



IMPOSTER PHENOMENON

“NOBODY WINS WHEN CAPABLE PEOPLE BELIEVE AND ACT SMALL”

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WHAT IS IMPOSTER PHENOMENON?



- Phenomenon vs. Syndrome
- 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.
- Crisis of confidence – luck, happenstance, charm, other people, mistakes – anything or anyone other than your own talents or abilities.
- First described in the late 1970's by two Psychologists, Dr. Pauline Rose Clance & Dr. Suzanne Imes.



THE IMPOSTER CYCLE

- Clance & Imes originally studied this phenomenon in individuals who identified as a woman.
- Disproportionally present in marginalized groups.
- The Cycle
- Self-doubt is **NOT** unhealthy – it can protect you in healthy doses – imposter phenomenon takes it one step further (e.g. stress about an exam translates to not worthy/capable of being in program at all)
- **NOT** a diagnosis
- Maladaptive Perfectionists – impossible goals and extremely self-critical vs. Adaptive Perfectionism – high standards are positive & motivating.
 - Maladaptive – tricked people into praising them.

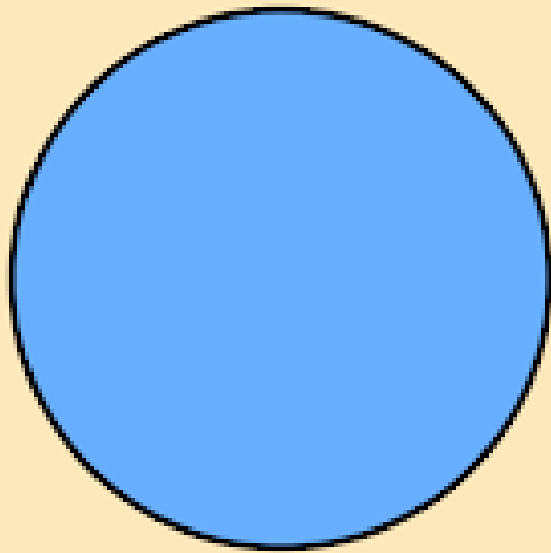
- “I’m in over my head and they’re going to find out.”
- New role - luck, mistake, can’t believe it, attribute it to chance, slipping through, etc.
- “If I can do it how hard can it be?”
- “They just like me. I’m nice, but not capable.”
- “If I can anyone can.”
- Discount or diminish obvious evidence of abilities.
- “I’m fooling everyone”
- “I don’t deserve this – someone else would be doing more with it than I am”
- **REMEMBER** – these messages can be about school, work, OR relationships.
 - “I’m not as good of a person as they think I am”

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?


- You don't think you deserve your success; luck not your own hard work; attributing success to external forces;
- You're a perfectionist (success = hard work) or a procrastinator (success = luck or fooled them);
- Afraid of being exposed as a fake (anxious and afraid of being found out);
- Fear of failure (shame or humiliation when you fail – replay mistakes, anxiety about failure);
- You need to be the best (disappointed by your own abilities or feel an imposter);
- Compare your success to others – more successful (more experience).

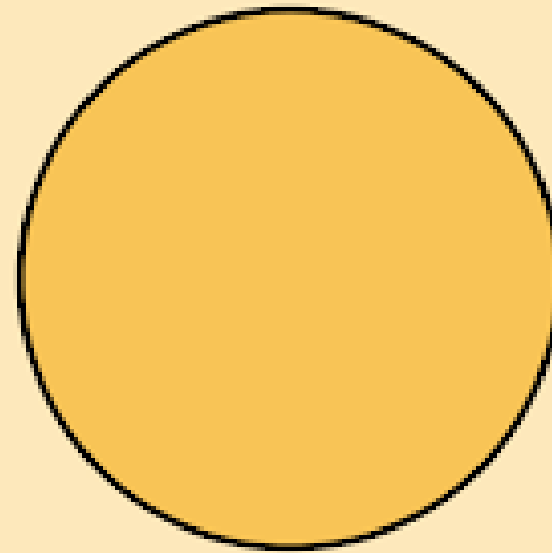


SCIENCE OF PEOPLE



Who you think you are:

-  An awkward, crazy mess of an individual who tries too hard to impress people and has no talent.



Who others think you are:

-  A pretty cool person.

WAYS THAT IMPOSTER PHENOMENON CAN SHOW UP

- Perfectionist - never satisfied and always feel that their work could be better. Rather than focus on their strengths, they tend to fixate on any flaws or mistakes.
 - Superhero – to avoid being exposed, the superhero is compelled to work harder and do more.
 - Expert – always trying to learn and know more, try to avoid not being in the know so they can avoid being exposed or perceived as less than.
 - Natural Genius – set impossible goals for themselves and are crushed when they don't meet them on their first try.
 - Soloist – see asking for help as a sign of weakness and reject offers of help. Self-worth stems from productivity.
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- **NOTE:** This is not an exhaustive list, but rather one theory. It can show up in a person shutting down, not trying, isolating, etc.



What does your
imposter look like to
you?

