Limiting beliefs

Do you feel that you are an imposter or a fraud, that you are not what people think you are? If you do you might be carrying around some negative thoughts about yourself known as limiting beliefs. These may be something like:

I can't do this job very well, other people are better/cleverer than me, my opinion is worth less than other people's, other people find things easier than I do, other people are more confident than I am, I'm not the sort of person to be really successful, I'm only fooling people into thinking I can do this……

As well as thinking negative things about yourself, you're also making a lot of assumptions about other people. For example, you probably don't know whether other people are confident or find things easy. They just give you that impression. You don't know how they feel inside, any more than they know how you really feel.

Accept that these are just your thoughts, they are not proven facts. Where have you got them from?

A lot of our negative thoughts and limiting beliefs come from childhood, when someone told us we were no good at something. For example, a teacher may have told you that you couldn't draw or sing or a parent told you that you were clumsy and you've carried that with you ever since.

How can you change a negative thought?

Take one negative thought, such as one from the list above, and write it down. Then ask yourself:
- Do I really believe this?
- Is it true? Can I absolutely say that it's true?
- Could I be wrong about it?
- What evidence do I have for this thought?
- How does thinking this make me feel?
- How would I feel if I didn't have this thought? How would I act differently?

You can then go further and write down some positive beliefs or thoughts, the reverse of the negative ones, such as:

- I am very capable and good at this job
- I can learn and develop new skills whenever I need to
- I have achieved a lot and can achieve even more
- My opinion is worth as much as anyone else's

Ask yourself whether these new beliefs could be just as true as the old ones. Look for evidence that supports them, begin to act on them and strengthen them (just as you did with the old ones). Try to catch yourself thinking the old thoughts and stop it. Work on replacing them with some new, more positive beliefs. This isn't about deluding yourself or trying to ignore reality. Your old thoughts weren't reality either; they were just one view of how things are. Another thing you can do is to get feedback from other people you respect. You'll probably be surprised that their view is actually more positive than your own! And, if they do point out some areas where you could improve, then you've got something concrete to work on, instead of just having some vague idea in your head that you're somehow "not good enough".