

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Navigating Your Professional Success

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*GSS / NC ASA / WiMLDS NC*

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

im·pos·tor

im'pästər/

*noun*

noun: **imposter**

a person who pretends to be someone else in order to deceive others, especially for fraudulent gain.

synonyms: impersonator, masquerader, pretender, imitator, deceiver, hoaxer, trickster, fraudster, swindler; More fake, fraud, sham, phony, scammer



# Impostor Syndrome

- Describes individuals marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and exhibit a persistent fear of being exposed as a "fraud".
- Despite external evidence of their competence, remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve success they have achieved.
- Proof of success is dismissed as luck, timing, or as a result of deceiving others

# Impostor Syndrome

*Term coined in 1978 by clinical psychologists Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes*

While early research focused on prevalence among high-achieving women, impostor syndrome has been found to affect men and women in roughly equal numbers

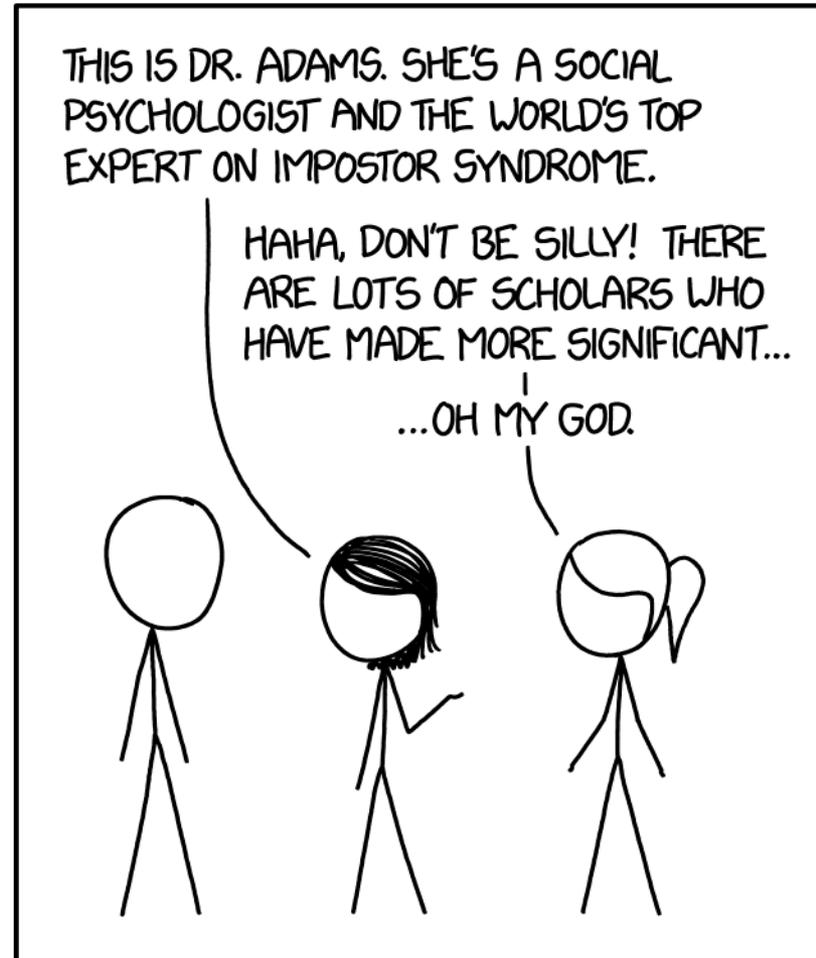
## **Also known as:**

*impostor phenomenon, fraud syndrome, impostor experience*



# IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

⏪ < PREV RANDOM NEXT > ⏩



⏪ < PREV RANDOM NEXT > ⏩

# American Psychological Association

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## COVER STORY

# Feel like a fraud?

You're not alone. Many graduate students question whether they are prepared to do the work they do. Here's how to overcome that feeling and recognize your strengths.



# Scientific Articles & Presentations

## Science Magazine

- <http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2008/02/no-youre-not-impostor>

## Forbes

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2014/04/03/impostor-syndrome/#3f0f119548a9>

## TED Talks

# Science Magazine

- *"Impostor syndrome" is the name given to the feelings that many young scientists describe: Their accomplishments are just luck or deceit, and they're in over their heads.*
- *key to getting past it, experts say, is making accurate, realistic assessments of your performance. Perhaps equally important: knowing you're not alone.*

# Forbes

- *the list of people who sometimes worry about being uncovered as an impostor is as impressive as it is long.*
- *But what matters most is not whether we occasionally (or regularly) fear failing, looking foolish or not being ‘whatever enough’; it’s whether we give those fears the power to keep us from taking the actions needed to achieve our goals and highest aspirations.*

# Syndromes of Imposter Syndrome

- “I’ve been lucky. Hope it holds out.”
- “Feels Achievements don’t have anything to do with yourself”
- “Weird condition that has a name? Like Alfred Hitchcock movie”

Lou Solomon – TED talk in Charlotte  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whyUPLJZiJE>



