**TSK Imposter Syndrome 3 And 4**

0:03  
Sarah, I, I, I love what you just said there 'cause I think, and this is not my anecdote.

0:08  
This is the sort of famous anecdote if, if anybody's ever heard of Neil Gaiman, if celebrated famous author, he has a story where he was at some sort of gala events that was celebrating artists and scientists and, you know, discoverers of things.

0:23  
And there was an elderly gentleman who approached him and was saying all these nice things and they had name tags on and they said, oh, my name's Neil.

0:32  
What a coincidence.

0:33  
And the the gentleman pointed pointed out to the group of people and said something to the effect of, you know, I don't, I don't think I belong here.

0:41  
I, you know, all these people have made amazing things, like where I just went, where I was sent.

0:45  
And Neil Gaiman goes back to him.

0:47  
It's like, well, yeah, but you're, you're Neil Armstrong.

0:50  
You were the first man on the moon.

0:51  
Like I that's, that's, that's gotta, that's gotta be something, right?

0:55  
And, and he, he recounted that like that, that made him feel better.

0:59  
Because like, if Neil Armstrong, like a celebrated astronaut feels like an imposter, like maybe everyone does.

1:05  
Like, we're there, there, there's his, his whole point with that story is like there are no grown-ups.

1:10  
It's, it's people who worked hard and maybe got a little bit lucky and like that's and we're slightly out of their depth, but like, we're all doing the best job that we can.

1:19  
And that's all really anybody can ever hope for.

1:22  
Right.

1:22  
Yeah, I love that, Ryan.

1:24  
And that there's, for me, there's qualities coming through in that story that you share humility, right?

1:31  
Which I think is a real antidote to this toxic invulnerability.

1:36  
If we if we just acknowledge that, you know, I'm not going to be perfect.

1:42  
Yeah, I'm going to have a go.

1:43  
I'm going to have a go.

1:44  
And so and some compassion as well is there.

1:51  
And, and of course, I suppose the story also perhaps suggests that one can be amazing and excel in one field and then walk into a different kind of room and think, Oh my God, I don't know what I'm doing here.

2:06  
I hope no one asks me a question.

2:07  
And, and, and perhaps, like Kipling said, to treat those two imposters the same, you know, triumph and disaster again, it's that humility piece.

2:17  
There was, there was something else in there.

2:18  
I wanted to.

2:20  
Yeah, back in the day, like, like, yeah, when, when the course, when my course, when I launched it in 2017, for about a year or two each week I would put up a slide with a quote on it.

2:32  
I don't do it anymore, but because we we've moved on and sharing different things on the course.

2:38  
But it used to be this week's mystery impostor and there'd be a quote and you were invited to guess who said it.

2:45  
And of course, you know, it'd be people like Michelle Obama and Meryl Streep and Einstein and, and, you know, folk of that ilk.

2:55  
And I suppose the idea perhaps a little naive, but the idea was like you're saying, you know, goodness me, if Michelle Obama is is, you know, doing a few rounds with impostor syndrome, then maybe, I don't know, maybe I can take a breath as well.

3:17  
Yeah.

3:18  
Yeah.

3:19  
Something very connecting about us all struggling with the same things.

3:28  
And again, if we if we carry on in this sort of narrative of invulnerability, I don't think that really serves any of us.

3:36  
Yeah.

3:36  
October.

3:38  
Yeah.

3:38  
I loved the point about letting people help you, your friends, whatever, which involves being vulnerable but recognizing that there is help.

3:50  
And it reminded me of a of a time when I committed to writing a quarterly article for a professional journal.

4:00  
And these were like 10 to 15 pages, double spaced.

4:04  
And I just truly struggled after I collected all my information and then tried to write it up.

4:11  
And it was just never right.

4:12  
And I was always late.

4:14  
And finally, maybe the second or third time I was doing it, the editor who was assigned to me said, this is good stuff.

4:23  
It just needs some restructuring.

4:25  
And there's this.

4:26  
And, you know, I think you need to expand this part and do it.

4:30  
And after that, he would contact me about two weeks before the deadline and say, how are you coming?

4:37  
What have you got?

4:39  
Please send it to me now so I can give you, you know, the advice that you need to make it not so painful.

4:47  
And it was really a a great lesson to recognize that, you know, you're not totally on your own.

4:53  
There's people whose job it is to help you.

4:57  
Yeah, that's beautiful.

4:59  
Yeah.

