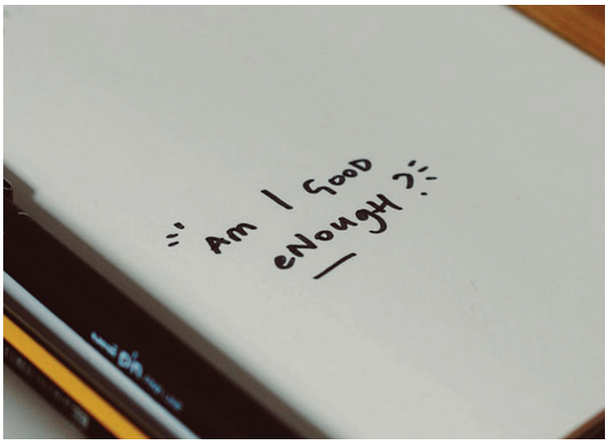
AM I GOOD ENOUGH FOR A CAREER IN SCIENCE?

By Sven Hendrix

Are you one of the many people who wonder, "Am I good enough for a career in science?" Every young scientist suffers from these negative thoughts. You've worked hard to contribute to the scientific community… and then you get the feeling that you are not good enough. This sense of doubt makes you feel you aren't good enough for a career in academia.

Where does this nagging feeling come from?

Many young scientists suffer from this condition, commonly known as impostor syndrome. While it's normal, the vague feeling of **"not being good enough"** is fed by different sources.



You – like most people – may be a little bit messed up by your parents. They may have given you the feeling that you aren't good enough. As a result, you may still attempt to prove that you are enough by trying to achieve excellence and collecting accolades.

In addition, as a scientist, you get continuously evaluated via scores, impact factors, h factors, citations, and grant money raised. Thus, there is frequently somebody who is "better" according to the bibliographic metrics without considering all the other aspects of our complicated lives.

Often you are unfairly compared to scientists who are

- in the business much longer
- have more support/money/infrastructure
- do significantly less teaching
- haven't taken pregnancy or parental leave

Despite these disparities, you may be successful and **still feel not good enough** for an academic career. And I know many, many senior scientists who still feel and behave like that.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

The first step is obtaining clarity about your career and your future. Ask yourself, do you want to pursue an academic career – or not?

If you can not answer this question, I recommend getting some inspiration here:

- I have no idea where I will be in two years
- Am I doing enough for my scientific career?
- Should I become a professor? Success rate 3 %!
- Do I need Nature or Science papers for a successful career in science?
- Do I really have to work abroad as a scientist?

If you have the feeling you should invest more in finding clarity about your career in science, please enroll in the course Find your dream job in science.

To help you decide, imagine the following two scenarios:

Scenario 1: Imagine that you realize, "I do ***not*** want a job in academia!"

This would be great! Now you can focus on the skills that make you attractive or "good enough" for a more suitable career, for example, in the industry or social sector.

This will quickly resolve the vague feeling of not being good enough because you are not comparing yourself with the wrong role models (e.g., professors and academic star scientists).

Scenario 2: Just imagine that you realize, "I ***definitely*** want to pursue a career in academia!"

This scenario is also great! Now you can systematically focus on qualifying yourself and increase your chances to get tenured.

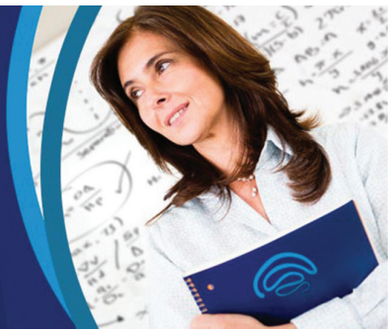
This will also resolve the vague feeling of not being good enough – because now you know what to focus on. As a consequence, your chances to succeed will dramatically improve. To do that, you should determine precisely what is needed to become good enough or even outstanding for an academic position.

In conclusion, if you have the feeling that you are not good enough for an academic career, you likely suffer from a lack of clarity. Either you have not decided which career path you want or have no clear idea of what is necessary to qualify for an academic position.

If you need help to develop a clear idea of which career path is right for you, enroll in the course Find your dream job in science. This course will help resolve your uncertainty and allow you to finally focus on your future.

If you need instructions on pursuing a successful academic career, you may enroll in the course How to become a professor. It comes with expert advice and guidance on navigating your path to a successful career in academia.

DO YOU WANT A SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC CAREER IN SCIENCE?

Take the course on **"How to Become a Professor"**

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