

WHAT'S YOUR 'IMPOSTER' TYPE?



If you feel like an impostor you are very likely to be holding yourself up to an unrealistic and unsustainable standard of competence, falling short of this standard evokes feelings in you of shame and not being good enough.

So your impostor type is really a competency type – the particular the way you measure competence.

Impostors don't all experience failure-related shame the same way. And the reason is that they don't all define competence the same way so you will have created your own rule book of what it means to be competent.

Here are the five different Competence Types – each with its own unique focus. You may recognise yourself in several but there is usually a dominant one.

1. **THE PERFECTIONIST'S** primary focus is on “how” something is done. This includes how the work is conducted and how it turns out. One minor flaw in an otherwise stellar performance or 99 out of 100 equals failure and thus shame.
2. **THE EXPERT** is the knowledge version of the Perfectionist. Here, the primary concern is on “what” and “how much” you know or can do. Because you expect to know everything, even a minor lack of knowledge denotes failure and shame.
3. **THE SOLOIST** cares mostly about “who” completes the task. To make it on the achievement list, it has to be you and you alone. Because you think you need to do and figure out everything on your own, needing help is a sign of failure that evokes shame.
4. **THE NATURAL GENIUS** also cares about “how” and “when” accomplishments happen. But for you, competence is measured in terms of ease and speed. The fact that you have to struggle to master a subject or skill or that you're not able to bang out your masterpiece on the first try equals failure which evokes shame.
5. **THE SUPERWOMAN/SUPERMAN** measures competence based on “how many” roles they can both juggle and excel in. Falling short in any role – as a parent, partner, on the home-front, host/hostess, friend, volunteer – all evoke shame because they feel they should be able to handle it all – perfectly and easily.