

Episode 159:

Life Repurposed Podcast
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Host Michelle Rayburn

Michelle Rayburn [00:01:10]:

Not too long ago, I was serving on faculty at a conference. And despite feeling confident in the professional services I offer to writers as an editor and book designer, I still felt that familiar sense of impostor syndrome creep in as I caught snippets of conversations in the halls, at meals, or hearing someone's teaching coming out of a classroom as I walked by. The voice in my head will say, "You don't belong here, Michelle." And there is some truth to it when I look at my marketing materials or I compare my methods I can't do all the things. I'm a staff of one. I don't have a team of people who put together fancy promotional sheets. There's no team to make sure my website is updated or my image is current. So sometimes, I don't belong there professionally. But there's a lot of pressure in my field as a writer.

Michelle Rayburn [00:02:05]:

We have to come up with new ideas. We have to spin that new idea in a way that no one else has. We have to write it in such a way that readers want more, and then we have to market it so that people will tell their friends about it and want to buy it. But some of that feels very fake to me. I rebel against the perfect image. And instead, I leaned on being approachable and real. But then, there I am in a room with 50 professionals, writers and speakers who have perfected the art of being put together. So today I want to talk about impostor syndrome.

Michelle Rayburn [00:02:42]:

First things first, let's define what impostor syndrome is. There are many definitions out there. But essentially, it's this pattern where we doubt our accomplishments and have a fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of our competence. It's that nagging feeling that convinces us we're not as capable or not as deserving as others perceive us to be. Imposter syndrome can manifest itself in various ways. Sometimes it shows up as self-doubt. That causes us to question our abilities and constantly seek validation from others.

Michelle Rayburn [00:03:17]:

Other times, it leads to excessive perfectionism, and we strive to prove our worthiness through flawless performance. For me, it shows up as a fear that'll say or do something and another person will reveal my method is wrong or that I'm not as professional as they are. And perfectionism is part of it. And no matter how it manifests, imposter syndrome can hold us back in significant ways. Our identity is rooted in God's love and purpose for our lives. So we don't want to forget that. However, impostor syndrome can still impact our faith journey and hinder us from fully embracing the calling that God has placed on us.

Michelle Rayburn [00:03:57]:

So how does impostor syndrome hold us back? Well, first, it can prevent us from taking risks and pursuing new opportunities. The fear of being exposed as an imposter can keep us confined within comfort zones where we feel safe and in control. And then we miss out on chances for growth and personal development. For me, it can stop me from wanting to put my writing out there and promote it. It also keeps me from pursuing opportunities to serve as a speaker or an instructor. Impostor syndrome can also hinder our ability to recognize and celebrate our achievements. We downplay our successes. We attribute them to luck or external factors.

Michelle Rayburn [00:04:39]:

rather than acknowledging our own skills and efforts. And this self-deprecating mindset diminishes our confidence and robs us of the motivation to aim higher. It's kind of a vicious cycle. And it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy sometimes as well. And for me, I know that I often am one who has a hard time receiving a compliment, and I downplay it as, you know, beginner's luck or somebody else helped me with it or whatever. So if you're somebody you often downplays when somebody else compliments you, you might be experiencing impostor syndrome. Impostor syndrome can also impact our relationships and interactions with others. In addition to maybe finding it challenging to accept praise, it's also difficult to accept constructive feedback.

Michelle Rayburn [00:05:31]:

Deep down, we might believe we don't deserve the praise, but deep down, we also can internalize the constructive feedback. And this can lead to strained relationships and missed opportunities for collaboration and learning because we're just ruminating on that constructive feedback. For me, it can make me defensive. If someone offers constructive feedback, it can start a narrative that has to do with my self-worth rather than simple feedback. I tell people this when I'm editing their content all the time that this is not a critique of you. This is purely me trying to help get the mechanics of your writing figured out on paper. And yet when somebody else is constructively giving feedback to my own work, I struggle with the same things that other authors do. Perfectionism is a companion to impostor syndrome in case you haven't noticed.

Michelle Rayburn [00:06:23]:

One of the things we want to do often is to have everything be perfect on the first try so that we don't have to go through revisions. It's important for us to remember that God has uniquely designed each of us with our own set of gifts, talents, and experiences. We are fearfully and wonderfully made according to Psalms.

Now that we understand the ways impostor syndrome can hold us back, I'd like to explore how we can repurpose that feeling into something constructive. The first step is recognizing and acknowledging our feelings. Understanding that this is a common experience that it's shared by even the most successful individuals does help us to normalize our self-doubt. I have found that I

need to challenge my negative self-talk, and I need to replace it with more positive and realistic thoughts. Whenever the voice in our head tells us we're not good enough, we can consciously remind ourselves of our accomplishments and the hard work we've put in to achieve them.

Michelle Rayburn [00:07:22]:

We can remind ourselves the way God has gifted us, developing a positive affirmation practice can be a powerful tool in combating impostor syndrome. It also helps me to remind myself that there is more than one way to do something. I can be successful with my method and another person can be successful with theirs. Another effective strategy is seeking support. Oftentimes, I find if I just share my feelings of inadequacy with someone else, with a trusted friend, a mentor, for some people to therapists, those people can give us reassurance and provide some perspective and just help us boss back those feelings. They can remind us of our strengths or accomplishments and the things that we might overlook and dismiss. Also, and this one is hard, it's important to embrace vulnerability and accept that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. Failure does not define us it's an opportunity for growth, and I have to tell myself this all the time.

