



UNORTHODOX  
**SUCCESS**  
SECRET  
**SHAME**

*How I Stopped Feeling  
Like the World's Biggest  
Fake and Found Peace  
in Being Me*

**CHRIS FROLIC**

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*I dedicate this book to Geoff Ronning.*

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## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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**T**his book is a collection of thoughts about my history and experience dealing with debilitating imposter syndrome. Completing this book is part of my journey. In a lot of ways I feel like I've come out the other side of this, so I wanted to create the book that I wished someone had given me years ago, when I was in the depths of my crisis.

I would have felt less alone.

I would have felt seen.

I would have had hope for a solution.

Back in my crisis, I desperately wished I had someone to model after, to make my life easier. If that's a role I can play for you now, that would make me happy.

Back then, I didn't even know what imposter syndrome was. I was suffering alone.

Like everything I do, I didn't follow the rules when creating this book. I was inspired by my desire to help people like me, so I created what made sense to me.

This book is written in the style I best communicate: I tell my own story. I used to think that my story didn't have value because I was too different, my story was too wild, and there was nothing to learn from me unless you were me. I've now learned how wrong I was. That's part of getting over my feelings of being a fake. There is value—a lot of value!—in telling my story. The fact that it is so unique is what makes what I have to say so valuable.



*Every chapter ends with a powerful Action Step or Steps, contained in a separate box. To get the most out of this experience, I invite you to really take time with it and see how it applies to your own life. Don't move on until you have a response to each question. Write out the answer in your own journal. As you move through the book your answers will evolve. This is normal. Give yourself the space you need to impact your life from this experience.*



## A B O U T M E

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**S**o, who am I to write this book? Let's start with my accomplishments. I'm the co-founder of StealthSeminar.com, the leader in the automated webinar business. It launched in 2010, made a profit from day one, has created over a billion dollars for its users, and today it is bigger than it has ever been. In the 1990s I was a hugely successful DJ known as Anabolic Frolic, with the best-selling electronic music series of that decade, "Happy2bHardcore". I was an architect of the original rave movement as a promoter of one of the most revered and celebrated rave promotions, "Hullabaloo!" I was the host of the highest-rated online dance music show of 2000, Happy Hour. I have a published memoir about that part of my life called Requiem for My Rave. Following my DJ career, I spent five years as a comedy stage hypnotist, appearing on television and doing shows across Canada, where I live.

Now here's the thing: I accomplished all of the above while never having graduated high school. That was a secret shame

of mine for most of my life. I clearly have a solid history of “making shit happen”, and yet because of my unconventional background, the things I did, and how different they all were, I didn’t see it that way. Despite how successful my efforts were, I felt like the biggest fraud in the world.

I didn’t start out feeling that way. It got worse over time. The more money I made, the worse I felt.

I stand before you today firmly on the other side of this story. Nowadays, I like to help people like me—those with unconventional backgrounds who have achieved incredible success, yet still feel like fakes that have fooled the world and are too ashamed to admit that this is their problem.

This is what this book is about.

I’m able to speak it, and share what changed, and how I changed. My hope is that my book might find and speak to the people that really need to hear this. I look forward to what new thinking it will create in your own mind and what new possibilities it might open.

Something in you chose to read this book, and that tells me you’re ready to change your situation. It all starts there, so you’ve already done the hardest part.

I believe in you.



*What is your intention from reading this book?*





PART ONE

# THE CRISIS



## CHAPTER ONE

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# I'M GOING TO DIE

“I think I’m having a heart attack,” I told Robin, my wife. It was the only explanation I had for the pain in my chest. I felt pressure, like a contraction, all around the center of my chest. It was like someone was pushing their fist into my ribcage. I didn’t know what to do. I was terrified that I was going to die.

After asking a few questions about other symptoms, Robin said, “It’s not a heart attack. It’s anxiety. You spent so many years worried about money, now that it isn’t a worry, your mind has to find something else to worry about.”

Robin tracked down my bottle of Ativan, prescribed to me years earlier to help with flying to Australia. I took one, hoping Robin was right.

I had no other choice but to trust Robin in that moment. In my mind, I figured if I collapsed on the floor, Robin could call 911. I would wait until that moment before going to the hospital. I guess enough of me suspected I wasn't actually dying, and I wanted to avoid the shame of showing up in the emergency room as a hypochondriac.

The tranquilizers began to work. The fear was subsiding. Whatever it was I was feeling in my chest wasn't an actual heart attack, because it wasn't getting worse, it was getting better.

