

Self-Doubt and Mental Health



Self-doubt is a very difficult experience that we are likely all familiar with. It is something that can be a small nuisance for some, and a crippling weight for others. When we experience self-doubt we lose confidence in our decision-making and feel ill equipped to manage the many demands that we face. In this newsletter, we will learn more about self-doubt. We will discuss what self-doubt is, where it may be coming from, and how we can learn to quiet this critical voice.



What do we Mean by “Self-Doubt?”

So, exactly what do we mean by “self-doubt?” Let’s put forth a definition for the purposes of this newsletter. Self-doubt can be a reference to anything about ourselves that we question the truth of. It could refer to our thoughts, our actions, emotions, decisions, self-view, etc. More specifically, when we discuss the concept of self-doubt, it is in regards to times where we question our own competence. We may feel we are in a situation where we don’t have the skills to be successful. We begin to question our ability to achieve things, even if they are well within our reach and capabilities.



Who does Self-Doubt Affect?

Self-doubt is a good concept to discuss in this newsletter because it affects everyone! Even the people in your lives that seem the most competent, the most put together, experience thoughts of self-doubt. They feel nervous, they question their own abilities. They dwell on the thought that they might not be successful in whatever it is they are trying to do.



We can take solace in this. When we are dealing with difficult thoughts and feelings, like those that come along with self-doubt, we can feel isolated. We might not realize just how common the experience is. Self-doubt is a human experience. It doesn’t mean there is something wrong with us. In fact, in many ways, it means just the opposite.

Self-Doubt and Catholicity

“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” Timothy (1:7)

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

“Fear not , for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Times of self-doubt can be very challenging for us all. These would be good times to fall back on your faith in order to bolster yourself! Faith can bring us great strength and increase our mettle!

Where does Self-Doubt Come From?

This can be a very complicated question. Self-doubt is wrapped up in our self-confidence, our life experiences, our emotional wiring, and much more. Self-doubt is also clearly a manifestation of our anxiety. Our brains are amazing things. Our thoughts guide us through our daily lives and are so automatic, that we might not always take time to assess them. Sometimes, our brain might prompt us to consider the worst case scenario of any given situation. This can be viewed as a form of protection. Protection of our safety, and of our best interests. When we get a small twinge of self-doubt, “Your mind will go blank during the speech you have to give”, we are forced to face the possibility that something could go wrong. This may help us to prepare ourselves for that scenario and can be very useful in some cases. From this perspective, we can consider the purpose of self-doubt, but it easily gets blown out of proportion. Some of our thoughts are just junk thoughts. They enter our mind, but they deserve no credence. They are simply a momentary consideration our brain is making, and have no deeper meaning. When we assign deep meaning and unquestioning belief to our thoughts of self-doubt, we may become paralyzed in our thinking and struggle to take any action at all. It is helpful to learn to trust our abilities and skills and recognize that we can rise to meet the demands of many situations. We also will benefit from taking the leap and diving in with a new experience, even if we are nervous we won’t be successful with it!



Imposter Syndrome



Let’s briefly turn our attention to a **VERY COMMON** cultural phenomenon directly related to self-doubt: imposter syndrome. This is a non-clinical term used by people to describe their sense that they are a fraud. People experiencing imposter syndrome feel they are unworthy and undeserving of accolades and esteem that they have received in their lives. They may feel like they have been able to “fail up” in their career or in their life. They feel like frauds who are just waiting for those around them to discover the truth. People who experience imposter syndrome are often well accomplished and qualified in a number of areas. Yet still, the feelings of doubt creep in.

Steps we can Take to Fight Self-Doubt

<p><u>Stop Comparing</u></p> <p>Comparison is the thief of joy. We are unique people, and we can’t reasonably be compared to someone else.</p>	<p><u>Validate Within</u></p> <p>Spend time focusing on who you are as a person. Reflect on your beliefs, your values, your motivations, etc.</p>	<p><u>Note your Wins</u></p> <p>Spend time reflecting on your successes and achievements. It is not cocky, conceited, or self-indulgent to do so.</p>	<p><u>Visit Loved Ones</u></p> <p>Spend time with the people who know you and value you. They likely have a great perspective on your many strengths.</p>
<p><u>Recognize the Critic</u></p> <p>We all experience a critical internal voice in some way or another. Recognize its voice so you can be ready to talk back to it.</p>	<p><u>Get Something Done</u></p> <p>Engage in an activity that you know gives you a sense of accomplishment. It doesn’t have to be something big.</p>	<p><u>Limit Social Media</u></p> <p>Social media can wreak havoc on our self-perception and feed self-doubt. Be aware of the negative influence it can have.</p>	<p><u>Seek Professional Help</u></p> <p>It can be difficult to keep self-assessment and self-talk in check. Millions the world over struggle. Therapy can help!</p>