Michelle Rayburn [00:08:24]:

This can help us overcome our fear because we're afraid that somebody's going to expose us as an imposter. And if we reframe failure as a steppingstone to success, then we can cultivate this resilience that we need to move forward with confidence. I have found that impostor syndrome isn't a bad thing altogether either. It's often a good sign that I'm balancing my confidence with humility. When I get overconfident, then pride comes in and I become critical of others instead of myself. I'm looking at their flaws and I don't see my own. I've been there. Feeling like an imposter is a sign for me that I need to put a little more confidence in while keeping it tempered with humility.

Michelle Rayburn [00:09:08]:

One way to counteract impostor syndrome in our faith walk is to ground ourselves in the truth of God's Word. Like I said, Psalm 139 reminds us that we're fearfully and wonderfully made. And meditating on passages like this can help us to reaffirm our identity in Christ. Another powerful aspect of overcoming impostor syndrome is relying on God's strength rather than our own. I often feel inadequate and overwhelmed when I have a big task in front of me. But then I know God promises to be with me every step of the way. And I found that when I lean on him and I trust in his guidance, I have a lot more confidence to overcome my self-doubt and embrace the roles and the responsibility that he has given me. I've often whispered little prayers of conversations with him throughout the day. And when I'm in public, it's just me thinking them in my head, but sometimes I'm talking to myself and sometimes I'm talking to God as I'm going about my daily business.

Michelle Rayburn [00:10:06]:

Those prayers help me to take comfort in knowing that he knows me intimately and he knows my heart and he knows my motives. Last of all, as Christians, we are called to support and encourage one another. So one of the ways that we can help one another is creating a community of people who share our struggles in vulnerability with trusted people and we can provide a safe space for one another where we give and receive affirmation. We pray for one another, and we hold each other accountable as we navigate through impostor syndrome together. Let's remember that this is not a reflection of our worth or are standing in God's eyes. He has uniquely gifted each of us for a specific purpose and he will equip us to fulfill that purpose. By leaning on his strength and grounding ourselves in his Word and surrounding ourselves with supportive people, we can counteract impostor syndrome and walk confidently in our identity.

Now it's your turn. What has feeling like an imposter kept you from pursuing?
Have you rubbed shoulders others and felt insecure even though you have God given talents and abilities?
What have you tried that helps you to counterbalance these thoughts when they come up?

When we wrestle with them and we wrangle those rogue thoughts, then we can unleash our true potential.

Michelle Rayburn [00:12:22]:

I'd like to leave you with a resource today And I wanted to share about a book that I recently read. It's called *Ready To Rise: Own Your Voice, Gather Your Community Step Into Your Influence*. This is by Jo Saxton, and I'm going to link to that in the show notes so that you can find a link to *Ready to Rise* if you're interested in it. Let me read you a little bit about the book from the description on Amazon. Have you ever questioned the roles you find yourself in, wondering if you were made for more but unsure of the rocky path before you. Have you had a clear vision for your life? But along the way, insecurity and fear weighed your dreams and silenced the voice within you. You're not alone.

Michelle Rayburn [00:13:25]:

Many amazing women like you have experienced the same struggles. Whether you're moving into leadership, discovering your calling, fighting for change, or doing all three, leadership coach and speaker Jo Saxton, affirms that God designed women for influence and impact. But are you living up to your full potential? This book tackles the real-life issues from harassment to sexism to self-doubt and loneliness that can discourage and derail women from leading in the areas God has called them to. With insights from her own journey and powerful biblical examples, Jo offers practical advice to empower and equip women to transform their communities. If you've ever longed to uncover your true potential, own your voice and boldly advance God's goodness in the world., now is the time to start.

Let me tell you a little bit more about Jo Saxton. She's an author speaker and podcast host and leadership coach.

Michelle Rayburn [00:14:19]:

She has dedicated her career to growing leadership teams around the world and empowering women to find their purpose in their personal lives and leadership. She was born in London to parents who immigrated from Nigeria, and Jo credits her family's unrelenting work ethic to the bold tenacious approach she takes to sharing her wisdom on identity, influence, and living an authentic life. She is characterized by her effervescent honesty and warm approachability, leaving audiences with practical steps in areas that are usually a bit ambiguous. I'm going to link to *Ready to Rise* in the show notes in case you'd like to read it to. I listen to the audiobook and Jo reads it herself and I really love her accent, so that just makes it more fun.

But she has a way of sounding very convincing. She's just a powerful speaker. And so I encourage you if you'd like to listen to the audiobook just because I found that really inspiring when I was out for a walk, and doing stuff around the house to have Jo kind of coaching me as I was listening to the audiobook of *Ready to Rise*.

Michelle Rayburn [00:15:22]:

I hope you pick that up. I just want to encourage you to live boldly. I encourage you to look for where you're holding yourself back with thoughts that sound like impostor syndrome. If you're wondering if you might be experiencing impostor syndrome, I've created a quiz for you with a few questions where you can answer them. You circle which answer most likely applies to you, and then you can tally up your responses and see if you have a strong likelihood or you have a healthy level of self-confidence and are less likely. This quiz is just a general assessment. It's not a diagnosis. It is not a professional assessment. It's just a fun quiz.

Michelle Rayburn [00:16:04]:

So that's going to be going out to my email list. That's one of those bonus resources that I offer each week. So if you're somebody who wants to get those, you want to subscribe to the list, or you can become a life repurposed plus member, and then all of the printable worksheets, quizzes, everything is available there in Patreon. So that will be the resource that goes along with this episode. I hope you have fun with that.

That's all I have for you today. I hope that you have a wonderful week, and I will see you next time.