



Your Leaving Academia Toolkit

Cultivating your courage exercise

The purple thread

Bring to mind a real postdoc you know (and like) who is in a similar field to you. Use the questions below to start lists in answer to them.



What qualifications and experiences has this postdoc had to get where they need to be?



What holds this postdoc back? How might they overcome these barriers?



What does this postdoc deserve? How might they move towards it?

Now either answer these questions with you in mind or ask the postdoc concerned to answer them for you. Notice any language changes that creep in when you think of yourself. Where are the 'ah but ...', 'if only ...' and 'it's just ...' and other negative phrases coming from (if there are none well done!).

Head tapes / ear worms / impostor elves / limiting beliefs

I've heard those little words in our head that stop us called many things! They might well be unconsciously stopping us from being courageous in our careers. When I am trying to defeat the impostor elf (he sits on my right shoulder) I ...

- **Notice** he's there. Awareness is key here. I think too often we can say no to opportunities because we have internalized the 'no you can't'. So when you are

next about to shy away from an opportunity – pause. And see if you can identify why.

- **Articulate** the why. Drill down into this. If you said no because you are ‘rubbish at presenting’ ask yourself why you think that and what the underlying fear is.
- **Question** the truth. Are you really bad at presenting / writing / taking the lead? Time to use that big researcher brain of yours and dig for evidence. On both sides. Look for examples when you did do this well – what made it so? How much evidence is there pushing the other way?
- **Reframe** the problem into an action. ‘I can present when I have time to prepare well. I will say yes to this opportunity and block time out to prepare.’

I would really love my career to contain more ...

Can you answer the question? How would you move towards your dream career?

Set your sights high. You are amazing. Adopt a growth mindset, believing that your abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and effort. You’ve already done that to get here! Embrace challenges as opportunities for learning and growth rather than obstacles to be avoided.