**TSK Imposter Syndrome 1 and 2**

0:03
Hi everybody.

0:04
Welcome to this SSP fireside chat.

0:08
My name is Adrian Stanley.

0:10
I'm a independent consultant and former SSP President and member of the SSP Mental Health Awareness Task Force that SSP President Randy Townsend initiated this this year.

0:29
The task force really is being charged with looking at bringing a broader awareness around mental health issues and especially within our community and society.

0:41
What might we do as groups to sort of help our SSP member base face some of the multiple challenges around mental health issues?

0:54
So today alongside myself, we have two of the task force members.

0:57
We have October Ivans, who's a also a past president of SSPA, former librarian and happily retired industry consultant.

1:09
And along with that we have Ryan Ray who's a senior digital publishing strategist for the American Academy of Paediatrics.

1:20
Importantly to Ryan is a Wiz with podcasts and technology, and along with his insightful thoughts and questions around the topic of impostor syndrome, we'll be the one who's pulling all this session together.

1:37
We're also very blessed to welcome Sarah Durant.

1:42
After a successful career in scholarly publishing, Sarah qualified as a professional ICF accredited coach in 2012.

1:55
That same year she established Lead from Within.

1:59
Sarah's done some amazing work in leadership, coaching and transformational learning.

2:07
I know first hand because I've worked with Sarah and fully recommend all the the things she she does.

2:15
Sarah is well known for her immersive courses, webinars, small group learnings, helping helping people grow beyond impostor syndrome.

2:25
But you may have heard a number of of webinars and trainings and sessions that Sarah's done around impostor syndrome.

2:33
So we're very lucky to have her here to talk collectively with us and share our insights and wisdom.

2:40
So, Sarah, I think perhaps a good starting point is perhaps a little intro from yourself into imposter syndrome.

2:48
I mean, in a way, I think imposter syndrome is quite AI find it quite a problematic phrase, to be honest with you.

2:56
I mean, anything with syndrome in it, it's a bit challenging really.

3:03
I think it's a constellation of thoughts and emotions, physical sensations, because you know, there's a nervous system component, a somatic component and a behavioural component, and I would argue also a kind of spiritual or existential component because imposter syndrome has a lot to do with belonging.

3:29
So the definition I've been working with for the last seven years in my work in this field is from Valerie Young, who wrote a book called The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women, and she defines impostor syndrome in her work as I'll.

3:48
I'll read the quote actually, because I quite like it.

3:50
It's short.

3:51
All impostors have in common a distorted, unrealistic, unsustainable definition of competence.

4:00
Now I think it's a lot more than that, but I think she's also getting right to the marrow of it as well.

4:06
It is a distortion.

4:08
So distorted thoughts, distorted feelings and behaviours, it is unrealistic.

4:16
Things become wrong sized in imposter syndrome.

4:19
So for example, everyone else has got it together and I don't know anything, you know, that's a distortion and it's also very unrealistic.

4:28
And then the third adjective she uses is unsustainable.

4:33
And we can see that over time, if, if we're, if we're experiencing distorted thoughts and, and emotions and behaviours over time, that is going to be unsustainable.

4:45
It's going to be tiring at best.

4:48
And at worst, I think it can conspire towards burnout and so on.

4:56
And, and there's also, I mean, in the context of, of the focus of your A series here in terms of mental health, there is, there is a correlation between imposter syndrome and things like anxiety, depression, low self esteem.

5:15
And then we can imagine the kind of behaviours that flow off the back of that.

5:19
You know, this is a term I've heard forever and didn't really associate with myself until I was looking at Sarah's slides and doing a little reading.

5:31
And what jumped out at me is that two of the characteristics that are common for a lot of people who have this are perfectionism and procrastination.

5:45
So I was really excited to find out that there's some sort of reason and why this has been such a long term problem for me.

5:56
Yeah, I mean, those two, October, I think are really, they're very much in what I'm calling the constellation of symptoms, if you will, of imposter syndrome.

6:08
I talk about the draining P's in my work and you know, I'm laughing.

6:15
They're not funny.

