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Your guide in wellness and mental health

Seeing Yourself Clearly this Black History Month: Imposter Syndrome in the Workplace

"Each time I write a book, every time I face that yellow pad, the challenge is so great. I have written eleven books, but each time I think, 'Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody and they're going to find me out.'" This quote comes from none other than Maya Angelou, the best-selling author and world-famous poet.



And many of us can relate, in a way. We can land a good job, get that promotion, lead mostly successful projects for years, and still have a hard time feeling we deserve the success. What Maya Angelou described in that quote, and what so many professionals struggle with, is called *imposter syndrome* - doubting our skills, talents, or accomplishments and fearing that we will be exposed as a fraud despite evidence of our achievements.

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's crucial to recognize how Black professionals often deal with imposter syndrome in the workplace. Historical barriers have amplified these feelings of self-doubt, yet throughout history Black leaders from Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm to inventor Garret Augustus Morgan Sr. have demonstrated remarkable resilience and proven that feelings of inadequacy do not diminish our true capabilities. And there are powerful tools that any of us can use to build resilience and overcome imposter syndrome.

Let's consider one of those tools: Thought Inspection. One of the core principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is that our thoughts are the drivers of our emotions. So, the first step to changing how we feel is to recognize unhelpful thought patterns. When you catch yourself thinking, "I just got lucky" or "They'll eventually realize I'm a fraud," pause and challenge these thoughts with evidence. Did you really get that promotion purely by chance, or did your late nights, creative solutions, and attention to detail play a role? And is it possible that others continue to notice your strengths and hard work?

Some of the most powerful evidence can be our past successes. To collect concrete evidence to challenge these doubt-filled thoughts, you can start a log. Each time you receive positive feedback or accomplish a goal, document it. When those imposter-like thoughts arise, review your log to counter self-doubt with past evidence of your accomplishments and capabilities.

Remember that imposter syndrome, while common, doesn't have to be permanent. As we honor Black History Month, we can draw inspiration from those who pushed through barriers despite feeling out of place. Their legacy reminds us that feeling like an imposter doesn't make you one.

Get Started Today

If you've noticed imposter syndrome creeping into your life, there are a number of CBT tools that can help. You can learn more about those tools and what kind of support would be right for you by taking a quick mental health assessment or starting one of our programs. You can do this by scanning or visiting learntolive.com/partners and enter access code **MMHG**. Learn to Live is available to you and your family members, ages 13 and older at no cost.

