

The World Needs Your Special Gift

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium, and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, not how it compares with other expression. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

Martha Graham

Early in our relationship, Josh would leave town for work and return home only to find empty cans of Chef Boyardee and boxes of Kraft Mac & Cheese stuffed in our trash. He'd offer me vitamin supplements and suggest that we start "juicing."

Whatever, hippie man. I'm working, like, four jobs right now. I have zero extra cash. I ain't got time to learn your granola-loving ways. He was persistently kind and I was persistently stubborn. *I don't want to. It's too expensive. Too weird. Just, no. Pass the mac and cheese please.*

A few years later, I became friends with Kris Carr, a cancer-thriver and wellness icon who touted the benefits of juicing, superfoods, and a plant-based diet. "Josh! OMG, I met this *amazing* woman. She's a total badass who's written all these bestselling health books—check out these recipes for smoothies and green juices and salads. Here's the juicer we need to get and,

oh yeah, she said we should take these supplements. You know, we really should have started this years ago."

A justified face-palm moment for Josh.

"Marie, you've got to be kidding me. I've been telling you the exact same thing for years now. Why couldn't you hear it from me?!"

And that's the point.

One of the biggest obstacles to figuring out your dream is this: You incorrectly assume that "it's all been done before." You don't believe you have anything original, valuable, or worthwhile to contribute. You don't feel special or talented enough to add your voice to the mix.

It's time to set the record straight.

No matter how many times you think an idea or creation has been shared in the world, sometimes it takes that *one* person expressing it in their unique voice, at the right time, in the right place, for it to actually make a difference.

YOU are that person for somebody.

It doesn't matter how many people have gone before you. It doesn't matter how many versions of the same thing you think already exist or have been done by more talented, qualified, or famous people. Forget all that. With over 7.7 BILLION people on the planet (and counting!), there are more than enough humans with a diverse set of needs, perspectives, problems, preferences, desires, and tastes. There's always room for more. There's always room for you.

become sick, lethargic, bitter, cynical, angry, addicted, short-tempered, and judgmental—and that’s just for starters. Never forget, Hitler was a frustrated artist.

If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

Gospel of Thomas

Consider all the things that have brought you value, joy, or growth throughout your lifetime. Every song that’s made your head bop. Every movie that’s made you laugh, cry, or expand your point of view. Every athlete or artist who’s inspired you to reach for more. Every invention that’s made your life easier. Every restaurant that’s served a dish that made you moan with delight. Every book that’s opened your eyes to a different world. Every teacher, mentor, neighbor, or friend whose words or actions or leadership has guided you. Any bit of technology (e.g., electricity, Wi-Fi, cameras) that’s somehow enhanced your life.

Imagine if all those beautiful people never followed the call of their soul—never “figured out” their dreams and created and contributed and shared. I say this at the end of every *MarieTV* episode and I’ll say it to you now:

The world needs that special gift that only you have.

It’s true and you know it. You’ve known this since you were little. You’ve sensed that there’s something special inside of you, something distinct and

extraordinary that you, and only you, came here to create and express. Trust that feeling. It’s your life force. Your genius. Your destiny screaming to be realized.

Uncovering, developing, and sharing your gifts—that’s the whole reason you’re here on earth. I believe that’s the whole reason any of us are here! To create and contribute to one another.

To be clear, your gifts don’t have to be grand in scale or epic in their reach. All contributions are necessary and valuable. Right now, your gift may be the nourishing meals you cook for friends and family. The compassion and understanding you bring to tough conversations. Your gifts may involve wood sculptures, paintings, plumbing, activism, fighting fires, making comics, producing plays, doing research, rehabilitating animals, designing eco-friendly urban spaces, designing jewelry, or coaching your daughter’s Little League team.

Your gifts might be expressed through volunteer work, or through the attention, respect, and caring you show every person you meet—from your bank teller to a stranger on the street. Your gift may be the way your garden inspires hope and wonder in your neighborhood. You likely have many gifts, and those gifts will develop and evolve over the course of your life, just as you do.

**“But, Marie—really—I have nothing unique to offer.
It’s ALL been done before.”**

Imagine your favorite coffee shop or clothing store (any source of joy or

value—it can be a sex toy company for all I care). Now imagine the creator having the same limiting thought that you’re having. Imagine her throwing her hands up in the air before she even started—*“Why even bother?!? Everyone already beat me to it. The world has enough damn caffeine/T-shirts/dildos!”*

That would suck, right? I think about this as it relates to Italian food. One of my go-to spots is a little mom-and-pop joint called Pepe Rosso. They have one of the best eggplant parms in lower Manhattan. Imagine if the founders of Pepe Rosso, when thinking about opening their restaurant, threw their hands in the air and said, *“You know what? There’s already a thousand Italian restaurants in NYC. And another thing, there’s already way TOO MUCH eggplant parm in the world—fuhgeddaboutit!!!”* (The thought of never having Pepe Rosso’s eggplant parm again is giving me heart palpitations.)