6:16
Procrastination, perfectionism, people pleasing, and I call it towering through.

6:24
So that thing we do and they're all compensatory behaviours, right?

6:28
They're all, they're all behaviours that we can go into because we're experiencing these challenging impostor thoughts and feelings.

6:37
I'm not good enough, I'm not ready.

6:39
Everyone else is better than me.

6:42
I'm not talented enough, I'm not experienced enough.

6:44
Whatever the narrative is, it's always a narrative of less than and other people are more than.

6:51
And to sort of compensate for that, we can get thrown into these behaviours, these draining P's and I, I think they correlate with survival behaviours in human beings.

7:06
So survival behaviours in humans like fight, flight, freeze fawn, right?

7:13
We know that.

7:14
We know that when our limbic system is activated in our brains, we can go into those behaviours.

7:22
So fight, you could argue, translates to perfectionism in the sense that we're fighting against reality, we're trying to make things perfect, and of course that's a losing hand every time.

7:34
There isn't such a thing as perfection.

7:36
And actually in most situations in life, our 80 or 90% is more than good enough.

7:42
But but when we're in this distorted space, we're striving for 100% all of the time and then we get to that unsustainable piece where we're just feeling anxious all the time.

7:52
We're feeling unfulfilled, we're missing the mark in our own scheme of things and so on.

7:59
Similarly, people pleasing, I think correlates with fawning, the fawn response in in humans.

8:07
So we again, in that sort of not good enough feeling, we, we start kind of yes, Sir, no Sir, 3 bags full, Sir.

8:15
To everyone else.

8:16
We're tending to their needs.

8:17
We're neglecting our own.

8:19
We're saying, we're saying yes when we want to say no.

8:22
We're taking on more work than we can handle all those kinds of things.

8:26
And, and more procrastination I think correlates with freeze, the freeze response.

8:32
So we don't know what to do one way or the other.

8:34
So we don't do anything because it kind of feels safe.

8:38
But of course it's not, it's not a realistic response in life and and certainly not in the workspace just to freeze.

8:47
So yeah.

8:48
And powering through I think correlates with the fright flight, excuse me, the flight response.

8:54
I'm not making any of these things wrong.

8:56
I think, I think they're, they're just human.

8:59
They're what we do when we're under pressure.

9:00
We go from thriving behaviours to survival behaviours and we can experience it in ourselves.

9:08
It doesn't feel good.

9:09
It feels uncomfortable.

9:10
Our nervous systems feel activated.

9:11
We can be in meetings and you know, have tunnel vision, sweaty palms, racing heart, constriction, not wanting to speak, all these things.

9:21
Sarah, I'm sort of wondering you you keep saying the word distortions and I think it again, there are probably a lot of dimensions to this.

9:28
But if there's sort of like if we can probe that a little bit and talk about maybe like the internal versus external forces.

9:36
So I mean, some people may feel impostor syndrome, like some of these statements spite of flight responses coming from themselves saying that it like almost in, in a mirror.

9:47
And then also sometimes we we face external pressures that may kind of force us into this sort of mindset, you know, maybe it's a work situation or a, a personal relationship.

9:57
If we if we could talk a little bit, I I guess sort of like nature versus nurture here.

10:02
Yeah, yeah.

10:05
And in a way, I hear you, Ryan.

10:06
And in a way, what comes to me is that nature, nurture, they're often presented, aren't they, as a binary in the dominant culture.

10:14
And I think, I think really it comes down to the same thing at the end of the day, which is, is early life experiences.

10:24
So yeah, family of origin schooling, that kind of thing can set us up for the way our nervous system is calibrated, the way the way we feel in certain situations.

10:40
I mean, if I was looking at what might correlate with nature, if I keep it with the personal, there's something for me around what I'm bringing because of my family of origin, my schooling, my early years experience, the way my nervous system is set up and, and kind of, you know, small T trauma, you know, experiences of rupture that weren't repaired in my, in my upbringing, let's say.

11:07
And then there are systems around us, around me that might be systems that, that do more or less harm.

