



Impostor Syndrome and Parenting - What Is It and How to Overcome It -

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Impostor Syndrome and Parenting

Impostor syndrome, also known as impostor phenomenon or impostorism, involves feeling like a fraud despite one's achievements and worry someone will find out about it. It can cause feelings of anxiety and affect relationships. According to studies, 70% of adults



experience impostor syndrome at least once in their life¹. It is recognized that people most often feel like impostors at work, and parents' impostor syndrome is seldom acknowledged. Parents, mostly mothers, experience impostor syndrome when they doubt their own parenting capabilities and stress over failure. Like other people who experience impostor syndrome, parents who are high achievers are more vulnerable. These parents are already competitive, and rely on their own skills or the

achievements of others, to set parenting goals for themselves. When they feel like their goals are not met, such as with sleep training, discipline or work-life balance, parents start to feel like a failure. Social media usage may make parents feel they are not good enough. In a group survey, about 50% of moms (high achievers who are active on social media) reported impostor feelings about their parenting².

Causes of Impostor Syndrome



Impostor syndrome is the result of multiple factors, such as personality

traits, culture, family background and parenting style. Impostor syndrome is also affected by both internal and external factors³. According to experts in the field, when parents are hypercritical (commenting only on children's mistakes) or they overpraise (giving too much

general praise such as “you are the best child in the world”), their children may be impacted. Our culture also sends confusing messages to our parents. They may hear overpraise such as “You are a wonderful mom/dad,” or “You are doing a great job,” by family, friends, neighbors or online, then quickly shamed for a simple parenting decision. This combination makes many parents feel like impostors.

When and How Impostor Syndrome Affects Parents

Impostor syndrome can start as soon as the baby is born and can be connected to postpartum symptoms. Going home from the hospital and not knowing much about parenting may result in feelings of incompetence as a parent. As

children get older, when parents face new



and challenging behaviors, they may continue to experience these feelings, which lead to impostor syndrome. Parents also experience impostor syndrome because of their high self-expectations as a parent. Social media and comparison culture make this worse, adding in unsolicited advice from friends and family.

Symptoms of Parents’ Impostor Syndrome

Impostor syndrome typically happens when parents face a new or difficult challenge, and for mothers, this happens more often. There are

many possible signs of impostor syndrome, and different people may show signs in different ways.

- ⇒ Irritability
- ⇒ Feeling overwhelmed
- ⇒ Depression and anxiety
- ⇒ Low self-esteem
- ⇒ Isolation and withdrawal
- ⇒ Rigidity in daily routines
- ⇒ Black-and-white thinking
- ⇒ Catastrophic thinking
- ⇒ Lack of sleep
- ⇒ Thinking too much about mistakes
- ⇒ Minimizing accomplishments
- ⇒ Negative self-talk

Types of Impostor Syndrome⁴

The Expert

The experts always look for more: more knowledge, more experience and more awards. They always think that they don’t have enough knowledge, experience, expertise, etc. These type of parents tend to prepare themselves fully by reading books, searching online parenting information, and taking parenting training or courses but they still feel they are not good enough.

The Super Woman/Man

The super person loves to take responsibility. These parents can’t say no and try



to do it all by themselves often juggling many tasks, and then eventually feel exhausted. They handle multiple tasks at once, such as work, chores, school, a side business, volunteer work, etc.

The Perfectionist

The perfectionist focuses on how things should be done. When their own standards are not met, they start experiencing impostor syndrome. These type of parents have the highest standards, worry about making one minor mistake and always have to be perfect.

The Soloist

The soloists believe that they can do everything by themselves and prefer to do things without asking for help from others. These type of parents think that asking others for help is showing their weaknesses. Soloists do not ask for help, even when they really need it.

The Natural Genius

The natural geniuses think they should always be smart, learn fast and excel at everything. These types of parents may think they are born talented or skilled in parenting, but get frustrated easily and quickly switch from one parenting strategy to another.

How to Overcome Impostor Feelings as Parents

Share With Others

The first step in overcoming imposter syndrome is to talk about it. Although it will be very

difficult to talk about your mistakes, accepting that you are trying your best and you are always learning as you go will help you see there are other parents just like you.

Have Realistic Expectations

If you keep feeling disappointed in yourself as parents, it is time to have realistic expectations. Focus on things that you can achieve on a daily basis and enjoy your small wins whenever you get them. Confident parenting is not perfect parenting. Parenting is a process of becoming a parent⁵, so it is more important to do your best.

Stop Comparing With Others on Social Media

This is similar to having realistic expectations. The first step is to change, or filter, what you see on your social media pages. Try to see social media posts that are honest and encouraging. Avoid those “perfect photos” of other

children or families that many share. They

definitely have the 100 other photos of their children misbehaving or not smiling! In addition, do not compare yourself (and get stressed) by other parents around you. Remember that people try to show the best sides of themselves.



Be Yourself

Do not define your identify and self-worth only as a



parent. Try to remember that parenthood is only one of your roles. Nurture and respect yourself. Self-care is more important than anything else.

Seek Support

There is absolutely nothing wrong with asking for help as a parent. You can always depend on people around you for support, especially on those hard days. Although social media groups may be a trigger for impostor feelings, they may also provide social support you need when dealing with impostor feelings in parenting. You can always reach out for more professional support, such as from a qualified mental health professional. Do an online search in your area.

Conclusion

Good Enough Parenting is a concept invented



by Dr. Donal Winnicott in 1953.

According to him, meeting the child's

needs just 30% of the time is sufficient to create

happy, well attached children⁶. No parent is perfect — don't even try! Overcoming imposter feelings as a parent is possible and being a “good enough parent” will help you raise happy and self-confident children.

References

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