I wish I could say things got better from that day, but they didn't. I wish I could say I didn't fear having a heart attack again, but I did, regularly. I wish I could say I learned to get through these panic attacks without resorting to tranquilizers, but I didn't, not for a long while.

Why was I feeling this way? I had so much to celebrate and be grateful for. Robin was correct in saying I used to worry about money for years, and now I didn't need to anymore. After living precariously my entire adult life, I had finally "made it" financially. My latest venture, a webinar tech business, was a financial success. I still have an ATM receipt from that time from the bank with my checking account showing a balance of \$723,881.82. It was cash money just sitting there. Every month I received more money than I knew how to spend. I achieved all the things I wanted in life. I had wanted a home for my family, where my kids would have their own



bedrooms. We then found our dream home, in our dream neighborhood.

I was so worried about my ability to keep generating this kind of money in the future, I paid the house off within three years rather than carry a mortgage.

I had literally made millions of dollars, in real money in my hands, not pretend paper money, or stock valuations, or crypto fortunes. Yet I was terrified it could all disappear overnight.

The problem was that I felt like a fraud.

How I got here made no sense. I must have fooled everyone. I was making millions of dollars in tech, and I'm a high school dropout. No one taught me to do what I do. I had to figure it out on my own.

I kept rerunning my history in my head. Before the tech biz, I was a comedy stage hypnotist. Yes, that's as much of a non-sequitur as it reads. Before that, I was one of the best-selling DJs in the world and one of the most beloved rave promoters of the 1990s. Huh? Before that, I had worked at a video game store since I was twelve years old. When I was eighteen I moved to work at their head office, traveling the country while setting up new franchises and training the new owners on how to run their business. Where is the string that ties this all together?

It was such an absurd story. It felt like these things all sort of just... happened. It had to have been sheer luck more than anything else. "Right place, right time," was my belief.

With my previous ventures I had had various degrees of success, but the financial component evaded me until my most recent company.

It was the huge inflow of cash, combined with my unorthodox story of getting here, that really made me feel like a fraud. I fooled everyone; there was no other explanation.

And that left me feeling so unhappy. I felt like I was in over my head, and I had no idea how to transition out.

I felt so guilty. Guilty about how I felt, and why I felt it, and how it was affecting the people around me.

I felt so scared. Scared that everything would go up in smoke, and I'd have no ability to do anything after this. My only thought about how to create income was to rent out the basement of my house as an apartment. I didn't see any potential in myself for doing anything else.

I was scared I was going to die, either by dropping dead of a heart attack or going to sleep and never waking up again. What would happen to my family without me to support them?

And I felt so ashamed that these were my problems. Who am I to complain about anything? I literally have everything I wanted, including a happy marriage and amazing children.

I couldn't speak of my negative feelings, because my shame was too great.

That was me at my worst. I was in this state for six long years. The money rolled in and I dealt with fear, guilt, and shame. I spent every moment feeling like a fraud.

I estranged myself from mostly everyone. I withdrew. I did my best to avoid talking to my business partner, Geoff. It was ridiculous, but I couldn't control it. I didn't even know what I was doing. I was driven by primal fear.

Finally, in my crisis, I hit my lowest point. I had to pull myself out before I destroyed everything.



*What in my story do you relate with?*



## CHAPTER TWO

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# I WAS KING OF THE IMPOSTERS

I suffered for years for an unknown reason. Despite my outward success, the money I made, the things I owned, I was extremely unhappy and miserable. Then I came across the term “Imposter Syndrome” and things started to make more sense for me.

Wikipedia.com describes imposter syndrome as: *Impostor syndrome (also known as impostor phenomenon, impostorism, fraud syndrome or the impostor experience) is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents, or accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a “fraud”. Despite external evidence of their competence, those experiencing this phenomenon remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve all they have achieved. Individuals with impostorism incorrectly attribute their success to luck, or interpret*

*it as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent than they perceive themselves to be.*

I was living my life feeling like an imposter. My case was even more severe because I was living as an actual imposter—I had created an alias for the webinar company I had co-founded. I had decided early on that it wouldn't serve my tech business if it was revealed that a former DJ and rave promoter had hand-coded all of our software, with no outside help or assistance. Why would anyone trust the work of a hypnotist and high-school dropout?

Looking back, my achievement is amazing, but in my mind it felt like I had fooled everyone. Nobody could know this secret.

So I created a fake name, as generic as I could make it: Greg Fisher. That person was the brains behind the software. I let my partner be the public face, and I toiled away in the background with no credit other than my monthly dividends.

Even my own staff only interacted with me as “Greg Fisher”.