11:16
So arguably a hierarchy, which is by its nature a power over paradigm, which most workplaces still conform to a lot, a lot of us experience that as oppressive, you know, consciously or unconsciously, even even when it's well conducted, because we're losing a degree of our autonomy.

11:40
And that can create a stress which can kind of throw us into these survival behaviours.

11:45
That's just one example.

11:46
Is that sort of what you were thinking a bit about?

11:49
Ryan Yes, absolutely.

11:50
I mean, I think imposter syndrome certainly for me has, has come a little bit from the sort of like authoritative, like hierarchical perspective that sometimes comes with, you know, myself gaining some sort of position or somebody else in some other position and sort of feeling like am I, am I good enough to do this?

12:14
Am I qualified?

12:16
Am I capable?

12:18
And then from there, various responses of sort of that boiled down to can I figure this out?

12:25
Listening to you, it makes me think of like a continuum.

12:28
Maybe imposter syndrome is on a continuum where at one end we might experience kind of what I would call healthy self doubt.

12:37
It's like, well, you know, can I do this?

12:39
Am I, am I up for this kind of thing?

12:41
And maybe that's got a little kind of stimulating response.

12:45
I might, I might be motivated to seek out a mentor.

12:48
I might be motivated to read around this new position or to, to reflect on the experience I have.

12:54
And that seems to me sort of fairly healthy.

12:58
And then it might sort of go right the way through to a belief, like a quite an entrenched belief of I'm definitely not good enough, I'm not worthy.

13:08
Everyone else has got it together.

13:10
You know, I'm winging it.

13:12
They're going to find me out.

13:14
I feel like a fraud, all these sort of things.

13:16
Ticker taping in.

13:20
And that's, that's not a resourced place that's, you know, the limbic system is activated in, in I'm not a neurobiologist, but but in broad brush terms, as I understand it, the prefrontal cortex kind of goes offline at that point because it's not needed.

13:36
And we lose things like access to our creativity, our compassion, our curiosity, all of which like our calmness or clarity, all of these wonderful qualities that will help us kind of right size what's going on and right sizing it in.

13:53
The example you gave might be, wow, I've got this promotion.

13:57
It feels kind of big.

13:58
I wonder if I can fill these shoes.

14:02
Let me see.

14:03
Let me be curious.

14:04
Let me lean into it.

14:05
But there's a lot in the dominant culture, I would say that conspires against that because we have a dominant culture at the moment with a very strong narrative of invulnerability.

14:16
Everyone's supposed to know what they're doing all of the time.

14:19
You're not meant to show any kind of chink in your armour.

14:22
You're meant to have an answer for everything.

14:24
The higher up, the ladder you go, the more you're meant to know.

14:30
And you know, here we are the most in debt, addicted, medicated, depressed, anxious adult cohort we've ever known as far as we can tell.

14:42
And, and I'm not saying that's all down to hierarchical structures or impostor syndrome, but, but it's all in the mix, right?

14:50
I mean, people, people talk a lot about toxic masculinity and I'm, I'm really starting to push back on that.

14:56
Personally, I'm, I'm really interested in toxic invulnerability.

15:00
It's genderless as far as I'm concerned.

15:03
And I would say if you're working in an organization where authenticity isn't valued and invulnerability is, then imposter syndrome is going to thrive.

15:15
It's a really simple equation, Sarah.

15:21
Just thinking of our audience, of people who are listening in.

15:24
I think data and stats say there's a very large proportion, 70% plus of, of, of people who've experienced imposter syndrome.

15:37
Is there anything around those sort of demographics?

15:40
Obviously there's the sort of different aspects of that.

15:42
And, and I'm drawn to actually a discussion I had at an SSP meeting a number of years back with a, with a group of fellow SSP members, many who were female.

15:53
And we were talking about things like applying for jobs and how sometimes, you know, there might be 10 bullet points and requests and you cover eight of them.

16:04
But, but a female may not wish to apply or think themselves good enough where a male's like, oh, you know, let's go for this.

16:12
I'm, I'm OK.

16:13
And so the broader demographic that at some point everybody's likely to experience it.