4:59  
And and really hearing you October around saving two weeks of pain right, pinballing around in that arena of is that good enough?

5:09  
And have I expressed that?

5:11  
You know, I can imagine I I'm I'm projecting this, but I could imagine, you know, all the sort of second guessing and self doubt and it is what's out.

5:21  
And and he also taught me.

5:24  
Think about your audience.

5:26  
Who are you writing for and what they want to know.

5:30  
Pitch it to them.

5:31  
And it was amazing.

5:33  
You know, it started my lifelong appreciation of, of a good editor.

5:39  
Yes, yeah, yeah.

5:42  
And again, I'm just coming back to the first point again.

5:48  
I'm sort of, I'm understanding more and more how impostor syndrome is almost inevitable in the dominant culture or what I'm calling the dominant culture because we have on the one hand, what I've been calling the toxic invulnerability, you know, the, I know it all and I'm, I'm not going to show that I'm weak or whatever, you know, is that kind of being encouraged of us?

6:12  
But also this idea of hyper independence, you know, the self-made person is, is, is apparently a thing in our culture.

6:21  
And I mean, you know, no one is self-made, but the idea of the lone hero, all of these sort of tropes are in our culture, but actually we're a highly social species.

6:34  
We're absolutely wired for connection.

6:37  
And what I hear in your story is, I mean, we it's interesting, isn't it?

6:42  
We say, you know, I, I shared, let's say a person shares with someone else and you said October, you know, you have to be vulnerable.

6:50  
Yes.

6:51  
And I think the word vulnerable, we can almost make it interchangeable with the word authentic to be authentic.

6:59  
And in my authenticity, I'm struggling a bit, I'm suffering a bit.

7:02  
I've got a little self doubt here.

7:04  
I'm oh, I'm perfecting these things because I'm a bit worried that it won't be good enough that that's being authentic and another human being is going to connect with that, especially a trusted friend or a colleague.

7:15  
They're going to connect with that and they're not going to want us to suffer.

7:19  
I mean, I do think we should choose our allies very carefully because you know what, you don't what, what I don't want, what what I don't want for anyone is that we open up to someone and we're authentic with them and they shame us, you know, or they blame us or they make it worse because that that could sort of be re traumatising or, you know, it might kind of push us down even more.

7:42  
It seems quite likely that it would.

7:44  
So I think this idea of sharing your sacred stories with sacred people is quite important.

7:51  
Just Sarah to to perhaps give a shout out to SSP mentorship, but many other mentorship things that there are some great sort of codes of conduct and great experiences of where people support.

8:03  
And certainly I think mentoring is a two way thing you give, but you often receive back just as much, if not more.

8:11  
But one thing I'm, I'm sort of drawn to when we were talking, this discussion was sort of around the point of, of challenging fears.

8:20  
Sometimes I think it was a Churchill that said something be the only thing we fear is fear itself or something.

8:26  
And you know what?

8:27  
One experience for me, I know this is a little easy to say, but at one point in my life, I, I was always afraid of heights.

8:37  
And I just said, that's it, damn it, I'm going to go do a parachute jump.

8:40  
And I did one and I was so liberated when I mean, I think you get a whole adrenaline rush coming out of a plane.

8:46  
But I was liberated that I did that.

8:50  
And I challenged my fear.

8:51  
And that feeling you have after you have sort of had the courage to come up against it, I think does also mean a lot right to to people.

9:00  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

9:04  
I mean, I would, I would err personally, I would err more towards caution if we're talking about trauma or trauma based feelings.

9:16  
I mean, and and I heard what you said and it worked for you.

9:20  
You said liberated.

9:21  
You didn't say afterwards I felt even more fearful or I felt a little bit less fearful.

9:27  
You, you said I felt liberated.

9:30  
But, and I think the received wisdom at the moment around dealing with, you know, things like mental health challenges and things like toxic self doubt, toxic self criticism, toxic shame.

9:45  
There might be something around what I would call like like titration.

9:50  
So what that might look like practically is if, if I have a real fear, real imposter syndrome around public speaking, let's say which, which I kind of used to have actually about 20 years ago, it might be a good idea to say, I know I'll do the keynote speak talk at, you know, the World Conference of Public Speakers.

10:18  
It, it might be a thing, but it might be a good idea perhaps to do a small talk within a department for 5 minutes during a, you know, during a group meeting.

