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Do You Really Deserve That Job?

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Applying for your dream job is a thrilling prospect. But if you're like 70 percent of Americans, you may feel like you don't deserve to get that dream job. The application process could make you feel, ironically, like a fraud.

"People who identify with the 'impostor syndrome' feel they've somehow 'fooled' others into thinking they're smarter and more capable than they believe themselves to be," says Valerie Young, who does workshops on the syndrome. "They have a skewed definition of competence. As a result, they hold back and don't go after that killer job they really want."

But the impostor syndrome doesn't have to handicap your chances to advance. Instead, consider these tips to have -- and enjoy -- the career of your dreams.

Get Clear

Before you apply for your dream job, figure out what triggers fraud feelings:

- Are there parts of your job you don't think you do well?
- Are there parts of your dream job that you don't think you're qualified for?
- Are there parts of the [job search](#) process that scare you? Which ones?

"A lot of people will look at a list of job qualifications and even if they have eight of 10, they won't apply," she said. "I used to work for a Fortune 500 company and have been on the other side of the [interview](#) desk. You don't have to know how to do all of it. You just need to know 40 percent. The rest you can learn on the job."

Get Help

Once you know what's holding you back, seek advice from a coach, a mentor, or trusted colleague with expertise you need.

"Instead of seeing it as a sign of ineptness, use it as an opportunity to grow your knowledge," says Young.

"As confident as I feel in my career as a presenter, if Oprah called me tomorrow to be a guest on her show, I'd be panicked. But I wouldn't squander the opportunity," Young says. "I'd hire someone to get me very well prepared. Figure out what you need -- more time to prepare, coaching -- instead of saying, 'It's me. Everyone else is competent.'"

Track Your Successes

"Keep an 'effort and accomplishment journal' to record your accomplishments -- no matter how small -- for example, coming up with a great idea at a meeting that day," says Young. "Track small steps you took or other ways you put in the effort to achieve your goals."

Ask Questions

"At the [interview](#), ask your own questions," says Diane Zorn, who researches the phenomenon among high-achieving academics. This will help you assess and avoid workplaces that make employees:

- Feel isolated.
- Participate in cutthroat competitiveness.
- Figure the job out as they go. There's no mentoring.
- Base success on what they produce, not how they work.

Any of the above factors on its own isn't enough to cause impostor feelings. But together, they're a dangerous combination.

"Ask, 'Am I going to get mentoring? Will I get training? Will I be part of a team?'" she says. "That's self-care for the employee, and the employer is going to respect that."

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