16:18
But are there subtleties of ways and, and things that could be done to to kind of understand the bigger broader behaviours and, and experiences?

16:29
Yeah, I mean, yeah, there's such a lot in what you're saying there, Adrian.

16:34
Like when I first started in this work, the research, which was about seven years ago, the research said that it, like you say imposter syndrome, it effects about 70% of us, says the research right now.

16:47
I've always been a bit suspicious of that because I think if it's 70%, then surely it's kind of more than that.

16:53
And because, for example, you can often have conversations with people and you say, do you know about impostor syndrome?

16:59
And they say, no, I don't know what you're talking about and I don't have it.

17:01
And they're very sure, and that's fine.

17:04
And then you say, right, so you don't have a harsh inner critic and you don't second guess yourself, and you don't worry that you're not good enough.

17:10
And they go, oh, God, yeah, I do that all the time.

17:12
And they just haven't quite associated that with this, with this rather strange Yeah.

17:18
Phrase impostor syndrome.

17:21
I think the research up until recently.

17:24
The researchers said that historically, impostor syndrome has impacted women, more people of colour, people from historically and and currently oppressed or yeah, oppressed groups.

17:45
So it might be members of the gay community, it might be older people in a younger environment or younger people in an older environment.

17:52
It's it's that kind of there's a narrative of belonging and not belonging with impostor syndrome.

18:02
To your specific point about, let's say there are 10 points on a job description, and a woman might be feeling pretty confident about eight of them, but she's less confident about the other two, and then she feels dissuaded to apply.

18:20
And I've definitely been that woman more than once.

18:25
If you look at people like Brene Brown's work, she talks about how men and women, boys, boys and men and girls and women are socialised in such different ways even now.

18:41
So for women and girls, the narrative is to do with perfectionism and you know, thin, pretty, all all these things that that, you know, most of us kind of would wish we're not still in in the Geist, but they really are.

19:01
And perfectionism is really big for girls and women in terms of the way we're socialised still, hence the high score rate of these things.

19:09
But because I don't score the two, I don't resonate with the two.

19:14
Conversely, at the same time, boys and men are raised still to kind of bluff and kind of tough it out and be the ones who know.

19:24
And that carries its own kind of toxic constellation of pressures, as we know.

19:28
I mean, you only have to look at the suicide rate, which is the biggest cause of death in the UK, at least for men between the ages of 20 and 45.

19:36
Why we aren't all out on the streets protesting that, I have no idea.

19:42
But yeah, there's so.

19:45
So when it comes to that job description, they might only have 5, but because of that conditioning, they're just like, yeah, Chuck my hat in the ring.

19:52
And that gets rewarded in our culture.

19:57
Or it can do so.

19:59
Yeah, I, I, it's, it's massively challenging.

20:02
So I think one of the really helpful things we can do when we look at imposter syndrome is, yeah, have a look at who might be struggling with it and how that might be influencing their choices, how it might be influencing the way they show up.

20:20
Can we have a conversation around it?

20:22
Can we bring some oxygen to it so that there's awareness and you know, the chance, the chance to shift the the narrative a bit and in in for people to feel their power?

20:33
Sarah, I'm sort of struck by imposter syndrome and sort of classifying and defining it.

20:41
Like it, for example, it doesn't appear or maybe it does appear or is mentioned in the, the DSM, which is that like textbook that is used a lot to sort of like define and treat diagnosis.

20:55
Like they, they, they aren't gonna sell an over the counter cure for imposter syndrome, right.

21:00
So I guess I'm just wondering if you're looking at, let's say you're in the position of you're looking at a job description and you're not applying because you only meet eight out of the 10 criteria or five out of the 10 criteria.

21:12
And you're feeling, you know, maybe feelings of inferiority or feeling like I, I can't go for this.

21:18
I don't, I don't meet, I don't meet all the needs.

21:20
Like what are maybe some, some practical resources that people can sort of go towards to, to, to counteract that if they want to.

21:29
That's such a good question, Ryan.

21:31
And I mean, the answer's kind of huge because I, I guess, and, and arguably it's going to be different for each person depending on how imposter syndrome is expressed in them, what their experience is.