10:32  
And it, that's titration is what I mean, like these little drops that build up, you know, we, we expand our comfort zone so we don't go over into panic.

10:41  
We're just sort of walking that edge all the time and, and building our capacity.

10:46  
I think psychologists talk about the window of tolerance, but for people listening, if if you're interested in that sort of growing your nervous system capacity for, for greater and greater, you know, capacity, you know, it's, it's experiences.

11:06  
I would look at the work of Peter Levine and he's, he's all over the web at the moment.

11:10  
He's having a moment in his 70s.

11:14  
He's a beautiful man in my estimation.

11:16  
And he, he's got books, he's got talks.

11:21  
He demonstrates his work, which is around somatic experiencing and it's about it's about growing that capacity to be with the things that frighten us, to be with the things that shame us, to be with the things that make us feel less than.

11:35  
But we don't run at them like a bull.

11:37  
We sort of just take a little bite and come back, take a little bite and come back.

11:41  
He talked, he calls that pendulation.

11:43  
It's the word he made-up for swinging in, touching in and coming out again.

11:47  
Any anyone who makes up their own word, I think for their own work is is all right with me.

11:53  
Sarah, I've been reflecting on you talking about hierarchical organizations and thinking how it's sort of antithetical to flexibility and reminding me that one of my favorite jobs, favorite working experiences was for a start up when at first I was the third person hired.

12:20  
And at our peak, I think we had 10, which gave you so much scope for step stepping forward and saying, well, there's only three of us.

12:29  
I guess I have to try that.

12:32  
Well, there's only six of us.

12:33  
Somebody needs to take this on.

12:35  
Maybe we, maybe the two of us could do this together until we can hire another person.

12:40  
And it was, it was really quite wonderful.

12:45  
Yeah.

12:46  
Yeah.

12:48  
So I'm inferring from what you said by necessity, a kind of flat structure October because there weren't enough people to form a pyramid on a on a practical level.

13:00  
But also I'm wondering about some of the qualities that that there's there's sort of necessity as the as the mother there in terms of you kind of have to be have a go at everything, right, Like you were saying.

13:16  
So maybe there's more of an experimental energy in the place, more of a kind of world.

13:22  
They're they're giving that a go rather than they should know that by now.

13:26  
We hired them to do that specific thing.

13:29  
So it isn't power over, it's power to or power with.

13:33  
There's a lot of trust by the sounds of it.

13:36  
I think trust is massive and, and the erosion of trust can, can be, you know, impostor syndrome can really thrive in low trust environments.

13:47  
The other thing I'm hearing implied in what you're saying is dignity.

13:52  
It's a lot of, I, I think we're wired.

13:54  
People talk about how we're wired as mammals for safety and belonging.

13:58  
And more recently and I, I can't remember where I saw safety, belonging and dignity and that really landed with me.

14:06  
I I think there's something inherently dignified about being trusted to get on with something as an adult and being able to ask for help and that not being judged or shamed or, you know, you should know, you know, as soon as there's a s\*\*\*\*y should, you know, we're, we're going to feel we're going to get activated.

14:27  
Yeah, I hear, I hear.

14:31  
Yeah.

14:31  
All those things, experimentalism, flat structures, trust, belongings, safety, dignity and A and a kind of we're all in this together.

14:42  
So it's power with power two rather than power over you shall do this.

14:47  
And there might be people listening who are like, yeah, well, try that out in a bigger organization and it's like, fair enough, but you can't argue with the way we're wired.

14:58  
We're wired.

14:59  
You know, if you look at Indigenous people, they, I was going to say nine times out of 10/10, times out of 10, they tend to meet in circle.

15:08  
They don't, you know, they might have a chief or a spokesperson or a shaman or what, but they tend to meet in circle and everyone's voice counts.

15:15  
And I think, I think, I think if we could move more towards that, we'd start to foster trust.

15:22  
We'd foster the ability to rupture and repair, which is a trust building thing in organisations.

15:29  
We'd we'd, we'd foster qualities like compassion and understanding as well as, you know, drive and I don't know whatever else is in space.

15:42  
It's gathering the courage feeling comfortable to ask the question that will lead you to the answer you may already know.

15:51  
Maybe if you could talk about that gathering the courage.

15:55  
Can you say that again?

15:56  
October Sorry.

15:57  
Gathering the courage slash feeling comfortable to ask the question that will lead you to the answer you may already know.

16:07  
And along that, he says culture rewards extroverted tendencies for those who prefer more introverted approach.

