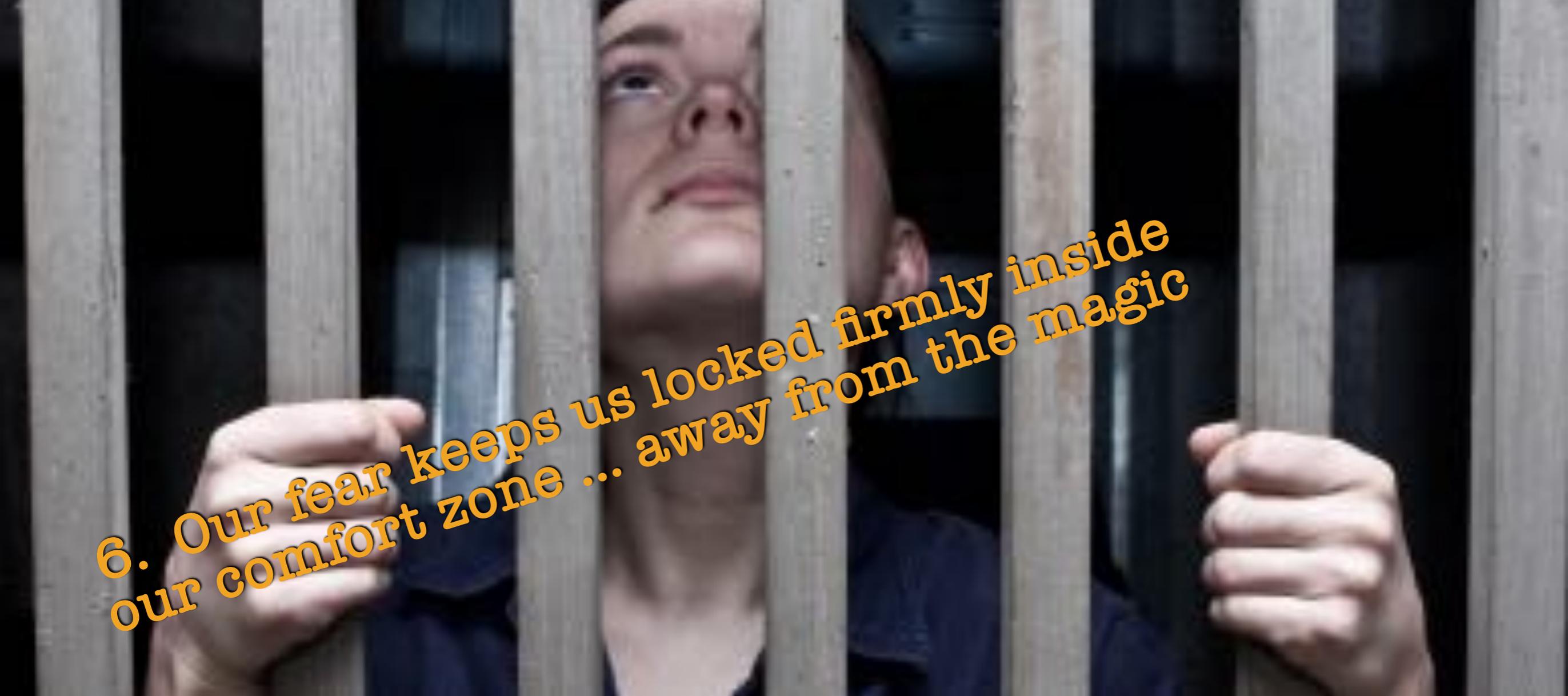
Emotional engagement comes from recognising the importance of what we're doing – the Purpose and contribution we're making by doing the work we do.

Taking it personally means we have blurred the boundaries and work has become entwined with our identity.

When we experience the Imposter Syndrome, it's more likely that we will take work very personally or anything else we do. Feedback can be taken as confirmation that we aren't good enough. The need for collaboration or co-creation can be interpreted as an indictment on the quality of our solo work. Taking it personally can be a career or business de-railer.