21:49
And of course, it might be different for one person in different situations.

21:58
Yeah.

21:59
I mean, I don't know, for some people, for example, public speaking might bring out a freeze response, a sort of procrastination response, whereas another person might be like, Oh yeah, I, I can't wait to get on the stage, you know, and it's really up for it.

22:13
But something else is challenging for them.

22:16
I would say for everyone as a minimum, I, I talk in the work I do, I call it ABC.

22:22
Awareness brings choice.

22:23
So it's really fundamental to start with awareness, which is almost so obvious it's not worth saying.

22:32
But I think it is because, you know, imposter syndrome has a lot to do with shame and because it has a lot to do with shame, we don't talk about it, you know, and, and you know, again, in Brene, Brene Brown's work, she talks about if you want shame to thrive, bring three things, put it in a Petri dish and bring three things in secrecy, silence and judgement and shame will thrive.

23:02
And that is kind of what goes on in the culture.

23:05
So I would say ABC is where we start.

23:08
Awareness brings choice.

23:09
And I've, I've done work with organisations where senior people have really, really led from the front on this.

23:14
So I'm thinking of one organization in particular where I did a talk a few years ago and it was a publishing company and the, the chief operating officer came to the talk.

23:26
We had 60 or 70 folk in the room in Oxford and a bunch more coming sort of wired in from different parts of the world

23:34
And I talked a little bit about it through some slides and then put it out to the floor for discussion.

23:42
And she stood up straight away, first question.

23:45
And she said, I've struggled with this all of my professional life.

23:49
And I swear to you, 60 pairs of shoulders in that room just relaxed, you know, because all of us are carrying all of this stuff.

24:00
I'm not good enough.

24:01
I'm not this enough or that enough.

24:04
And then the kind of deadly bolts is, and it's just me.

24:09
It's just me.

24:11
And there we are, secrecy, silence and judgement and we're off.

24:14
You know, shame is multiplying.

24:16
Whereas if we take another 2 words instead of just me, we substitute them for me too.

24:25
Then we're bringing empathy and the possibility of compassion, the possibility of a sense of common humanity.

24:34
And that's when things, that's when you get dialogue, that's when you get understanding.

24:38
That's when you start to move through these things.

24:40
And they're very practical things.

24:42
Beyond that which I teach in my four week course and in in my workshop around, I do quite a lot on mindful self compassion.

24:54
So meeting anything that arises with unconditional kindness, which is such a simple thing to say, but it's so counter cultural and counter even sadly counter intuitive for a lot of us.

25:09
One of the very big challenges with impostor syndrome is we get a very, very active inner critic.

25:18
And I think the inner critic is, is very misunderstood.

25:24
People talk about you have to shut your inner critic up.

25:26
You have to banish your inner critic.

25:28
You have to kind of squash it and quash it and all these things.

25:33
I think our inner critics are, and most people have them.

25:38
They're they're what, what psychologists would call a sub personality.

25:43
They're a part of us that is trying basically to protect us, to help us survive.

25:51
They just have a very old script which is an internalised script of be perfect, you'll be loved, get it right, you'll belong.

26:00
All these rather toxic narratives that we've absorbed from family of origin, from schooling and all the rest.

26:05
So it's for me, it's not about squashing the inner critic, it's about meeting that part of me with unconditional positive regard and love.

26:15
And a lot can move from there.

26:19
And again, if we look at the neuroscience, if I'm in my limbic system, fight, flight, freeze, fawn, a lot of adrenaline, a lot of cortisol going on, if I can bring awareness to, to what's going on with me and meet myself with compassion, neurologically, there's much more chance of my prefrontal cortex coming back online, giving me access to all sorts of generative and resourceful energies such as curiosity and calmness and creativity, and also also the desire and ability to connect with other people.

26:57
Because imposter syndrome, if nothing else, is isolating.

27:01
That's a whole mouthful of words.

27:02
And I don't know, I hope in some part I answered your question and, and so many other practical tools and tips that I've shared over the years.

