

# Living with Frank

When I sat to put pen to paper, I knew instantly the subject matter.

It's time the world knew about Frank; the story, the reasons, the actions and consequences. You see, Frank and I live together, permanently. One day I just noticed he had moved in; permanent residency had been established and whilst I couldn't say exactly the time or date, I just became aware of this constant presence in my life. When I questioned him, the response was a resounding 'you need me here to keep you safe and stop you doing anything stupid'.

Whilst I was a little put out, I realised I actually agreed and so I just let it happen.... And I let him take over every part of my life. Washing over me like constant waves on the beach, taking a little bit by little bit without me even noticing. I was comfortable with Frank, in a safe zone (so I thought) until one day I began to miss the washed away bits:

- Confidence to try new things
- Ambition
- Risk-taking
- Self-belief • Willingness to change
- Love of myself
- Confidence in myself

So, I initiated a very important conversation with Frank in which I explained the need for me to re-establish balance in my life and find a better way of us being together.

If you have not yet guessed, Frank is my Impostor Syndrome Monster. He could bear any name really, any gender, any look and in reality, none of this detail matters, Frank has his name and reference purely as a means of identification.

Nestled in my unconscious mind, Frank has been whispering not so sweet comments in to my ear for a long time, a steady stream of:

- 'You're just not good enough'
- 'You've got lucky'
- 'You are pretending and everyone will figure it out soon'
- 'Everyone else is better'

Now, I feel like I'm painting a bad picture of Frank but he's actually very kind, misguided at times, but kind nonetheless. His primary purpose in life is to keep me safe and protect me from everything perceived as potentially harmful.

Frank knows that by feeding me negative thoughts he can inhibit my behaviour and my risk-taking and therefore keep me in a safer place. Feeding off the fight/ flight/ freeze response, Frank serves me by trying to minimise my risk taking to the extreme.

This desire to stay safe sabotages my creativity and confidence and my self-belief. So, when I would give a talk, make decisions, create new plans, Frank would be there helpfully to remind me why they were all terrible ideas and why not taking the lead or exposing myself would be a much more sensible option.

The problem lies in my absolute desire for more! More belief in myself, more challenges in my life and career, more testing of my abilities, more unlocking of my potential. These dreams and goals are completely at odds with Frank's primary purpose.

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I'm delighted to tell you this story has a happy ending; Frank and I have established a set of very helpful ground rules allowing us both to exist together in a supportive and encouraging relationship.

You see I do need Frank in my life, without him I would not be able to respond to a situation where a fight or flight are my only options, he needs to be in there should an event arise that places me at real threat. Without him I could be entirely reckless and have no self-regulation or aversion to dangerous risks, like crossing a road safely.

So, the change went a little like this:

Step 1 – This is when Frank gained a name and took on a personality. It was an important part of the process as it's easier to work with entity you have created than a mystical being living inside us somewhere. I gave him a home where I feel him most (for me that's in my gut) and I began to acknowledge his existence and recognise when he was raising his head.

Step 2 – Once I could recognise his patterns and behaviours, I began to understand what his triggers were and could begin to anticipate his arrival. This would give me an opportunity to choose how to react and gain more control. I could also acknowledge the fight or flight response and why he was choosing to be aggravated.

Step 3 – Saying thank you. It's important to recognise that Frank is trying to protect me and I am very grateful to have his instinct within me.

Step 4 – Once I said thank you, I was able to explain to him why I was in control of the situation. To set Frank more at ease, I developed the mantra 'stand down soldier, you've done a great job of protecting me but I've got this. Remarkably what happens then is my brain proves to serve me right and begins to present both Frank and I with evidence that I have got this and everything will be okay.

Step 5 – Having said all of that, Frank still remains part of me, and at times we need to have some tough conversations, re-establish boundaries and it's my job to recognise when I'm handing my power back to him, to pull it back and be strong.

All of the steps though rely on one thing the recognition that Frank has moved in and the earlier we recognise his presence the quicker we establish boundaries and the better our relationship becomes.

I thrive now on helping others with their own versions of Frank, I encourage you now to think about how he manifests for you. For support and help

Please reach out and book a free discovery call with me through [www.lauracadmanlimited.com](http://www.lauracadmanlimited.com)