16:16  
Building a safe environment to allow people to come to their own solutions, tapping into people's potential and giving positive reinforcement.

16:26  
So I just thought that was a really nice cluster of concepts.

16:32  
So supporting people in that way.

16:36  
Yeah.

16:37  
Yeah.

16:38  
I mean, for me, everything And stop.

16:41  
I mean, it's probably sounding a bit like a stuck record in a way.

16:44  
I I hope not.

16:46  
But safety is massive.

16:49  
We're mammals and if we don't feel safe, we unbidden without our say so we will go to the limbic system, to the amygdala when we don't feel safe and then all bets are off.

17:05  
Then we're in survival mode and, and in a corporate space, in the space you're describing where, where you want people to flourish, where you want them to come forward with ideas and solutions and strategy and vision and creativity.

17:22  
All of those things come from the prefrontal cortex, which goes offline when we don't feel safe.

17:29  
And that's for individuals, but it's also true for groups.

17:32  
I mean, that's a little black and white the way I've said it.

17:35  
It will be, you know, 2°.

17:38  
But there's enough truth in it to, to make it something worth thinking about.

17:41  
So, so yes, we need trust.

17:45  
We need trust in in if we want people to come up with creative, you know, curiosity, creativity, clarity.

18:00  
All of those qualities live in the most recently evolved part of the brain.

18:08  
So yeah, for me, there's something really wise and sane about fostering a culture that really values trust, safety, honesty, authenticity.

18:21  
So in other words, there aren't snide remarks.

18:24  
There isn't shaming, There isn't punishment either overt or covert.

18:31  
There isn't undermining, There isn't undue confrontation.

18:37  
You know you're wrong.

18:38  
I'm going to put you straight.

18:39  
I'm going to shame you in front of other people.

18:42  
And, you know, I don't know how much corporate culture has changed.

18:46  
I haven't worked in an organization for a long time, but I can remember when I did, a lot of that went on, a surprising amount went on of people blaming one another, shaming one another.

19:01  
And again, I'm not even making that wrong.

19:04  
I just want to say it's unhealthy and unhelpful for people, any of us.

19:09  
When we're blaming others, people talk about that being shame turned outwards.

19:15  
So we're experiencing pressure, we're experiencing our own shame.

19:18  
We project it onto other people to make us feel somehow safer or better.

19:25  
I don't know if I'm answering your question, but for me, there's something really important about investing time in creating safety, transparency, trust, connection, the inherent dignity of everyone at the table.

19:38  
And then you're going to foster flourishing.

19:41  
You're going to give it its best chance for people to flourish and come forward with their gifts, you know, their insight, their creativity, their abilities, their unique talents, the combinations of talents that can flow.

19:54  
Whereas if we're all sitting there terrified to speak, worried that we're going to be laughed out of court or concerned that, you know, the last person who spoke up was a little bit kind of shamed or ignored or in some way other.

20:07  
Yeah.

20:08  
We're just going to shut down.

20:12  
So yeah, I think, I think really, I think we're looking at much, much more kind of mindful, holistic leadership from from everyone.

20:21  
Yeah, in a very practical world where everybody's got more and more pressures and feeling pressured to deliver and all sorts of things that it seems like somewhat sometimes a system, you know, people feel that pressure and then they that just transfers to other people and it shouldn't.

20:43  
You're right.

20:43  
It's, that's unfortunately the system's not designed in some ways.

20:48  
If you year on year got to grow and increase profitability and all those sorts of things.

20:53  
It's yeah, yeah.

20:54  
It's, it's, I think it is worth saying, Adrian, definitely.

20:57  
I mean, it's systemic, isn't it?

20:58  
It's not it, it's human beings in systems and, and some of them are systems of harm, you know, directly, you know, privileging men over women, privileging people, white people over people of colour, whatever it is, there are, there are there are sort of very overt systems of harm.

21:18  
And there there are sort of or less spoken about systems of harm, like the way power is, the way power is used and abused and the pressure that people are under to perform.

21:32  
Yeah, I wouldn't want to step over those things, but nor would I, nor would I, nor would I want to shy away from if we keep, if we keep creating structures of power over, then we can expect human beings to behave in particular ways in those systems.

21:55  
So if we want, if we want better outcomes, then we probably do need to think about the structures we're creating and the way that power is invested in those structures.

22:06  
That that's a personal view.

22:08  
I mean others will have other views for sure.