27:17
Just to give one example, and it's not mine.

27:20
It's ripped straight out of the pages of the Brene Brown playbook.

27:23
And you can tell I'm a bit of a fangirl.

27:28
It's definitely worth watching her Ted talk, The Power of vulnerability, I think.

27:33
But she talks about permission slips.

27:37
One of the things that imposter syndrome, very sadly, one of the kind of impacts it has is it can hold us back.

27:45
It can have us playing small.

27:47
We don't speak up in meetings.

27:48
We, we're, we're too afraid.

27:50
We're worried about the kickback.

27:53
We don't cut ourselves forward for that expert panel.

27:55
We don't speak at the conference.

27:57
We don't.

27:58
Whatever it is, you know, we have a narrative that we won't, we won't do well with it or we, we won't, you know, we'll, we'll somehow be wrong or we'll fail.

28:09
And Brene Brown talks about write yourself a permission slip.

28:13
So it might be permission to make a mess if you're a perfectionist.

28:18
It might be permission to draw a boundary if you're a people pleaser.

28:22
It might be permission, permission to take one small step if you're locked in procrastination.

28:27
And it might be permission to have a rest if you're someone who habitually powers through or to delegate if you're one of these people who does all the things because you feel you must.

28:38
Ryan, can I just add one point to there?

28:41
One thing I have noticed more and more, I do think employers when we talked about the sort of job example can also adjust wording, make it more friendly and open for people to apply.

28:54
I actually saw an example yesterday.

28:56
I was talking with someone and it, you know, it, it can really help make a difference when looking at the sort of language and wording and then other different programmes that can help HR or other departments to, to make language more diverse and inclusive.

29:12
So I, I think on both sides, there's things that that people can do.

29:19
Yeah.

29:19
And Sarah, listening to you, I was thinking about, you know, the two sides of this because everybody in the workplace deals with this for themselves.

29:31
But if you're a manager or a coworker and you have influence or expected to help and guide other people, one of the things that was said to me pretty early in my career, you know, a woman who was my supervisor at the time and became sort of a mentor, she was trying to help me with my procrastination

29:57
She said, what do I have to say to make you understand that you're 70% is better than most people's 100%?

30:08
So just do enough, you know, just get past it.

30:15
And I sort of used a version of that coaching staff over the years because it I didn't, I didn't automatically believe it, but it was something I would replay and try to coach myself on.

30:30
It's like, surely this is enough or it's close enough that you can let it go.

30:37
Yeah.

30:38
Yeah.

30:38
I hear you, October.

30:40
And a couple of things come to me hearing you.

30:43
One is, I think if that works, then great.

30:46
You know, it's like you're meeting someone at a kind of cognitive and belief level.

30:52
So, you know, I'm telling you as the person who's responsible for managing you or supervising you, that you're 70% really is good enough.

31:02
And if, if we're in a trust relationship where that feels safe, you know, then that that could work, that could work really well.

31:11
And, and you know, by the sounds of things that that gifted something to you, it, it enabled some sort of movement.

31:19
I would also say alongside that, that because we are dealing in some cases with early childhood experiences and things that get encoded in the nervous system, sometimes the cognitive approach isn't effective.

31:33
So in other words, I can sit here till the cows come home, let's say, and know that if I'm twiddling with my slides at 1:30 in the morning for a talk, I'm due to give the next day at 9:00 AM.

31:47
Because my perfectionism is running me.

31:50
I know cognitively I've done enough.

31:54
And yet my system just can't.

31:57
You know, I have to do this thing because the system, my system, is trying in its own way to protect me, to keep me safe.

32:06
And no amount of cognitive incoming at that point is probably going to help at that point.

32:15
I would, I would suggest kind of meeting the situation where it hurts most, which is, you know, it's, it's for me at that point, it would be about soothing the nervous system.

32:25
It might be like orientation, looking around to see that I'm safe, sending signals to my nervous system that I'm safe.

32:33
I mean, really we, we are talking about trauma.

32:35
I don't mean large T trauma, but small T trauma, everyday trauma, which you know most of us are carrying.

