Imposter Syndrome is the belief that we are not possible of being good or doing good things. Any time we do something good we chalk it up to luck or circumstances. Or we dismiss it as not really being good because what we did was so easy and simple “anyone could do it”. We live in fear that at any time someone could find out that we’re a fraud because we really aren’t the good person capable of good things that people think we are. Every time we receive praise we think “If only they really knew.” Yet we accept criticism as proof that we are permanently flawed.

Many people deal with some level of Imposter Syndrome. But for Survivors the depth of the belief that we are a fraud and capable of doing no good things is much more significant, especially if our abuse occurred consistently between the critical developmental stages of 4 to 8 years old.

Imposter Syndrome also has the potential to do more damage in Survivor’s lives than in the lives of those who have not suffered childhood abuse. It not only hurts us but it undermines our recovery. That is because it feeds into our already low sense of self-worth, which fuels our drive for perfectionism. But, of course, we cannot be perfect so we feel like even more of a failure. This feeds back into our low self-esteem. It is a vicious cycle with the lack of self-worth right in the middle of it all.

Tips and Strategies for Dismantling Imposter Syndrome

• Recognize it as a symptom of a larger issue: low self-worth. Low self-worth, shame and guilt are at the core of damage done by abuse. They are the triad of trauma damage, so to speak. Imposter Syndrome is a symptom of low self-worth. So instead of trying to defeat the symptom, tackle your beliefs about your self-worth.

• Collect evidence that you are good and you are capable of doing good. List your successes, collect the compliments you receive from those you respect, write reminders of your goodness on notes around your house. (As we mentioned in chat, “build up your good pile”)

• Learn how to see others objectively. You’re likely comparing your worst self to the best self they present. But this is a double edged sword because realizing that truth means you must accept that they know you have flaws behind the “best self” you present as well.

• Acknowledge your low self-worth and own it. Ask your support people to help you see the reality of your worth.

• Find a career that leaves you feeling successful and fulfilled. If you are working a job you hate it’s hard to feel good at it.

* Pro Tip: Practice in a safe place

• Practice Enlisting your “safe people” is such a fantastic idea when you are planning on dismantling Imposter Syndrome.