Check in with yourself:

1. Find the Purpose for what you do; the way your qualities and capabilities can be of service to others, allowing you to make a difference. Be inspired by being of service. Point 7 talks more about the ways to find your Purpose.
2. Notice your reactions in team situations, when you're collaborating with others or when you're getting feedback from others. If you feel you need to defend yourself, or feel the need to make others wrong, or even the need to control the situation, you may well be taking it too personally.
3. Divorce yourself from the business from your idea, from the products or services you offer. Your offering is not you (identity). Your work is what you do. Recognising that others can improve on something you developed does not mean it wasn't good enough!



6. Our fear keeps us locked firmly inside our comfort zone ... away from the magic

Venturing outside our comfort zone can be unnerving for anyone. Some dig deep, find the courage to go for it. Others ...?

Self-doubt is human. We all feel nervous in the uncharted territory outside our comfort zone. After a little while, though, many realise the discomfort has gone and now they're even a bit more adventurous in other areas of their lives too. Unless you experience the Imposter Syndrome where the lack of belief in yourself erects an additional barrier.

Let me explain. In denying your role in your successes, you remove bricks from the foundation of your self-esteem and confidence. You are likely to find it more challenging to expand your Comfort Zone, instead remaining wary of the unknown - at least in areas of personal sensitivity.

In the business world, the outcome of remaining uncomfortable can show up as fear of failure, or judgement and rejection by others, fear of not being special, fear of missing out, fear of being caught out or even fear of success and the expectation of pulling the rabbit out of the hat again.

Fear is the greatest inhibitor to success. Fear is what you need to overcome. But fear catches you unawares until you understand what triggers the fear; the external factors that create your personal uncertainty and lead to an experience of the Imposter Syndrome.

Deconstruct the fear

1. Notice what creates the personal uncertainty for you and whether that personal uncertainty is getting in the way of you achieving the success you dream of.
2. Now unpack the situation that created the uncertainty. Who said / did what?
3. Examine your own interpretation of what was said and done.
4. Ask yourself 'What must I believe to have interpreted the situation that way?'
5. Then question whether that is the most useful interpretation. If not, how else could you have interpreted what happened?



7. Until we can see our value,
our Purpose will remain elusive

Offering a new idea, product or service feels vulnerable. Setbacks can derail you. Motivation and inspiration are critical to keep going in the face of brick walls.

Purpose is the ultimate motivation. It will inspire your actions and choices every day. It puts challenges and setbacks into a bigger picture context. It helps you develop the resourcefulness, clarity, focus and commitment to bring your Purpose alive in some way.

When your great idea, product or service comes from your Purpose, you have the day-to-day excitement and energy to do what needs to be done to be of service.

Purpose is the ultimate hack for the Imposter Syndrome. Purpose is far bigger than you or me. In the context of your Purpose, you become the best version of yourself. Your insecurities seem minute by comparison.

While it's the ultimate hack for the Imposter Syndrome, without doing the work – which is a personal journey to understand who you are – it can be difficult to hold current reality and Purpose driven possibility in two different hands and work in a positive way with the tension between the two.

There are multiple ways to identify your Purpose.

Purpose is all about a much bigger agenda. It's not about you ... or me. Rather it's about the service you can render to others; the change you can be in the world to paraphrase the words of Gandhi. Here are some ways you can identify your Purpose:

1. A watershed moment - one of life's huge events that causes you to re-evaluate everything and ask questions such as "Why am I here?".
2. The benefit (x5) of your product or services for others.
3. The gap of unmet needs in a product or service currently being offered.
4. Something that was missing from your childhood.
5. The legacy you would like to leave.



Is it time for you to change the way you see yourself?

You have a unique take on the world around you ... unique experiences and unique interpretation of those experiences. You have a role to play in creating a sustainable future; to creating wholehearted businesses that engage and inspire others to contribute to their highest potential.

Recognising your immense value, showing up as the best version of yourself and being inspired by the contribution you can make will create an exciting future.

This is no time to play small; to hide your light. Now is the time to do what you need to in order to make the difference only you can make.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you for coaching me. I wouldn't have had the courage - or even the thought - to step up 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!"

Ellen, Senior Manager,
Leading Australian Insurance Company.

Would you like to learn more?
Call our email me for an obligation free conversation about what you need and what I may be able to do to help.
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The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.
Eleanor Roosevelt.

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Wholehearted Business

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