It wasn't meant to be a big thing, because at the start we didn't even know if this project would work. But as the business kept growing, my identity became a bigger and bigger secret.

The worst part was that I could not feel the success of the business, since I continued to think I fooled everyone. Millions of users were successfully using the software I created by myself with, as I phrased it, “duct tape and Popsicle sticks”. They were getting value from it, because it worked. It was the product

of my creativity and ingenuity. Yet I was scared all the time I would be outed as not knowing what I was doing, and it could all go poof.

I made a ton of money and every month I was worried that could be the last check I would ever see. I feared I'd never do anything as big as this.



*When was the last time you found yourself  
feeling like an imposter?*





## CHAPTER THREE

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# I SUFFERED FOR YEARS

**O**ne of my biggest regrets is how many years I suffered needlessly because I didn't value my own work.

Here are some pics from over twenty years ago, during February 1999. This is me DJing in front a sea of people at the International Center, just outside of Toronto. People paid and traveled to come to see me. I had sold hundreds of thousands of CDs by this time, and my rave company, Hullabaloo!, was at its peak.

When this event was over, I went home to my one-bedroom basement apartment. I had abandoned my piece-of-crap car in the street about a month before these pics were taken, because I had no money to pay for insurance or fix the car.

I lived without a car for fourteen years after this.



I want to make this even more clear: I had just had 5,000 people buy tickets to see me, and I was broke! If I calculated the hourly wage of the months of planning and risk that went into putting an event on of this size, not to mention my value as an attraction—I was working for below minimum wage. I lived in apartments, often scraping by, until 2012.

I didn't value the experience I was creating for all of my patrons. I was fixated on keeping prices low and only making a small bit of profit, in some misguided attempt at not looking greedy, combined with working-class guilt.



And I suffered greatly because of it. The sad thing was, I was still accused of “being in it for the money”. People would do bar-napkin math and guess that I was making 100x more what the reality was. So, my suffering wasn’t even quieting those critics. I did it for nothing!

My real fans, the ones that truly valued this unique experience I was creating, I’m sure would have told me the event was priceless.



*When in the last 6 months have you found yourself suffering unnecessarily from being unable to value yourself properly?*

*To see video from this exact rave, if you are curious what it was all about:*

**[WWW.CHRISFROLIC.COM/BONUS/](http://WWW.CHRISFROLIC.COM/BONUS/)**



## CHAPTER FOUR

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# IMPOSTER SYNDROME IS A PRESENTING SYMPTOM

In medical terms, a “presenting symptom” is the reason someone seeks help with a medical problem. A cough that lasts for weeks is a common presenting symptom for tuberculosis, for example; the patient doesn’t yet know they have tuberculosis, but they know this cough needs to get checked out.

Just as the cough is not the tuberculosis itself, imposter syndrome is a symptom and not the underlying issue.

I didn’t realize this at first. I thought imposter syndrome *was* my problem. I believed I needed to treat *that*.

The anxiety I was feeling, the fear, and the guilt: they were all tied together. All were presenting symptoms of a much deeper problem.

*A lack of sense of self.*

I didn't believe in myself. I didn't know who I was. I thought I did: I'm a father, husband, and entrepreneur. Those are all pretty clear, so what else is there? Yet the feelings continued.

The first step is to recognize the difference between the presenting symptom and the actual thing.



*Where in your own life do you feel like an imposter?*

*What changes for you if you consider that the imposter syndrome is a presenting symptom and not the actual problem?*

## CHAPTER FIVE

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# I BOUGHT MY WAY OUT OF AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS (OR SO I THOUGHT)



In 2012 my life was on a trajectory I hadn't experienced before, with real financial stability. I had huge monthly dividends arriving and had moved out of my apartment into a rented house. I had a bank account flush with cash, and for the first time in my life nothing to worry about.

There was one fly in the ointment though—my brain was so conditioned to worry, to my precarious life, to living on the edge. When I solved a huge part of that, it needed to find something else to latch on to. It settled on my health.

Suddenly I had massive health anxiety. Every time I got winded, I thought I was going to have a heart attack. Every time I felt my heart beating, it felt abnormal. The anxiety trap I found myself in often triggered a racing heart, which made me even more scared.

Then my mind went to cancer. A benign lump on my body that I've had for 10 years, that had been checked out and cleared through MRI a number of times, all of a sudden had new menace. I was convinced something had changed. It had grown, and this time it was going to kill me.

This constant health anxiety triggered an even worse outcome: a full-blown existential crisis. For about five months, throughout the entire summer of 2012, I was consumed with thoughts of death, and of what happens (or doesn't happen) afterward. From the moment I woke up, to the moment I fell asleep, that awareness of my death was haunting me. It was unrelenting, exhausting, and brutal.

