

## Ep #85: Self-Doubt: Your Leadership Superpower



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With Your Host

**Sandy Linda**

[The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy](#)  
with Sandy Linda

## Ep #85: Self-Doubt: Your Leadership Superpower

A study found that 75% of female executives across all industries have experienced imposter syndrome. However, very few talk about it. Why? Society has taught us a dangerous myth. Let's explore how our biggest losses can help us become genuine leaders. Stay tuned.

Welcome to *The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy*. Hosted by Master Certified Life Coach and fellow trailblazer, Sandy Linda, this is your space to discover how life's biggest challenges can ignite profound transformation—where grief becomes growth, setbacks become stepping stones, and your unique story lights the way for others. If you're ready to turn life's challenges into opportunities for leadership, legacy, and forward momentum, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Hello, creative humans and fellow trailblazers. It's spring break, and some people are escaping to quiet corners to breathe, reset, and reveal their true selves beneath their professional personas.

Last week, my friend, a brilliant teacher who shapes countless young minds, called me from the airport. She was heading to a restful location to escape mounting pressures at work and the charged political climate around education. Over the fuzzy phone line, her voice dropped to a whisper as she confessed something she told no one at her school. Most days, she feels like she's pretending to have it all together.

She said to me, "I walk into that classroom, put on my teacher's face, and act like I got all the answers. But inside, I am constantly questioning whether I'm good enough to be standing there." What struck me wasn't just her admission, but her feeling safe to confide in me. She stated that I'm the only one who will understand and admit when we're not okay without judgment. Plus, she listened to our show. Thank you, my dear friend.

Her words hit me hard because that's why we're here today. Many of us wear perfect masks, especially in leadership positions. Underneath the mask, imposter syndrome has you in a grip. You're playing a role that doesn't feel

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natural. Workplace pressure might cause overachievement to avoid criticism. You might only hear negative feedback, yet dismiss compliments.

Let's be honest. This feeling often intensifies after significant loss. Whether it's losing a loved one, facing job rejection, watching a friendship crumble, or pivoting your career, these moments of loss can make us question everything we thought we knew about ourselves. Women leaders wonder in boardrooms and team meetings worldwide, am I good enough to be here? Will they discover I don't have all the answers?

Let's be real. Leadership isn't about having perfect confidence. It's about leading, even when doubt creeps in. So how do we acknowledge those doubts without undermining our authority?

Today, we are talking about something every leader faces but few admit is called self-doubt. Earlier, I mentioned that 75% of female leaders experience imposter syndrome. Society has taught us a dangerous myth. And that myth is: People always expect leaders to display flawless confidence. We are leading in complex times, between technological change, remote teams, and constant uncertainty. Perfect confidence isn't just unrealistic; it's impossible. And pretending otherwise is exhausting us and preventing authentic connections with our teams.

Let me tell you about a woman whose journey speaks volumes about overcoming self-doubt. As a shy child, she used to say to herself that she was allergic to attention. She hid behind humor, tried to stay small, invisible. Sound familiar? For many of us, that pattern of self-protection starts early. Leadership isn't about eliminating self-doubt. It's about finding your voice despite it.

Today, we're digging into three critical tensions that create self-doubt for women leaders. Then I will share my The Doubt to Decision method. Three practical tools to transform your relationship with doubt. By the end of our time together, you will have a new perspective on self-doubt. You'll see it not as your enemy, but as a leadership companion that, when understood, can enhance your performance. So let's dive in.

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The first tension we face as women leaders is the Reliability Paradox. Today's teams crave trustworthy leadership. They want to follow real humans, not perfect robots. But when we feel doubt, we worry, "If I show uncertainty, will my team lose faith in me? Will my authority crumble?"

Let's return to the woman's journey through the imposter syndrome. In 2016, she had a book manuscript but faced a safety dilemma. She had important things to say but questioned whether her voice mattered. The old leadership playbook would have told her to fake unshakable confidence, to hide her doubts. Despite zero confidence that it would succeed, she found the courage to put it out in the world anyway.

That book became an instant New York Times bestseller, and I will leave you the name of the book and the author on the show notes. She dealt with her self-doubt privately and boldly continued. Her powerful quote that resonates with me is: "Confidence isn't walking into a room thinking you're better than everyone. It's walking in not having to compare yourself to anyone at all."

Loss can transform us as leaders. When we survive our worst fears—losing a job, ending a relationship, major failure—we discover a core strength we never knew we had. The question shifts from, "What will people think of me?" to, "What do I believe is right?" This captures how to resolve the Reliability Paradox. True leadership confidence isn't about projecting perfection. It's about being secure in your unique voice and perspective with no need for external validation.

The second tension we face is the Feedback Blind Spot. Imagine playing darts in a dark room. You're throwing your best shots, but no one's telling you if you're hitting the target. That's what leadership feels like for some women. Research reveals a startling truth. Women in leadership positions are 32% less likely to receive precise, actionable feedback on their leadership abilities compared to men.

Think about that. One-third less guidance on what's working and what needs improvement? Talented women are less likely to apply for job opportunities,

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especially advanced, higher paying positions, because they are concerned they are not qualified enough. In contrast, men don't seem to worry about matching their skills to the job requirements.

This creates what I call the Qualification Problem. Another study found that men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications. But women apply when they check 100% of those boxes. What holds a talented woman back? A misunderstanding of the hiring process.

We believe the job description is a perfect checklist rather than a wish list. We think we are being practical, but we're actually holding ourselves back. After facing rejection, whether in relationships or careers, this tendency often intensifies. We become even more cautious, more determined to be perfect before we try again.

