

**BREAKING  
FREE FROM  
IMPOSTER  
SYNDROME  
TO LAND A  
SALARY  
INCREASE**

**DITCH YOUR FEARS AND  
NEGOTIATE YOUR SALARY  
WITH CONFIDENCE**



**VALERIE MARTINELLI, MPA**

***Women have had long-standing difficulties with salary negotiation in comparison to men. Many believe that it has held us back in the workplace and in terms of our pay equity. So, what can we do to fix this issue? It begins with the issue of confidence because we must believe that we are worth it to ask for it. Let's begin by looking at the issue of confidence and how Imposter Syndrome affects salary negotiation.***

As women, we have the tendency to play down our confidence. This is done as a self-protection method to keep us from being seen as too demanding; however, most women have the tendency to underestimate their worth. Author Barbara Stanny recognizes and lists traits of women who undervalue their earnings potential, also called “underearners”, in her book “Secrets of Six-Figure Women”. Those traits include:

- A high tolerance for low pay
- Willingness to work for free and live-in financial chaos.
- A belief in the nobility of poverty.

Is this you? Then continue reading because women lose out on valuable income throughout their careers with lasting effects into retirement without negotiating.

Have you ever had that nagging feeling that you do not belong or are not good enough? This is called Imposter Syndrome and it will get in the way of a salary negotiation if it is not dealt with properly. Imposter Syndrome is common among high achievers.

The first step is to recognize that it is more than just a feeling. Imposter Syndrome will lead you to devaluing your worth and undermining your experience and expertise. In negotiation situations, you could even end up talking someone out of giving you more money! So, when feeling this way, you should check-in with:

- **Your Self-Talk.** What you say to yourself can change the way you see yourself. To change the way, you think about yourself:
  - **Make a list.** List out at least 10 things that show you are just as qualified as anyone else for a salary increase.
  - **Say Your Name Aloud.** Research has found that taking a positive affirmation and adding your name to it may have a powerful effect on how you feel about yourself.
  - **Own Your Accomplishments.** Do not fall back on excuses by saying that it was luck, hard work, or help from others that allowed you to succeed. Practice saying out loud that you are proud of your achievements.
  - **Visualize Success.** Visualize precisely how you will navigate the situation — successfully — before it happens. This is a tactic that is taught to military recruits, training them to visualize how they are going to handle a situation before it happens.
- **Fight Your Imposter Feeling.** Is that imposter feeling still creeping in? Then try the following:
  - **Decide to be confident.** Being resolute in being confident can make a world of difference because you have literally made up your mind to be confident. This means raising your hand, volunteering, and sharing your

experience. If you find yourself spiraling into self-doubt, force yourself to write down 3 things you have done well. If 3 does not ease your doubt, add more. Be sure to handwrite them- you will remember them better that way.

- **Remind yourself that you are good at what you do.** This is where I urge my clients to write brag books, which is essentially documenting your accomplishments. They do not have to be perfect or only the largest, biggest, and best accomplishments. It is meant to train your brain to see the things that you can achieve and how well you can do it. You also can keep a folder (paper or digital) with things that others have said about you.
- **Unsubscribe from doubt.** There are 2 kinds of doubt- self doubt and idea doubt. Self-doubt will cause you to freeze up. Idea doubt will motivate you to refine, test, or experiment with a good idea. One of the keys is to try turn self-doubt into idea doubt by telling yourself that you are not bad, it is just that your idea initially may need some work or revisions.

It is important to remember that failure does not make you a fraud. Failure is not meant to define you. It is meant to be learned from.

So, how can use this to your benefit and negotiate a salary increase? Let's take a closer look.

Women have unique challenges when it comes to negotiating- the main one is that we are oftentimes viewed as unlikeable when we do it. Women also have the tendency to underestimate our professional value. As women, we have also been socialized to avoid assertiveness, which is an essential quality for a successful negotiation.

Here are some quick steps you can take to prep for a successful negotiation:

- **Know Your Worth.** Some women have the tendency to play down their confidence to protect themselves from being viewed as demanding. Many women tend to underestimate their worth to begin with. Underearners have a high tolerance for low pay, a willingness to work for free and live in financial chaos, and a belief in the nobility of poverty.

So, where do you begin to build the case for negotiation?

- **Quantify your accomplishments.** Put a number on your contribution to your workplace. Do your best to quantify the results of your work however you can. If it is possible to put a dollar figure or a percentage to these accomplishments, do it.
- **Present documentation.** Do not expect your boss to rely on memory or to simply trust that you are being underpaid when you can bring documentation to show it. This means that you need to present any compensation stats that you have found based on your role. If you believe you deserve a raise based on merit, you might save an email thread about your last workplace achievement. It will be important to

- present any documentation regarding the achievement because it is evidence of your value.
- **Show improvement.** If your boss has given you feedback about your work, use it to show progress. Implement the feedback and improve your skills, then follow up, prepared to make the case for your raise. You can apply this to the documentation and any applicable data as well. By doing so, you are focusing on your value and what is in it for your employer. A negotiation well won should be a win-win for both you and your employer.
  - **Learn to be assertive.** When women trade their agreeableness for assertiveness, we may be viewed as unlikeable and demanding. This is a double bind that can make it difficult for women to be assertive; however, we also need to be assertive to negotiate. So, what to do?
    - **Stop apologizing!**
    - **Practice being assertive.**
    - **Do it for the cause.** As women, we have an easier time negotiating when we are advocating for other people. If it helps you to approach asking for a raise by thinking about it as something that will help others, then you should do it.
    - **Ask for feedback.** Soliciting feedback can help to show your employer that you want to do your job better and then execute on it. It shows that you are committing to improving, then check back a few months later after having made those improvements.
  - **Talk about your salary.** Salary transparency is an important first step toward closing the wage gap between both women and men. So, what is a good starting point? You want to utilize a website that collects salary and income information by location. Some examples?
    - **Glassdoor**
    - **PayScale**
    - **Salary.com**
    - **The Salary Project**
    - **Get That Raise**
  - **Have a Plan B.** You may do everything right and still receive a no. But that no is not the end for you, either. It can lead to bigger and better things if we are open-minded enough. So, consider the following as well:
    - **Ask for something other than money.** Think about other benefits that are important to you that can have a monetary value, like PTO or commuter benefits.
    - **Schedule a time to revisit the conversation.**
    - **Be transparent but diplomatic.** If there is a pay discrepancy, you do want to state it.
    - **Think about your future.** Are you in the right workplace? How far underpaid are you? Do you feel undervalued and underappreciated?

***If you need more practical, hands on coaching with negotiation, please feel free to reach out for help. I am here to assist you to a successful future!***