



## Stanford eCorner

### CEO Insecurities

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To illustrate the point that no amount of success can satisfy someone as long as the inner judge rules the mind, Positive Intelligence's Shirzad Chamine reads the anonymous confessions of CEOs and others who he has trained. One admitted, "My air of confidence is false. I have no plan in life."



#### Transcript

Working with, a ton of the research by the way, was with a lot of CEO's. With a lot of sales teams and executive teams. With world class athletes. With 200,000 people around the world. Looking into the saboteurs. What I now know is that this thing, what we are talking about is universal. That there are no exceptions to people having this kind of experience. And the question of can you be successful with your saboteurs. The answer to that is yes. The negative saboteurs can actually push you and push you and push you to succeed.

A lot of CEO's that I work with actually have strong saboteurs. But the reason you want to deal with this issue is two things. One, so long as the saboteurs are pushing you to your level of success, you will never be happy. Because every step of the way is littered with negativity. That's one. The other thing is your path to highest performance is not through the saboteurs. So you will not perform as well, you will not accomplish as much. But can you accomplish some good stuff? Absolutely. You can achieve. And one thing I want to just show you to kind of bring this to life for you.

Is a while back I was running a leadership development seminar for more than 100 CEO's. Some of them billionaires. Some of them household names you would know. A lot of obviously very successful people. And because I had been coaching some of them, I knew what life really was for them. And I knew they were suffering from the pains that saboteurs cause everybody. But when we are starting a seminar people are going around and introducing themselves to each other. Everybody was puffed up and peacock colors and yeah, everything is perfect. I'm great. And all of the facade of perfection.

And when the seminar started, I told them you know what, I don't buy that bullshit. I coached some of you. I know what your life really is like. Let's tell the truth. And I gave them these three and a half by five cards and I said tell the truth about what's really going on in your life. And anonymously, no names attached. And then I shuffled the cards and I read out the cards to them. And this is a random selection of the 100 or so cards from these CEO's. This is what life is like even after you succeed if your saboteurs are still intact. This is what life is about if your saboteurs are still messing with you.

"I'm terrified of failing as the leader of my business". "My air of confidence is false. I have no plan in life". "I'm rarely at peace with myself. Constantly looking for more, comparing myself with others". Do you hear the saboteurs? At the top of their profession, that's still what this person is thinking. "I fear dying at an early age from overwork and stress". "I'm self-destructive and I don't know why". "I have no idea how to truly connect with my only son". "I often feel like I'm a fraud".

This is so common among high achieving individuals that we even have a name for it. We call it the imposter syndrome. So many high achieving individuals think that their success is due to luck and circumstance. And that one day they'll be discovered for the fraud that they are. Saboteur. "I have been abusing drugs and alcohol to deal with stress". "I battle with constantly ranking and judging everyone around me in all settings, all the time". Do you hear the saboteurs? "I lack strength in resisting

temptations and desires". "I am feeling very sad and lonely and the antidepressants I am on don't seem to be helping". "I worry my materialism is hurting my children".

This one broke my heart when I first read it. "I don't love myself very much". Written in all capital letters. "I don't love myself very much". No amount of money in the bank will have this person be happy so long as these saboteurs are at play. "I wish I could run away for one year. Just be alone". And the last one from the CEO's. "I am afraid of ending up like my father who is unloved and will die alone". Unless you think that this is just like CEO's, I was teaching a positive intelligence class for a bunch of graduate students at Stanford.

30 graduate students. And I asked them to write cards about how were they really feeling. And of these 30, 29 came back. Just one card came back saying, you know what, there isn't much for me to share. 29 of the 30 cards, Stanford graduate students in that class came back with, this is just one random selection. "I am never good enough for myself. I am a disappointment, a wasted potential". Can you imagine the lie inside somebody's head that as a Stanford graduate student will have them believe this. Unless you take on your saboteurs, there is no end to the game of trying to find peace in your heart. Because no matter what you create in the external world, in terms of success and wealth, if these guys are running you, these are the things you'll be saying.