



## The True-Colours Phenomenon

Freeing the Sparkling You – An Appreciative Re-frame of the Imposter Syndrome

By: [Vivien Hau](#) & [David Shaked](#)

*Don't be afraid to let them show*

*Your true colours*

*True colours are beautiful*

*Like a rainbow*

Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly (1986) *True Colors*.

In our previous article (An Appreciative Re-frame of the Imposter Syndrome), we talked about a review of the imposter syndrome and our thinking process of the re-framing journey. Together with all the genuine sharing and insightful contributions from people around us, we went through a journey to arrive at a life-giving name to this new phenomenon.

Our top choice is “the True-Colours Phenomenon”. We also propose the following concise definition:

***The True-Colours Phenomenon is a set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours with which we can connect. It supports us in embracing our self-worthiness and enables us to reveal our true, unique qualities, talents and creative best. It also frees us from limiting beliefs so that we can pursue new opportunities to the fullest.***

***It is an intentional choice of seeing ourselves for/ honouring who we truly are rather than comparing ourselves with someone else or with perceived expectations from others.***

The following four attributes represent ones' inner experience when living out the True Colours:

- 1. Embracing our self-worthiness.**
- 2. Revealing our inherent qualities, talents, and creative best including our hidden resources that can help us shine.**
- 3. Embrace the *phenomenally magnificent* here-and-now and dare to dream.**
- 4. Tune in to our deep longings, honour them and galvanise ourselves fully.**

We also deliberately chose the word 'phenomenon' because it is more neutral than syndrome. In fact, in some sources, even the imposter syndrome is referred to as a phenomenon, so this pays homage to the original term that sparked our imagination!

In fact, the name 'True-Colours', our proposed definition and attributes did not only come from our intellectual co-creation. It also came from personal experience and reflection. So, the phenomenon is alive in us, the authors!

### Finding our True Colours

Now that we have a name and know what we want to have more of, we would like to give you, our readers, a parting gift – how to take this concept one step further and apply it to yourself by actually discovering some of your own sparkling true colours. You can do that by inquiring into the themes we mentioned in our previous article using the Appreciative Inquiry approach<sup>1</sup>

### What we focus on, grows!

Remember, what we focus on and inquire into will grow and become a greater reality in our lives.

Here are a few generative questions to reflect on:

---

<sup>1</sup> Appreciative Inquiry is a powerful, strength-based lens of seeing the world through (1) appreciating and valuing the best of 'what is', (2) Envisioning 'what might be' and (3) and identifying ways to progress with 'what could be'. It is a powerful perspective shift through the 'quest' to find 'the best' in and around people, organisations, and communities. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative\\_inquiry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appreciative_inquiry)

<i>Past high moments</i>	<i>Present strengths and resources</i>	<i>Future aspirations</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When in the past were you able to grow into a role or a specific opportunity you were offered (i.e. you have learnt what you needed to know along the way)? What kept you going during the journey along that learning curve?</li> <li>• Who was there and placed utmost trust in you even when you were in doubt of yourself? What did they say and do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a moment to scan yourself (your mind, heart, competence, personalities, everything). In what ways are you special, unique and powerful? Notice your sensations and write down everything that comes up for you.</li> <li>• What parts of your current work feel authentic, fully aligned with who you are, your qualities or your credentials? What areas, however small or seemingly insignificant, do you feel confident and grounded in?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's your biggest hope for the next generation? If not imposter syndrome, what would be the best for them?</li> <li>• Suppose that while you sleep tonight, a miracle happens... suddenly you transform into a sparkling version of yourself... what will you first notice that is different when you wake up? What would others notice? What else?</li> </ul>

Perhaps just reading through these questions has already raised some inspiring ideas for you. Maybe you want to stop and reflect further on the answers to the above questions... How does your energy and confidence feel like having read and reflected on them?

### Why now?

Now that we have a new name for this phenomenon, we can stop for a second to reflect on the question of 'Why now?': what prompted us to think about and come up with a set of qualities we wish to have more of and a new name for them? Why is it important to work on this re-framing right now?

While we may never know what exactly in our subconsciousness prompted us to follow this journey, we can make some educated guesses. One of them is that the current context we are all experiencing in relation to the COVID-19 virus, its global implications and the impact on our lives and work has forced most of us to do things we have never done before, to tackle new and stressful situations, to lead ourselves and others in different ways, to take tough decisions we may feel unprepared for, and to change our professional and personal lives in significant ways. Many media reports and much literature suggest that we are moving towards a world with new roles and ways of

working. Rapid advances in technology along with COVID-19 have further accelerated these changes. We are all preparing ourselves for roles that we have never thought of – and may not be ready for. At the same time, many of the existing jobs will disappear. This trend is giving many of us a deep sense that the skills we used to be proud of are no longer valued. We may feel the heaviness of catching up with all kinds of changes, and may feel that we are going to be found out because of what we may not know!

All of these experiences are likely to induce a sense of helplessness, randomness and of being an imposter – simply because none of us have faced such an all-encompassing and global shift before. Could it be that, as we find new ways to navigate in this new and still emerging world, we are craving to undertake the journey with a surer foot? We will probably only find out at a much later stage. In the meantime, let us all invite our hidden sparkle to come out and help us all shine!

### Our hopes

The true colours are inside us. They have always been a part of us. Sometimes we just need the courage to let them show. Or, sometimes we need someone to help us find them. We would love to give this topic a space to grow and glow. We hold the vision that people will feel comfortable recognising and talking about their true colours proudly. With that we have a few hopes:

- We hope that you will be inspired to discover and fully live out your true colours.
- We hope that by living out your true colours, you will also spread the positive influence to people around you so that they are ignited and inspired to live out their own too. Starting with a focus on your own true colours will also help you support others in finding theirs!
- We hope to stimulate the discussion in different systems (teams, organisations, society) about what we can do to empower each individual to live out their 'better-than-the-best' versions.

And with these hopes we invite you to start exploring and realising your own true colours!

---

[Vivien Hau](#) & [David Shaked](#) are both OD practitioners with passion and interest in Appreciative Inquiry. Based in the UK and Hong Kong they bring diverse, people-centred and dialogic approaches to OD including positive psychology, strength-based change enablement, etc. In their work they impact different levels of systems - individuals, small & large groups, whole organisations and societies.



**Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike CC BY-NC-SA**