In this information vacuum, lacking clear feedback and consistent rules, our doubts grow. Without distinct input, we begin questioning everything. Did that meeting go well? Was my decision respected? Am I being too assertive or not assertive enough? We judge every interaction based on unspoken, unclear expectations.

This creates a vicious cycle. We doubt ourselves, which makes us hesitate, reinforcing the doubt and causing more hesitation. Meanwhile, our colleagues, with more feedback confidence, move forward.

The next tension is the Responsibility Weight. Leadership isn't about just making decisions; it's about carrying their consequences. When our choices affect other people's careers, well-being, and livelihoods, doubt isn't just normal; it's healthy.

I felt this weight myself when I was considering leaving corporate America to branch out on my own and do this podcast. For years, I stayed in my lane, collecting steady paychecks while keeping my deepest insights locked away. I had stories to share, lessons learned from my own reinventions. But a voice in my head kept asking, "Who are you to start a podcast? Will anyone even listen?"

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I didn't realize my hesitation wasn't just about me. A mentor finally looked me in the eyes and said something I'll never forget. "If you are hiding work that could inspire other people's lives, you're doing a disservice to yourself and everyone who might benefit from your story." That hit me like a thunderbolt. My doubt wasn't just affecting my career path; it was potentially holding back other women who needed to hear what I had overcome.

The weight of that responsibility made my doubt worse. "What if I said the wrong things? What if my advice led someone astray?" But then, I realized something. The responsibility weight should make us thoughtful, not frozen. I needed to acknowledge the doubt, examine it, and take action anyway.

Each episode of this podcast carries that weight. Knowing that my words might influence your decisions, your courage, and your next steps. Now, before I continue and provide you actionable steps, if you are enjoying this episode or any other episodes, please leave a rating or comment on your podcast app. Your feedback helps other women creatives and leaders find these insights. And I love hearing how these ideas resonate with you. Every five-star rating brings this message to someone who needs it.

Now, back to some actionable advice that I hope you will take on. The problem isn't having doubts. It's when those doubts paralyze us from taking action. And I've been saying that a lot. And this is where I want to share something practical with you today. I call it the Doubt to Decision method.

I have developed it from my journey and from working with other fabulous women leaders who have learned to transform doubt from a problem into a stepping stone. First is the Doubt Reframe. When self-doubt hits, ask yourself: Is this doubt protecting me from a real risk, or is it just fear talking? Not all doubts hold the same weight. Try this exercise. Write your individual doubt. Then write: "This doubt is helpful if..." and "This doubt is unhelpful if..."

This reframe helps you see whether your doubt is a useful warning or just an emotional reaction. Let me give an example. For those who experience profound loss, say your doubt is, "I can't survive another failure." That doubt is



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helpful if you acknowledge your need for healing and preparation. This doubt is unhelpful if it keeps you on the sidelines of your life.

Second tool is what I call your Decision Counsel. Most of us have an inner critic, but successful leaders build an inner advisory board. Identify three or five people whose judgments you trust. When major doubts hit, ask yourself, "What would [name that person] tell me about this situation?"

This gives you a perspective beyond your doubts and taps into the wisdom you respect. This counsel can include mentors who have navigated similar losses or transitions. Their wisdom becomes part of your internal guidance system. I have even seen leaders include lost loved ones on their counsel asking, "What would my father advise?" They can access profound wisdom that lives on within them.

The third tool is the Confidence Timeline. We forget how many times we faced uncertainty before and came through it. Create a timeline of past challenges you have overcome. When doubt hits about a current challenge, place it on that timeline. This visual reminder shows you: I have navigated uncertainty before, and I can do it again.

Your timeline should highlight the losses you survived and the resulting growth. That painful career transition, the relationship that ended, the project that failed? Each of these points on your timeline represents not just survival, but transformation. They stand as evidence of your resilience and capacity to create meaning from difficulty.

Today, we have explored how self-doubt after significant losses can diminish or expand your leadership presence. We have seen how the Reliability Paradox, Feedback Blind Spot, and Responsibility Weight create tension that intensifies our doubts. We discovered how these challenges can transform into your greatest leadership assets with the right tools. Your losses don't define you, but how you metabolize them determines whether you lead from fear or intelligent power.

Remember these three powerful tools: The Doubt Reframe: Distinguishing between helpful and unhelpful doubt. The Decision Counsel: Accessing wisdom

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beyond your inner critic. And the Confidence Timeline: Recognizing your proven resilience.

What I want you to do this week is try the Doubt Reframe tool. When self-doubt hits, ask whether it's protecting you or just limiting you. And you can share your experience with me via email. Fire away with questions, and your story could be featured.

Self-doubt doesn't make you a weak leader; it makes you a more thoughtful one. The goal isn't to eliminate doubt, but to build a healthier relationship with it. Your team doesn't need you to be perfect. They need you to be real, thoughtful, and keep moving forward, even when the path isn't clear. That's not just good leadership; that's great leadership.

Thank you all for listening and I want you all to have a beautiful, wonderful week. Bye.

Thanks for joining us on *The Reinvention Lab*. If today's episode inspired you, don't forget to follow and share it with someone who's ready to turn their challenges into opportunities. Want to take your journey to the next level? Visit [sandy linda.com/program](https://sandy linda.com/program) and apply for coaching today. Together, we'll turn your story into a legacy. Until next time, keep moving forward with purpose, passion, and power.