

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/curing-the-imposter-syndrome>

Challenges can seem less intimidating when you see someone you can relate to take them on, explains Sandy Jen, co-founder of senior-care startup Honor. She recalls how witnessing her boyfriend in college embracing entrepreneurship wholeheartedly began to melt the fears and insecurities she grew up with - and emboldened her to become an "unlikely entrepreneur" herself.



## Transcript

- And so I graduated in 2003, and this was shortly after the first internet bubble burst in a spectacular fashion, and if you mentioned the word start-up people would think you were an evil person who's trying to take their money.. And so, I landed a good job as a software engineer at a semi connector company and I worked there for a couple years, and I sit there in my cubicle, and I think I'm like 23 or something, and I'm thinking there, I'm eating my lunch, I'm like okay, I got a great education at Stanford, we're taught that we can change the world.. I'm 5'2", sitting in this 20 square foot space surrounded by 6 foot cubicle walls.. And I was like, "What the hell?" Because I was like, what am I doing? Right, I was having this mid-life crisis at age 22 and I was like I've done all this work.. I've gotten the good grades, I've gotten the good school, I've gotten the good job.. I'm not happy like what am I doing here? And so I talked to my boyfriend who I later married and is my husband and he had chosen a very different path so he was already doing a start-up with his co-founder and he had started it when he was still in school so he just sort of graduated and sort of jumped right in to start-up land.. And he and I were talking and I realized when we were talking that he had flunked the same test that I did.. He had no business background at all.. He had acquired funding in a period of time where it was really difficult to get funding to me cause the start up environment was so bad.. He wasn't, I mean, he was smart but he wasn't a genius and he was basically as dumb as I was in a lot of ways and so I was like well he did it, why can't I do it? And the difference was that he didn't have that mental block..

He said, oh, I'm just gonna go do this.. As opposed to what I had was there's no way I could do this and so that was really eye opening for me and I was trying to figure out why was he so happy and enthused and engaged in his sort of work and I was just not happy whatsoever and so I tried to shut the shy, high school kid part of me out and tried to channel the let's go to Stanford me more cause that part had been nurturing a little bit more of that brave bravery and courage throughout my college years and that part ultimately won out and so I got my butt into gear and opportunity knocked in the form of a partnership with a friend of a friend who wanted to stand a venture and when he asked me if I wanted to join, I was like hell yes.. So which brings me to my next point which is that everybody has imposter syndrome and I may have sounded really gung ho but I was absolutely terrified.. I was like scared shit less.. I had said yes but I had no idea what I was getting into.. I had no idea how start-ups worked.. I had no idea how fundraising worked.. I had no idea how to build a team.. Had no idea how to do anything and yet I was like just keep going because why can't I do this? Right and I wanna pause and really make this a point because the thing that really crystallized for me was when I saw someone that I could relate to do something that I thought was impossible and so accessible role models is really, really important and I think one of my goals to coming here and talking to you guys and I always make time for students is that the unbreachable, untouchable sort of founders that you hear in the news are kind of untouchable and unreachable but there are plenty of founders that are sort of normal folks who just like you are sitting in a class, listening to someone talk about entrepreneurship who have a lot of potential, who never realize that potential and so for me it was really important that I saw my, he's not dumb, but I call him my dumb husband do the same thing that I wanted to do and it was like, okay, someone else could do this, so can I...