

BBC iWonder – How do I stop feeling like a fraud?

Step 3 VIDEO – Managing your thoughts

Every day I see people in my clinic who want to retrain their thoughts, and it never ceases to amaze me how many intelligent, successful women sit across from me and tell me that they feel like frauds.

I use cognitive behavioural therapy to help people with this feeling of being a fraud. The way that you think affects the way you feel, which actually affects your behaviour, so if you tweak those thoughts and change them then, in turn, so do the feelings and so do the behaviours.

Here are some things that you can do if you're feeling like a bit of a fraud in your personal life or, indeed, at work.

Remember that these are just your thoughts, so if someone compliments you on a job well done and your immediate thought is: "I didn't do a good job and they don't really mean it," stop right there! They've said it – take it at face value, accept it and move on.

Secondly, try writing down all the steps that've led you to where you are now. It may be a course that you did, an important decision or a meeting that you arranged. Ultimately you need to take some responsibility for your success, and by remembering what you've done, it'll make it easier.

Try and speak to someone about the way you're feeling – a mentor, perhaps. Getting it out in the open about how you feel, about being a fraud, is really important because it'll allow someone you respect to challenge those thoughts.

Finally, and most importantly, feelings aren't facts. So name your fears, and remember: no matter how hard we try none of us are going to be perfect, so being able to acknowledge your accomplishments, own them, and be happy with both those and the times when you haven't got it right is the way to feel better about who you are and, most importantly, to stop feeling like a fraud.

Remember: it's important to do these steps and to do them regularly, because eventually they'll become habitual and, when they do, those positive, rational thoughts will outweigh those negative ones.

And don't forget: there are many successful and admirable people who share these feelings – so you're not alone.