32:46
If, if, if a situation doesn't feel safe, cognitive input isn't going to talk us out of it.

32:52
That's not how the limbic system is designed.

32:56
It's designed.

32:59
It's not interested in reason or logic.

33:01
It, it if, if, if the nervous system is calm, then that I would say that's the place to come to for that, which is why I think mental health is, is a slightly, I don't know about problematic, but limiting term.

33:20
We need to be looking at ourselves as whole beings, really.

33:24
Although people might say, you know, that's what I mean by mental health.

33:28
But typically it's very cognitive in the dominant culture.

33:31
And more and more you've got people bringing in things like somatic experiencing and other kinds of interventions like EMDR and stuff that that really help ground.

33:45
I mean, things like yoga.

33:47
Yeah, things like that.

33:49
One thing that comes to mind too is obviously there's a sort of conscious awareness, an unconscious awareness and and then things that you can come out of your subconscious sometimes.

34:02
I know in the past we've done sort of visualizations and different experiments that that help just tap into really who you really are when you're talking about that, that whole well-being, you know, in in your kind of process of, of teaching and bringing awareness around imposter syndrome.

34:23
Are there a number of different techniques at work?

34:26
Is does it depend on the individual or, you know, the things you'd sort of recommend as as people are aware what they they may try and think about?

34:35
Yeah, I think so.

34:37
I mean, yeah, I guess you were touching on visualisation, Adrian, that that can be really powerful, really powerful.

34:49
I used to, I don't include it in the course anymore.

34:52
It's sort of the course is a bit like Abraham Lincoln's axe.

34:55
I've changed the head and I've changed the handle over the last few years.

34:58
But we used to, in the fourth week of the course, we used to do this quite big visualisation where, you know, people got into a very relaxed state, eyes closed, deep breathing, kind of really, really letting go and then visualising meeting the wisest part of themselves.

35:17
Now, you know, for some people visualisation is not going to work at all.

35:22
It maybe they just don't have a visual capacity or they might find it a bit out there or not quite for them.

35:30
But I usually check with people and, but either way, a lot of people really got on board with that and, and didn't have too much pushback.

35:39
There's, there's something, there's something resonant about it.

35:43
There's something that people are like, OK, a bit like, you know, on a sort of more surface level.

35:48
But I mean, the thing about visualisation is an image, an image brings with it so much other understanding.

35:58
And the nervous system, again, can respond to that.

36:02
We don't have to sit there with a whole load of words and a whole load of story and sort of therapy.

36:09
Yeah.

36:09
We can have a somatic sense of what it's like to sit in our wisdom, to sit in our courage, to sit in our compassion or be with our curiosity.

36:19
Yeah.

36:20
I think one of the things I recall we did in a session was, was sort of visualise and take yourself to a part where you were successful of things for for me, I don't mind cheering, but I was playing pool and the, the all the balls broke and, and you just instinctively knew which way to to play and go.

36:40
And taking that and translating that then to say a job interview or, or something else and having trust and knowledge in yourself that you do that.

36:49
And sometimes you just need a boost and some confidence, right.

36:52
And yeah, looking at areas in your life that you feel good about and then try to apply that to, to other aspects here.

37:01
Yeah.

37:02
A few things come to me here and you say that, Adrian.

37:05
One is there's something about balance.

37:07
You know, the, the challenge with imposter syndrome is it's very binary.

37:11
It's like suddenly I'm rubbish at everything.

37:16
And that's again, because the limbic system doesn't deal in nuance.

37:20
It deals in binary.

37:21
If you know, back in the day, back, back back in the day when we were kind of wandering around the savannah if a sabre tooth tiger was coming at us, nuance isn't going to help.

37:32
It's it's not going to be like, Oh my, aren't those amazing creatures?

37:38
Because you're going to be lunch.

37:40
The limbic system needs the amygdala.

37:42
It needs to be binary.

37:43
It's either run, fight, negotiate, or freeze.

37:48
Those are the, there's no sort of, you know, Yeah.

