

The 5-5-5 Technique

People with Imposter Syndrome have a tendency to dilute or not accept compliments. They will put their successes down to luck or other factors rather than internalise them.

One way to begin to counter this is to ask for and, most importantly, practice accepting compliments. Image a compliment as a gift: you wouldn't reject a birthday present would you? So why reject a compliment?

One technique to use with 'imposter's is the '5-5-5' technique. This is a short form of 360° appraisal and, as with all the best techniques, is very simple. It usually works very well as a homework exercise, i.e. something that the client does in between coaching sessions.

Give your client the following instructions:

1. Think of five people whose opinions you respect and trust and give them a short form with five questions to complete. The questions should only take five minutes to answer. (See template over the page).
2. Ask each of the five people to read out their answers to you. (Many people do this exercise over email, which is still beneficial but not as powerful as having that person in the room actually saying the words).
3. Ask them to pause after reading out each of their answers.
4. During that pause, repeat what they have said in the first person in your head. For example if the person says, "I think your greatest strength is your creativity because you always see options that others would never even consider," you would say to yourself "My greatest strength is creativity because I always see options that others would never consider."
5. Thank them unreservedly for the feedback.

Template for the 5-5-5 questionnaire

Below are five questions that I would like you to answer based on your perception of me. I have chosen you as one of five people whose opinions I trust, value and respect. I hope and expect you to be honest. This will probably take about five minutes of your time and I would like you to write down your answers first. Then, when you are ready, I would like you to tell me what you have written, one answer at a time.

Thank you.

1.	What one word or phrase describes me best?
2.	What do you think is my greatest achievement?
3.	What do you value most about me?
4.	What one thing could I change for my own benefit?
5.	What do you believe to be my greatest strength?