<https://psychcentral.com/quizzes/imposter-syndrome-test>



BUT WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Suggestion #1

- Break the Silence
 - Shame keeps people silent
 - Tell someone you're feeling like an imposter
 - There is a good chance the person you're telling will understand
 - Counter-messages might be introduced or reinforced



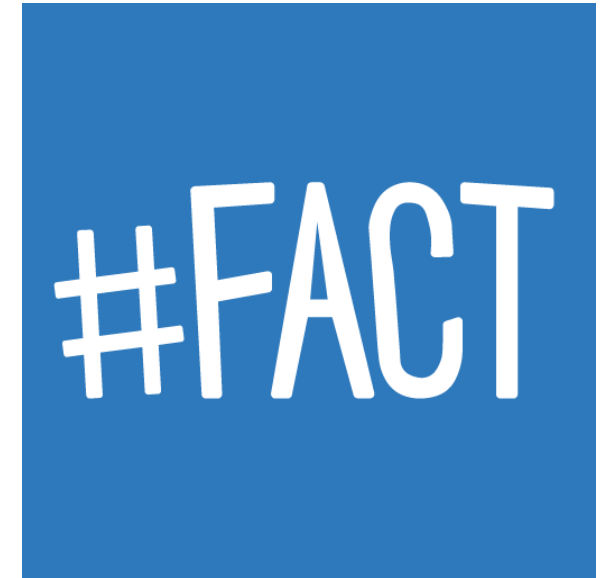
BUT WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Suggestion #2

- Separate Feelings from Fact
 - Realize that just because you feel stupid, does NOT mean you are.
 - It's a lie you're telling yourself.

Suggestion #3

- Recognize When There Are Reasons You're Feel Fraudulent
 - Instead of taking your self-doubt as a sign of ineptness, recognize it might a normal response to being on the receiving end of social stereotypes about competence and intelligence.



BUT WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Suggestion #4

- Accentuate the Positive
 - You care deeply about the work you do and relationships you're in.
 - Forgive yourself when inevitable mistakes happen.

Suggestion #5

- Develop a Healthy Response to Failure and Mistake Making
 - Learn, move on, do better next time.

Suggestion #6

- Right the Rules
 - Assert your rights! Recognize the you have just as much right as the next person to be wrong.



BUT WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

Suggestion #7

- Develop a New Script
 - Be aware of the conversation in your head that trigger the imposter.

Suggestion #8

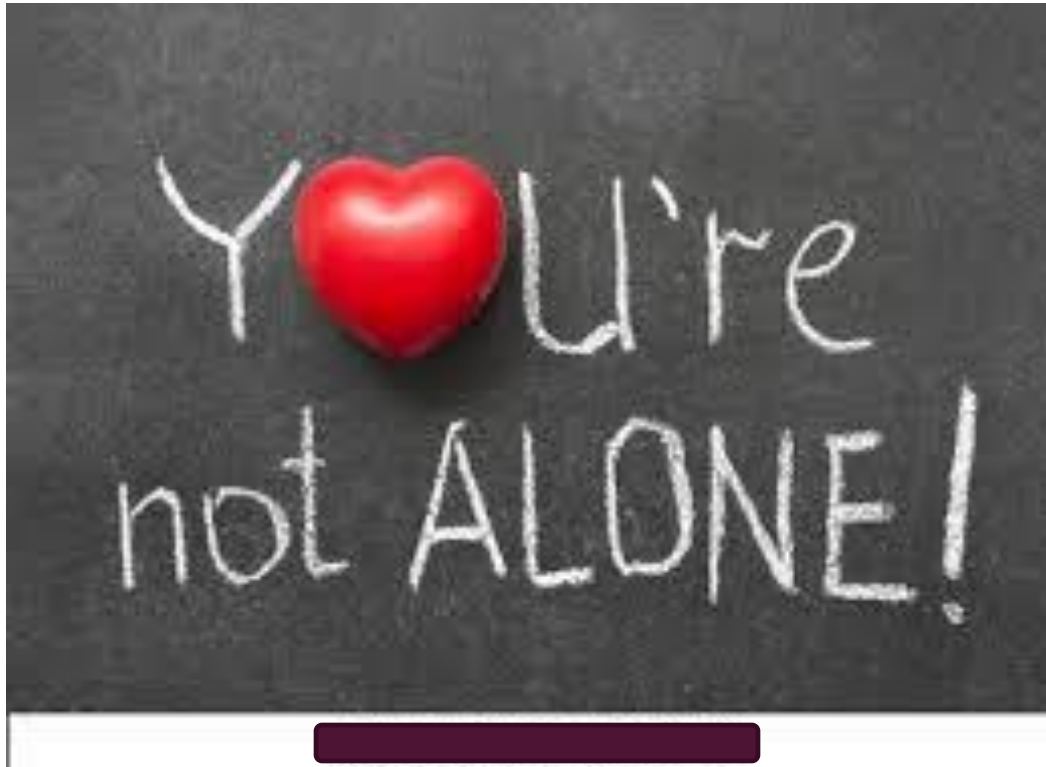
- Visualize Success

Suggestion #9

- Reward Yourself
 - Break the cycle of seeking and dismissing validation outside of yourself
 - Pat yourself on the back



YOU ARE NOT ALONE



- Listen for evidence that counters what you're telling yourself.
- Look for the result of your hard work and perseverance.
- Check to what you're attributing others success
- Nobody is is good at everything – focus on what you're good at and check your values around that “thing” (e.g. compassion and empathy).
- If you're scared to be “found out” – talk about it – share it with someone you respect.
- If you believe that everything good that has happened to you is because of something external and everything bad is because of something internal – do a deep dive into the reality of that.

CONCLUSION

