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## **7 Signs You Might be Feeling Like a Fraud!**

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Just like you, on some level, in certain situations, every person feels like a fraud. Even the most successful and confident individuals find themselves in settings where they begin to think that someone else would have been a much better choice to handle their duties. Does that surprise you?

In working with organizational executives, business entrepreneurs, and consultants, I have found this underlying feeling of inadequacy, and I have come to call it ‘the fraud factor’. These symptoms are thoroughly described in my new book, **The Fraud Factor** (Leader Press: Minneapolis, May 2016).

In this book, the word ‘fraud’ means feeling inauthentic, like a phony or charlatan in a particular situation that, in your mind, requires you to pretend to be someone very different than whom you really are at the core. The most effective individuals function genuinely from their core personality, abilities, motivators, and beliefs; they get into trouble when they stray too far from that core.

How can you know if you are feeling like a fraud? Here are some typical symptoms:

### **7 Signs You Feel Like A Fraud**

1. You consistently avoid certain people and situations that make you feel inadequate.
2. You believe that you need to explain your actions, prove yourself to certain others.
3. You often think that others are better, more qualified, or more successful than you.
4. You believe that nobody would understand or accept you if they really knew you.
5. You believe that you must act/ behave very differently from who you really are in order to be acceptable or successful in a particular environment.
6. With friends and family, you are relaxed and confident, but at work, you feel a level of tension or anxiety (or the opposite—relaxed at work, but tense at home).
7. You often feel like you have not prepared fully enough for a task or responsibility at work or home, and you worry about failing.

These 7 signs reflect someone who has a *deflated* sense of self as a result of feeling inadequate. Sometimes, however, people respond to fraud feelings with an *inflated* sense of self. Here are some examples of these symptoms:

1. You hold unrealistic, positive beliefs about your own capabilities
2. You minimize or ignore critical feedback from others
3. You blame others for the problems that occur at home or work
4. You feel like you must inflate and/or promote your own results to get adequate credit
5. You believe that others do not appreciate what you bring to the table or undervalue your work

It is more difficult to recognize these inflated self-symptoms when you look at yourself in the mirror. It helps to receive 360 degree feedback, or at least to have others who are willing and courageous enough to give you honest perspective on yourself.

Whether you experience an inflated sense of self or deflated sense of self, these signs, and other specific ones you may be experiencing, can undermine your confidence and success. When a situation or set of circumstances pushes you off balance and creates a level of dissonance or destabilization in your life, what can you do to overcome this feeling of being a fraud? Here are 5 steps you can take to

**Get Real Again:**

1. Recognize what it is about the situation/circumstance that makes you feel inadequate
2. Identify the fraudulent behaviors you are engaging in that actually undermine your effectiveness (avoiding, trying to prove yourself, blaming others, etc.)
3. Pinpoint the Big, Fat Lie you are telling yourself (why you are not adequate in this situation/circumstance)
4. Reconnect to your core attributes that have helped you succeed in the past (signature personality traits, unique abilities, positive motivations, values/healthy beliefs)
5. Leverage this insight to become authentic again!

What does it look like when you are genuinely and authentically yourself, at work and at home? For most people, being real has these components:

- You present yourself to others in a relaxed, confident, and authentic manner
- You are well aware of who you are at the core—personality, abilities, motivators, and beliefs
- When new, unexpected situations arise, you confidently respond to them, rather than react anxiously, fearfully
- You are open to others' feedback, and regularly solicit it from them
- You accept yourself, and you are realistic about your talents and limitations

**Bottom line**—the most effective you will ever be occurs when you leverage fully the talents and abilities you have been given. That means that you develop deep self-awareness, are thankful for your talents, accept your limitations, and work hard to minimize fraud feelings.