37:53
So what I love about what you're saying is it breaks out of that binary that all or nothing, black or white thinking where I'm one down and everyone else is one up or the situation is one up and I'm less than.

38:06
And it brings some much needed balance of like, Oh yeah, I remember, I remember I did that thing.

38:12
I showed tremendous courage there or tremendous flair or I brought a creativity I I hadn't quite felt for a long while.

38:23
And I think I think that can be incredibly motivating.

38:26
And again, you know, it's, it needs to be something with a bit of genuine power.

38:32
Like you were talking about the pool break.

38:33
It really was meaningful to you and we got into it and embodied it.

38:37
And you can, your body has a memory of that and you can tap into that.

38:44
The other thing I wanted to draw out from what you said, you used the word confidence.

38:48
And I think I think that is a really important and interesting part of impostor syndrome.

38:55
So many people who come to my work and I certainly feel this myself when I asked them before we start the course or before we start coaching or whatever it is, what would you like to gain from this?

39:09
You know, what if this, if this was successful for you over the four weeks, what, what would an outcome?

39:14
And I would say to a man, Jack and a woman, Joe and everyone in between, everyone says more confidence at least as one thing that they want, right.

39:23
And I got really curious about that a few years ago because I was as a coach and like confidence, you know, wow, I don't, I don't know if I can help with confidence.

39:36
It just feels so nebulous.

39:38
But if you look at the word and break it down, you've got con from it's a Latin stem.

39:44
So you've got con with and FID is the same FID we see in fidelity.

39:49
So it's faith, faith with and that comes out to me.

39:54
And what you're talking about there is like when was when are other times when I had absolute faith in myself?

40:00
What about other times in my life where I was I was scared or concerned or I felt fearful or or I wasn't sure if I was up to it, but I showed a bit of faith in myself or a bit of faith in life.

40:13
And I think those can become really meaningful.

40:17
I can give an example from my own life.

40:20
I write poetry and even saying that in a public space is sort of that takes some faith with for me that takes some confidence.

40:30
And a few months ago in the city where I live in Norwich in the UK, there's a pub called The Last Pub Standing.

40:39
And on a Wednesday each month they have a poetry session called Last Poets Standing.

40:44
And I went in, let's say in October last year and just saw what the deal was and watched the poets getting up.

40:52
And it was a big evening.

40:53
You know, it's like 40 or 50 people in the room and maybe 10-12, fourteen folk reading their poetry.

40:59
And then I went back in November and I was like, OK, I'm going to put my name on the list.

41:04
If if I get called, I'm going to go.

41:06
And I've got to say, I was sitting in the audience and, and it wasn't a pleasant feeling, but I got up, I shared my poems.

41:13
They went down pretty well.

41:15
Now, to me, that's lovely.

41:17
I enjoyed sharing the poems.

41:19
I enjoyed writing them and all the rest.

41:21
But to the point you're making, Adrian, when I've been at challenge points in my life since then, I remember about being in that room and sitting on my hands thinking, I wonder if my name's going to get called out and then going up and my hands are shaking.

41:38
But I did it.

41:39
And I don't know.

41:42
I, I think we've all got that.

41:43
We've all had experiences like that.

41:46
We've all had times when we've almost watched ourselves find the edge of our fear and go beyond it.

41:53
And you know, we don't have to do that on our own.

41:55
We we've got friends around us.

41:57
We've got trusted colleagues.

41:58
We've got supervisors, managers, mentors, coaches.

42:01
You know, one of the big messages I would say about imposter syndrome is don't do it on your own.

42:07
Only Connect.

42:08
You know, Ian Forster, Only Connect.

42:10
Share it with a buddy, share it with a friend, say, oh, mate, I've got the imposter heebie jeebies right now.

42:16
I'm in a shame shitstorm.

42:18
I don't know if we're allowed to swear on this podcast.

42:22
I've got a lot of shame.

42:25
And and your friend is going to your friend is going to show you and remind you of things that you've forgotten or that that in that amygdala hijack, that limbic hijack are just not available in the present moment.

42:36
They're going to remind you.

42:37
And that's really powerful.

42:41
Yeah.