# Syndromes of Imposter Syndrome

Valerie Young - Caltech PhD in  
Astrophysics

Internationally-known expert on the  
impostor syndrome and author of award-  
winning book:

*The Secret Thoughts of Successful  
Women: Why Capable People Suffer  
from the Impostor Syndrome and How to  
Thrive in Spite of It*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7v-GG3SEWQ>

# Syndromes of Imposter Syndrome

Valerie Young - Caltech PhD astrophysics

Started Imposter Syndrome Support Group:

*-Says “she’s the only “real” imposter in the group”*



# Recognizing Impostor Syndrome

Imes and Clance's theory suggests several behaviors of high-achieving professionals with impostor syndrome

<http://www.researchgrp.com/blog/impostor-syndrome/>

# Syndromes of Imposter Syndrome

- Diligence
- Feeling of being Phony
- Use of Charm
- Avoiding Displays of Confidence

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# Diligence

- Work hard in order to prevent people from discovering they are "impostors".
- Hard work often leads to more praise and success, perpetuates the impostor feelings and fears

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"Impostor" may feel they need to work two or three times as hard, so over-prepare, tinker and obsess over details

# Feeling of being Phony

Often attempt to give supervisors and professors answers that they believe they want

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Often attempt to give supervisors and professors answers that they believe they want

-Often leads to an increase in feeling like they are "being a fake".

# Use of Charm

- Use intuitive perceptiveness and charm to gain approval and praise from supervisors
- Seek out relationships with supervisors to help them increase abilities intellectually and creatively

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- Use intuitive perceptiveness and charm to gain approval and praise from supervisors
- Seek out relationships with supervisors to help them increase abilities intellectually and creatively

-However, when supervisor gives praise or recognition, feel that praise is based on charm - not on ability.

# Avoiding Displays of Confidence

“Imposter” may believe that if they actually believe in their intelligence and abilities they may be rejected by others.

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“Imposter” may believe that if they actually believe in their intelligence and abilities they may be rejected by others.

-Avoiding showing any confidence in abilities can perpetuate imposter feelings

# 5 Types

- The Perfectionist
- The Superwoman/Superman
- The Natural Genius
- The Rugged Individualist
- The Expert

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

# The Perfectionist

Set excessively high goals for themselves, and when they fail to reach a goal, experience major self-doubt and worry about measuring up.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

# The Superwoman/Superman

Since people who experience this phenomenon are convinced they're phonies among real-deal colleagues, they often push themselves to work harder and harder to measure up.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

# The Natural Genius

Judge success based on abilities as opposed to efforts.

If they have to work hard at something, assume they must be bad at it. When not able to do something quickly or fluently, alarm sounds.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

# The Rugged Individualist

Believe asking for help reveals their phoniness.

May refuse assistance so that can prove their worth.

<https://www.fastcompany.com/40421352/the-five-types-of-impostor-syndrome-and-how-to-beat-them>

# The Expert

May feel like they somehow tricked their employer into hiring them.

Deeply fear being exposed as inexperienced or unknowledgeable.

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# Issues with Imposter Syndrome

- Burn-out
- Sleep Deprivation

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## Affects:

- productivity
- work product
- success over long-run

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## Affects:

- Willingness to take chances / new roles
- Missed opportunities

# Issues with Imposter Syndrome

- Burn-out
- Sleep Deprivation
- Fear
- Feeling undeserving
- Cannot accept/appreciate praise

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- Burn-out
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## Affects:

- Happiness
- Fulfillment

# Fantastic Four



*Lou Solomon*

- Anxiety
- Perfectionism
- Self Doubt
- Fear of Failure

Lou Solomon – TED talk in Charlotte  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whyUPLJZijE>

# Personal Experience

Can we talk about grad school for a minute...?

Not to mention postdoc?!

And then first job? (And then second job...!?!?)

# Facing impostor feelings

- Talk to your mentors
- Recognize your expertise
- Remember what you do well
- Realize no one is perfect
- Change your thinking
- Talk to someone who can help

# Facing impostor feelings



Personal lessons learned

# Talk to someone who can help

## Mentor and/or Sponsor

### Mentor - Advise

Short term, Long term, Situational  
Could have many throughout career

### Sponsor - Advocates

Career Success / Invested in your career

# Recognize your expertise

- **Remember what you do well**

I am an expert in certain things (not all things!)

I am knowledgeable, not infallible

Other skills that I bring to the table:

Communication

# Realize that no one is perfect

- **Change your thinking**

Postdoc: “Best review I can do.”

*If they want Brian to review this paper – they can ask him\*.*

Statistician: “Best, ethical, thorough work I can do –  
*in given time frame, while balancing all projects.*”

Management: “Best decisions on behalf of my staff with  
information I have at the time.” - *Trust staff*

**THANK YOU!**

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# DISCUSSION



# ACTIVITY



# Imposter Activities

- Did you identify with 1 or more of the Types?  
Can you recognize this in others?
  - An achievement: 2 reasons why you earned it (hard work, knowledge, prepared when needed)
- Your expertise:
  - List 3 things you are good at;
  - 1 thing you are GREAT at, confident about
  - 1 thing you LOVE to do
- Name a peer you can talk to; and a mentor