Keep going with any area of art, science, sports, or culture. All of the musicians in the world didn’t stop Beyoncé or Lady Gaga or Stevie Nicks or Kendrick Lamar from adding their voices to the mix. The popularity of Phil Donahue didn’t stop Oprah. Margaret Cho’s comedic ingenuity didn’t stop Ali Wong from expressing hers. Just imagine how much we would have missed out on if any of those brilliant beings stopped at the thought that their contribution was unnecessary because it had already been done. As Fred Rogers said, “If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to people you may never dream of.”

Yes, there are millions of books and songs and plays and businesses and hot sauce makers and knitting clubs. But if you haven’t done your version

yet, then no—it has *not* all been done before. Because it hasn’t yet been expressed by the once-in-a-lifetime miracle that is you.

OVERCOME THE FRAUD FACTOR

What do J.Lo, Jodie Foster, and Maya Angelou have in common? It’s not the fact that they’re all award-winning cultural icons, it’s that they’ve all felt like impostors. Total fakes and frauds.

Even though I had sold 70 million albums, there I was feeling like “I’m no good at this.”

Jennifer Lopez

When I won the Oscar, I thought it was a fluke. I thought everybody would find out, and they’d take it back. Excuse me, we meant to give that to someone else. That was going to Meryl Streep.

Jodie Foster

I have written eleven books, but each time I think, “Uh oh, they’re going to find out now. I’ve run a game on everybody, and they’re going to find me out.”

Maya Angelou

If you ever feel like a fraud—like any accomplishment is a fluke or mistake and someday people are going to find out—you’re clearly in good company. According to research, impostor syndrome affects a whopping 70

percent of us.¹

While feeling like a fraud is universal among humans, it tends to hit women the hardest. Why? Because as women, and members of other traditionally underrepresented groups, it's easy to look around and feel like we don't belong. Socially, we've been conditioned to self-deprecate and downplay our abilities, which leads to low self-esteem and self-sabotage that adversely affects every sphere of our lives. When we internalize that message—that we're not the real deal—we suffer major consequences. Not just emotionally or creatively, but financially. I'm talking smaller careers and smaller bank accounts.

That's why it's vital to not only acknowledge this phenomenon, but take active steps to ensure that “fraud feeling” doesn't prevent you from sharing your gifts and reaching the heights you're capable of. Here are a few steps to stop impostor syndrome before it stops you.

1. SHARE THE SHAME

Most high achievers struggle with feeling like a fake, but never talk about it. It's like a dirty little secret everyone's afraid to admit. I'll tell you right now—I still feel this way at times and I've been doing this work for almost two decades. Brené Brown says, “As a shame researcher, I know that the very best thing to do in the midst of a shame attack is totally counterintuitive: Practice courage and reach out!”²

Brené is on point. You know why? Because shame always shrivels when you share it out loud. It simply cannot exist when brought into the light. To take this idea even further, I recommend you put one or two trusted souls

on speed dial for when that fraud festival comes to town. These folks are your new Fraud Squad—people you can connect with and say, “Hey, I'm feeling like I suck right now. Can you remind me why I don't?”

Naturally, you must return the favor. It feels good to be the person who lifts others up and reminds them of their intrinsic worth, especially when they can't see it themselves. Our world has more than enough critics. Be an encourager instead.

2. START A HYPE FILE

A hype file is a place where you stockpile compliments, thank-yous, accolades, and any comments from people who've said you've positively impacted them. Maybe it was a text from a friend, a note from a colleague, or a voicemail from a client. No kind word or display of appreciation is too small for your hype file. You can even add your accomplishments, too. Collect them in a central location and review as often as needed. Remember, where attention goes energy flows. A hype file can combat the negative effects of imposter syndrome and reground you in the reality that, yes, you are, in fact, the real deal.

3. SHINE YOUR LIGHT OUT, NOT IN

Think of your attention—your mental, emotional, and spiritual energy—as a flashlight that can only shine in one direction. In any given moment, your flashlight is either shining in on you and how much you feel like a fake OR it's shining out on others—what they need, want, and how you can help

them.

When your flashlight is shining out, you're giving zero attention to your fraud feelings. Without attention, those feelings can't survive.

Shining your light on others doesn't need to be time-consuming or overly complicated, any act of kindness can do the trick. Maybe you send your boss a thank-you note detailing something specific that made a difference to you. Perhaps you offer support to a neighbor in need. You could even visit a local elderly home and find out who hasn't had any visitors lately and go make their day. Look around. There's no shortage of people hungry for a moment of connection. There's always someone who could use a little assistance. A little attention. A little comfort. A little love.

Next time you catch yourself feeling like a fraud, check yourself. Chances are, you're shining your flashlight on yourself rather than directing it where it can make its greatest impact—caring for others.

For more tips to combat the fraud feeling, search *MarieTV + imposter syndrome* online to watch the episode on this topic. If you're still not convinced that you have a right to share your special gifts, this next part should help.

