



## *'We Can Go to the Reunion,* **AND JUST PRETEND TO BE SUCCESSFUL'**

**WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER, I ALWAYS WATCHED ROMY & MICHELE'S HIGH SCHOOL REUNION**

when I was feeling down. The movie cheered me up because of how the two main characters' long-term friendship helped them overcome various obstacles. Throughout the movie, Romy and Michele are singularly focused on impressing their former high school classmates when they attend their 10-year reunion. They first try reinventing themselves in ways they think their classmates would believe are "successful" and, when failing to do so, they concoct a story about inventing Post-it notes and show up as "sophisticated, educated, successful career women." When this backup plan also doesn't pan out, Romy and Michele leave the reunion but decide to come back wearing clothes that they love and that they had personally designed and made. They leave the reunion having impressed their classmates, but more importantly, realizing that they never needed to.

Fortunately, for most of my career, I haven't suffered from imposter syndrome. I felt relatively competent as a government attorney. But as soon as I transitioned into private practice, the imposter syndrome set in. It was not only my lack of experience with billing, but also in what felt like every aspect of representing private clients. Where I had developed efficient systems in government practice, it was taking me an extraordinarily long time to accomplish basic tasks such as logging onto the cloud, finding the right client folder, and adapting my writing style. This caused me to seriously question myself. If I wasn't good at these basic tasks, maybe I was a total "deludanoid" thinking I was good at being a government attorney. The even more pressing question I had was, "When are the partners going to find out I'm a total fake and fire me?"

It took me six months to shake the feeling of being an imposter and to feel comfortable in private practice. Although there's no guarantee I won't ever feel that way again, I'm using this column to take notes from myself, Romy, and Michele. First, it's better to work through feelings of inadequacy with a good friend (or several). Talk to your friends and trusted co-workers about what you're finding challenging at work—they'll provide helpful perspective. Second, don't invent false metrics for yourself by speculating as to what others find to be "successful"—take steps to find out what the expectations truly are and simply do your best to meet those actual expectations. Third, you don't need to reinvent yourself to shake the feeling of being an imposter—trying to be somebody you're not could make the problem worse. Instead, lean into what you're good at and leverage those particular skills to find success. Fourth, give it time. Most mental challenges don't have instant solutions, and imposter syndrome is no different.

So, now that we've tackled imposter syndrome, "let's fold scarves!"

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