All of this was because my life was at its best.

I can recall watching the opening ceremonies of the 2012 London Olympics that summer. There was a part of it telling the story of the industrial revolution, about how man



conquered nature, with the sounds of trees falling. It had some of the most beautiful music I can remember hearing, and I bawled my eyes out.

I was a wreck and I had no idea what to do.

Finally, towards the end of that summer, a memory came back to me. It was of my youth and the countless hours I spent in arcades. I thought about my young wish of having a pinball machine in my home. What a luxury!

And I realized in that moment, with my income and my home, I could actually do it.

I found a pinball community online. I researched and found an amazing pinball machine, a brand new state-of-the-art one. “New in box”, as we say in the pinball community. It was a lot of money but Robin told me, “You deserve it.” With Robin’s blessing, I ordered it.

I felt like a kid at Christmas. These were feelings I hadn’t felt in a very long time: the anticipation, the excitement. Those feelings of being a kid again overtook the existential crisis and health anxiety. I was so happy.

The game arrived in a huge box. We unpacked it, set it up in the basement, and it was awesome.

It was so awesome, I bought another pinball a month later. And then another. And then another. And then I filled all

available space in the basement with five pinball machines. Robin enjoyed decorating the basement to look like an arcade.

We had people over. I joined the local pinball league and made the first new friends I had made in over a decade. It was glorious.

And when it came time to buy a new home, we made sure it could support my crazy idea of building a secret arcade. We disqualified homes that could not do that. Then we found our perfect home. I filled it with fifteen pinball machines and a Pac Man machine and custom neon and tokens and branded merchandise featuring my arcade's name, Frolic's Arcade. I fully realized this wild idea I had.

But the joy didn't last. I had only put a Band-aid on a gunshot wound.

I hadn't dealt with the real work that I needed to address my underlying crisis.

I was still so vulnerable. When internet trolls attacked me and my arcade out of envious resentment, they weren't just criticizing some things I owned, they were inflicting terrible damage on a hurting human being.

I was still struggling with brutal imposter syndrome and anxiety, and my personal relationships were being affected. Buying things was no longer helping me.



*Where have you been applying Band-aids to yourself in your own life?*



## CHAPTER SIX

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# THE SADDEST MAN I EVER SAW

**M**any years ago when I was still DJing, I was waiting to be picked up at the Arrivals section of Chicago O'Hare Airport. I was standing by the driveway where cars picked up waiting passengers. Beside me were a teenage girl and her mother. They had a few suitcases, returning from who-knows-where together.

As I waited for my pickup, a car pulled up in front of the mom and daughter. A man got out. Slumped. Silent. He just seemed... so sad.

The scene got even sadder. This man went to the trunk and opened it. The mom and daughter put their luggage in and got in the car. The sad man got in the driver's seat, and... drove away.

There was no interaction between the man and the mom and daughter. This was twenty years ago, so this was not an Uber or private car pickup.

With horror I realized I had just witnessed a terribly dysfunctional family. There was no greeting between them, no love. The daughter did not acknowledge the father, following the lead of the mom.

I'll never know what was truly going on with that family, but it was so sad that the sight of it scarred me for life. I've recounted this story many times, both to my own family and others. I swore I'd never be that man. I'd never let the chain of events happen that resulted in that scene I saw that day.

Whatever happened to them started a long time earlier. I would prioritize my family, and never let that happen. I would take corrective action, and have, when caught in my own pits of unhappiness.

When I've found myself at crossroads, to take corrective action or do nothing, I've taken the action. To do nothing would over time make me into a version of the sad man I saw that day, defeated and broken.

Last September I was returning from four days away and Robin picked me up at the nearest subway station, to give me a lift back to our house. Our two kids were in the back seat.

"Hi Daddy!" I was cheerfully welcomed as I got into the car.

I thanked my kids for coming for the trip to pick me up. They could have easily stayed at home while Robin did the ten-minute round trip.

“I remember you telling me about that dad at the airport,” said my younger child. He was doing his part in not recreating that scene for me. Having a strong family bond takes effort and my kids have followed my lead. My kids could have stayed home, but they took action, and came for the trip because they knew it would be better to greet me in a nice way when I had been gone.

Some of my greatest lessons come from my own mistakes, but if I can learn from someone else's, I'd rather learn that way.



*Imagine you were me that day, standing at the airport arrivals curb and witnessed the sight of this family encounter. What lesson could you apply to yourself to ensure this doesn't happen to you?*

