

You really belong here: Let's Talk about Imposter Syndrome

What is it? How can we overcome it?

An open forum



Agenda

- Brief Round of Introduction
- Breakout Rooms:
 - Discussion around imposter syndrome (“IS”) test results ([see slide 6](#)), experiences of individuals in the groups, strategies to overcome (or avoid) IS.
- Final Round of Discussion
 - Hosts will convey results of breakout room discussions, incl. sharing best strategies on overcoming IS from discussion as well as personal experience.

What is Imposter Syndrome?

Imposter syndrome can be defined as a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. '**Imposters**' suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence.

The persistent inability to believe that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved as a result of one's own efforts or skills.

Who is Affected by Imposter Syndrome?

"I still have a little impostor syndrome... It doesn't go away, that feeling that you shouldn't take me that seriously. What do I know? I share that with you because we all have doubts in our abilities, about our power and what that power is."

MICHELLE OBAMA



"I have written 11 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

"The greatest obstacle for me has been the voice in my head that I call my obnoxious roommate. I wish someone would invent a tape recorder that we could attach to our brains to record everything we tell ourselves. We would realize how important it is to stop this negative self-talk. It means pushing back against our obnoxious roommate with a dose of wisdom."

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON



Who is Affected by Imposter Syndrome?

An estimated 70% of people experience these impostor feelings at some point in their lives. Impostor syndrome affects all kinds of people from all parts of life: women, men, medical students, marketing managers, actors and executives. Women, underserved minorities, first generation academics...

(<https://time.com/5312483/how-to-deal-with-impostor-syndrome/>)

Every time I was called on in class, I was sure that I was about to embarrass myself. Every time I took a test, I was sure that it had gone badly. And every time I excelled, I believed that I had fooled everyone yet again. This phenomenon of capable people being plagued by self-doubt has a name — the impostor syndrome.

Sheryl Sandberg

Impostorism is one of the few psychological issues initially thought to affect primarily women that later was determined to relate to both genders.



Impostor Syndrome Test

<https://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3803>

- Total score is <40, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics;
- Total score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IS experiences;
- Total score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings;
- Total score >80 means the respondent often has intense IS experiences.

The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the IS interferes in a person's life.

Impostor Syndrome Score



No matter what you manage to accomplish, you are unable to enjoy your success. You see yourself as an imposter and fear that eventually – especially if you make a mistake or fail – people will discover that you are actually incompetent. This could be related to a lack of confidence, a tendency to believe that success is due to factors that you cannot control (like luck), or a fear that you will be unable to sustain it and thus, lose people's respect. You find it difficult, if not impossible, to take ownership of your achievements, and experience a great deal of self-doubt and self-denigration.

Impostor Syndrome Score



You may take pride in some of your achievements, but still struggle to take full ownership of them. Sometimes, in spite of all that you have accomplished and the effort you put into achieving it, you feel like a bit of an imposter. As a result, you may attribute some of your success to factors beyond your control and therefore, feel like you haven't entirely earned the respect and praise that you were given. You want to believe that you are worthy of success, but can't fully convince yourself.

Impostor Syndrome Score



You may take pride in some of your achievements, but still struggle to take full ownership of them. Sometimes, in spite of all that you have accomplished and the effort you put into achieving it, you feel like a bit of an imposter. As a result, you may attribute some of your success to factors beyond your control and therefore, feel like you haven't entirely earned the respect and praise that you were given. You want to believe that you are worthy of success, but can't fully convince yourself.

Imposter Bingo!

I should just "get it" like everyone around me	I assume when people are complementing that they are being nice	I always share credit with others even if I did most of the work	Do not let people see you working too hard	I qualify things by saying: "This may not be right, but..."
I should feel lucky that I got this deal/case/job	I try to be really personable and friendly so people won't notice or mind if I'm not that good.	Failure is not an option	Eventually people will realize that I'm not that smart	It was a fluke. I can only be this good once
Never let on that you do not know how to do something	Don't challenge yourself for fear that you might look bad if you don't know something	Being a Lawyer/Banker!	I panic before a test or presentation or performance	I only won/accomplished because there wasn't that much competition
I don't tell anyone I feel like an impostor	I assume I will fall short so I won't be disappointed when I do	I should be able to do most things by myself	I hold back when working with a group or team	If I can do it, anyone can
I look really good on paper but I don't really have the skills to live up to my credentials	I remind others of how much I don't know so they don't expect too much	I succeeded because I had a lot of help	I was probably chosen/hired/admitted because of some kind of mistake	I apologize for mistakes or for not knowing something

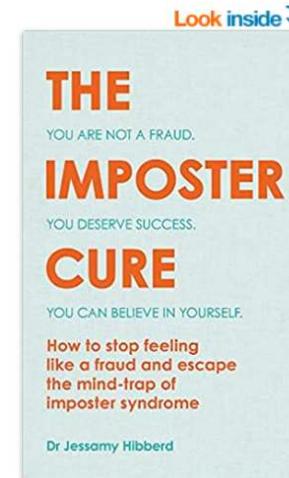
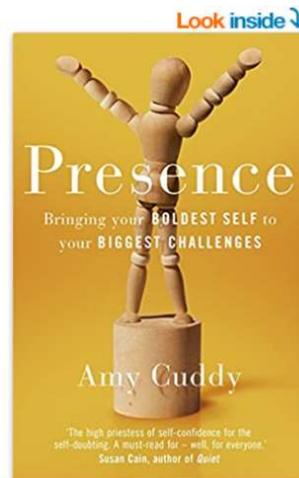
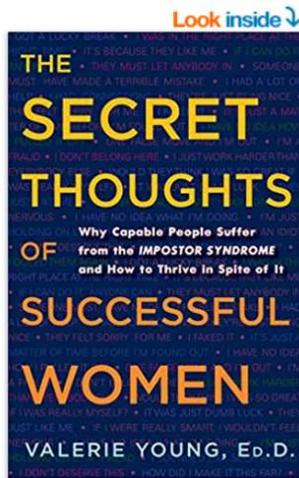
IS Cause-Effect Relationship

Attributing success to luck	Fear of Failure
Discounting success & Compliments	Perfectionism
Dreading that people will find out you aren't as talented as they think you are or as you should be	Self-Doubt & Downshifting expectations
Perfectionism & Relentless Self-Criticism	Anxiety
Circuit of fault & Extreme Self-Criticism	Performance Impairment
Emotional Burden	Isolation & Pain

Okay, So What Can You/We Do?

- Think of **confidence** as a skill you need to **develop**.
- Start by recognizing that you aren't the only "imposter" in the room.
 - **Share your experiences** (e.g. teaching and training new joiners);
 - **Share advice** from experts (e.g. talking about it really helps!)
- **Facts vs Thoughts**
 - Look at the evidence and base your thoughts/feelings really on what is going on rather than FEAR.
- Develop a **healthy response to failure and mistake** making
 - **Forgive yourself** for when mistakes happen and learn from it.
- Change the script
 - You can **ask for help** and, if you are starting something new, it's normal to feel off-base.

Suggested Reading



- https://www.paulineroseclance.com/pdf/ip_high_achieving_women.pdf
- <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/working-womans-handbook/overcome-impostor-syndrome>
- <https://hbr.org/2021/02/stop-telling-women-they-have-imposter-syndrome>