

05. BUILD RESILIENCE

AMONG THE MANY ATTRIBUTES THAT BUSINESS OWNERS NEED TO HAVE IN THEIR TOOLKIT, resilience might just be the most important of the lot. It refers to the psychological ability to cope with adversity and setbacks – and being able to keep going no matter what’s thrown at you. Suffice to say, running your own business is likely to require a hefty dose of it.

LAMIA PARDO ON COPING WITH BURNOUT

No matter how much thought you put into building techniques to help you deal with the stresses and strains of being a business owner, there’s a high chance that burnout will affect you at some point or other. Here, Lamia Pardo outlines how to cope with it – and minimise it – as you help your business grow.

Burnout is generally defined as a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion brought on by prolonged or repeated stress. It’s a word whose usage has increased exponentially in recent years, as the demands of work and a struggle to get the work-life balance right have come to the fore. As a business owner, it’s a serious subject that needs constant monitoring. Lamia Pardo is the founder of Journify, an audio journaling platform started to help users decrease stress and offer an alternative to meditation – the platform also offers users the opportunity to take a burnout test to prevent the normalisation of a high-intensity work culture. Here she gives her take on how to deal with it.

‘Stress by itself is not necessarily a bad thing – it just heightens our primitive instincts and state of alertness. Occasional stress can be good, because it’ll help you to focus and react to a problem quickly. Burnout, on the other hand, is an accumulation of chronic stress. It happens when people start normalising stress, and they don’t even know that it has happened. It’s a feeling of constant exhaustion, while at the same time having interrupted sleep and becoming more pessimistic. The symptoms mimic those of depression, like there is a cloud over your head.

‘We’re at risk of burnout now more than ever – in 2019, the World Health Organisation

‘Younger generations in particular are feeling a pressure to explore, save the world, have a positive impact and be productive all at the same time.’

deemed burnout to be a legitimate diagnosis. We feel the need to always be on in our digitally connected culture. By definition, burnout is workplace-related, but if you have problems at home, you bring those problems to work and vice versa. We’ve also started putting a lot of pressure on ourselves to have a ‘good life’ – younger generations in particular are feeling a pressure to explore, save the world, have a positive impact and be productive all at the same time.

‘We need to start by spotting the signs of burnout early. It’s OK to feel stressed from time to time, but you need to be able to balance it out – you need to get some water out of your boat before you put more in. It is hard to change habits, but here are some practical ways to avoid burnout.

- ➔ **HAVE MORNING AND EVENING** routines that are consistent, and embed rest into your calendar. You have to be disciplined with the rest – I am a workaholic, but if my calendar says it is time to rest, I will.
- ➔ **UNDERSTAND YOUR LIMITATIONS** and priorities, as well as knowing what you can and can’t control.
- ➔ **BE REALISTIC ABOUT** the role of your finances in burnout. Money might not be your motivation for doing what you do, but you need to avoid and alleviate financial stress before it comes.
- ➔ **KNOW THAT MEDITATION** might not work for you, and that is OK. People sometimes stress themselves out more trying to make meditation work.
- ➔ **TRY ALTERNATIVE TYPES** of meditation: music therapy, journaling and exercise can all lead to meditative states.
- ➔ **JOURNALING - EITHER WRITTEN OR AUDIO** – is important to start to identify patterns and reflect on your stress.’

i HOW TO... TACKLE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

THE CHANCES ARE THAT YOU’LL HAVE EXPERIENCED IMPOSTER SYNDROME, EVEN IF YOU WEREN’T AWARE

that’s what it was at the time. It’s something that can affect people in all walks of life – no matter how seemingly successful you might get – and small business owners, in particular, are susceptible to suffering from it.

For a long time, imposter syndrome was an affliction felt by many but strangely without a name – and very rarely spoken about. Thankfully, times have changed, as awareness around mental health continues to improve and the term has moved firmly into the mainstream. According to a study by insurance firm AXA, one in five business owners suffer from it; a separate study by the International Journal of Behavioural Science suggests 70% of millennials have, too.

In short, it’s about severely doubting your skills or talent, and harbouring a deep-seated fear that you’ll be exposed as a fraud at any moment. Sound familiar? Experiencing imposter syndrome can manifest itself in a variety of ways: from perfectionists who are never happy with what they’ve created, to those who consider themselves phonies among their colleagues, and even those who feel like they always need to do everything themselves for fear of looking incompetent. Angelica Malin is the founder of About Time Magazine and host of the She Started It podcast, which focuses on telling stories of female entrepreneurship. Here she shares her key advice for dealing with imposter syndrome.

KNOW IT’S NOT FOREVER

‘Imposter syndrome comes in ebbs and flows. We assume that we will progress out of it, but it is anything but linear. As soon as you step up again, try something different, or even just get too deep into your projects, it comes back and takes you by surprise. Women, in particular, feel imposter syndrome strongly – the women who you might deem to be super-successful are still vulnerable to it. Doubt, in and of itself, is OK, because it pushes you to think. But doubt shouldn’t

stop you doing what you have been dreaming about. Ultimately, there is never going to be a perfect time to start something.’

FIGURE OUT WHERE IT COMES FROM

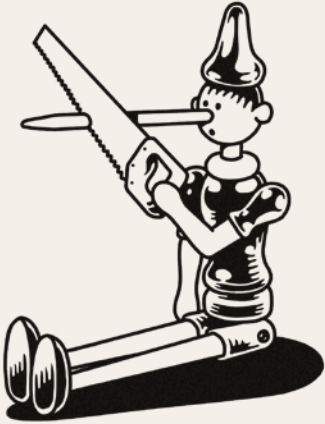
‘Studies show that imposter syndrome can sometimes originate from historically bad management, and how your old bosses treated you. Did you feel put down? Did you not receive praise for the work you were doing? These experiences can be deeply embedded into how we perceive ourselves. We also inherit a lot of it from social media. Start by assessing how you react to other people’s successes – do you compare yourself to them and feel jealousy? While we can easily unfollow and mute, we also have to recognise that it is not their fault. We have to do the inner detective work as to why we were triggered by whatever we saw.’

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR WINS

‘Alongside taking note of your own feelings, keep a record of your own successes. You need to be able to bolster your self-esteem. I believe that there are multiple voices inside my head, of which the imposter syndrome voice is the loudest. The self-confidence one is in there, just much quieter.’

USE YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

‘You can also create a support network that outwardly bolsters your confidence – from client testimonials through to friends and family who have faith in you. They don’t need to support you unquestionably, but they can help to strengthen the quiet self-confidence voice in your head.’



i POINTERS

THE GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Writing a gratitude journal is an increasingly popular way of keeping imposter syndrome at bay: noting things, no matter how small, to be thankful for every day. It’s been shown to result in a higher level of life satisfaction, increased self-awareness and improved sleep. In the past few years, notebooks have popped up to facilitate it, like the Five Minute Journal from Intelligent Change, or the five-year Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin. Alternatively, apps like Happyfeed, Day One and Reflectly can remind you to reflect every day. Once you’re comfortable with the basics, try going deeper: who was responsible for the things you’ve noted down? Why did you feel grateful? And have you accounted for aspects of both your professional and personal life?