

Mastering Self-Belief: Tackling the *‘Imposter Phenomenon’*





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Agenda

Imposter Phenomenon

What is imposter phenomenon?

How can I recognise imposter phenomenon?

What is the impact of imposter phenomenon?

Strategies to overcome imposter phenomenon



What is the 'Imposter Phenomenon'?



Does this sound familiar?

"I don't belong here"

"I'm a total fraud and everyone will find out"

"I'm not as competent as they think I am"

"I'm fooling everyone"

"What am I doing?"

"Do I even deserve this?"



The definition of the 'Imposter Phenomenon'

*'A psychological phenomenon where individuals **doubt their accomplishments** and have a **persistent fear of being exposed as frauds** despite evidence of success.'*

Note: 82% of people have experienced the phenomenon at some point in their working lives.



Psychological underpinnings: The imposter phenomenon



Here are some key psychological aspects:

Cognitive distortions:

- All-or-nothing thinking
- Discounting positives

Perfectionism:

- Unrealistic standards
- Fear of failure

Attribution styles

- External attribution for successes
- Internal attribution for failures

Psychological underpinnings: The imposter phenomenon



Self-Doubt & Lack of Confidence:

- Constant questioning
- Low self-efficacy

Social Comparison:

- Comparison with others
- Overemphasis on peers

Internalised Stereotypes:

- Belief in inherent inadequacy
- Fear of confirming stereotypes

Early Experiences & Feedback:

- Early criticism
- Overemphasis on feedback



Summarising the imposter phenomenon (IP)

The three defining features of the phenomenon:

- 1) A feeling that other people have an inflated perception of your abilities.
- 2) A fear that your perceived lack of abilities will be found out.
- 3) A persistent tendency to attribute successes to external factors, such as luck or disproportionate effort.

A note on the term 'syndrome'. The Imposter phenomenon is not a mental health disorder and does not appear in the DSM or ICD

How can I recognise IP?

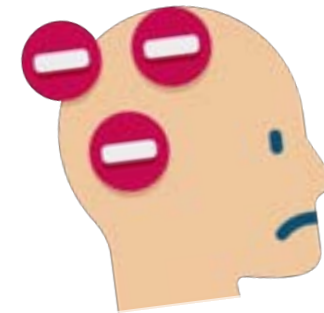




Internal signs

Internal signs refer to a personal signal, feeling, thought that someone experiences inside themselves.

What are some of the **internal signs** that someone experiencing Imposter Phenomenon may have?





Identifying imposters – Internal signs

Anxiety & stress

Negative self-talk

Fear of being exposed

Feeling guilty

Perfectionism

Impaired self-esteem

Persistent self-doubt

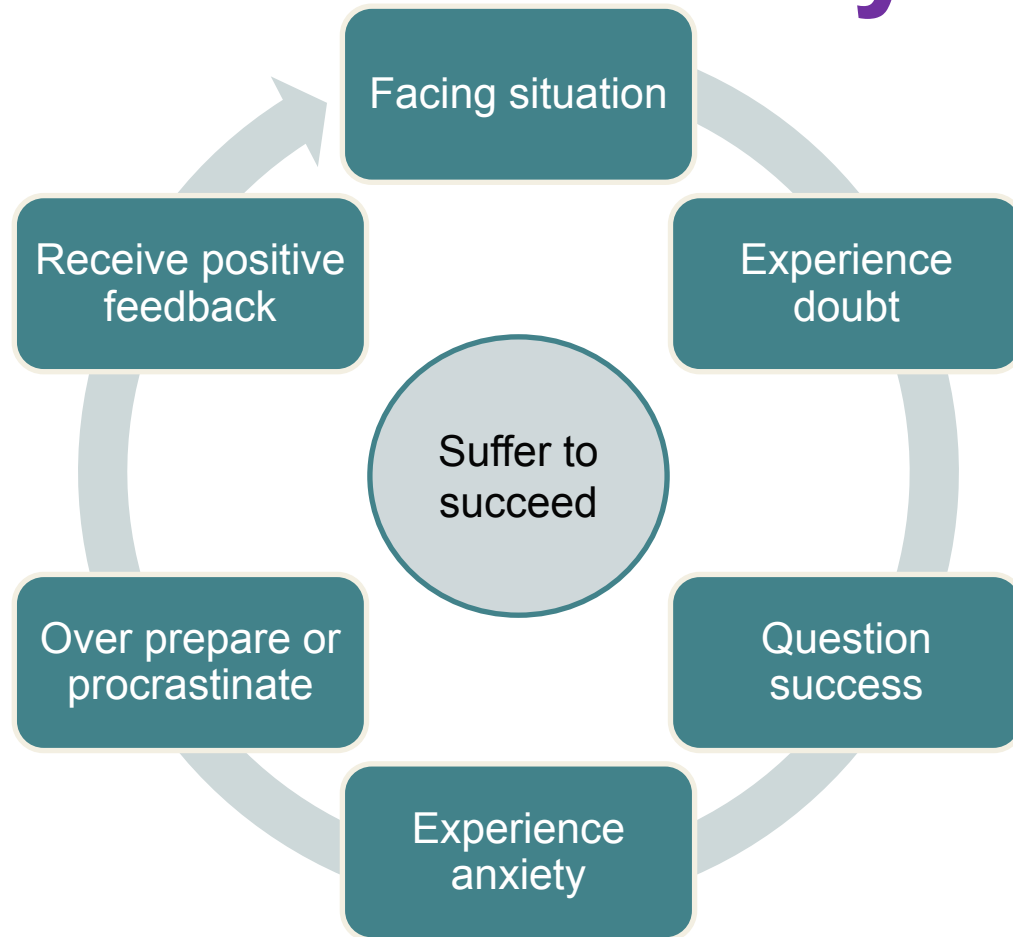
Setting unrealistic standards

Dismissing compliments as insincere

Regularly comparing oneself to colleagues

Attributing success to external factors

How IP shows up – The imposter cycle



Individuals experiencing IP respond to tasks in one of two ways:

- 1) Over-preparation**
- 2) Procrastination**

External signs

External signs are observable signals or behaviours displayed by individuals that others can see or perceive.

What are some of the **external signs** that someone experiencing Imposter Phenomenon may show?





Identifying imposters – External signs

Social withdrawal

Perfectionism

Procrastination

Over-preparing

Resistance to seeking help

Excessive apologising

Downplaying skills & achievements

Avoidance of leadership roles and visibility

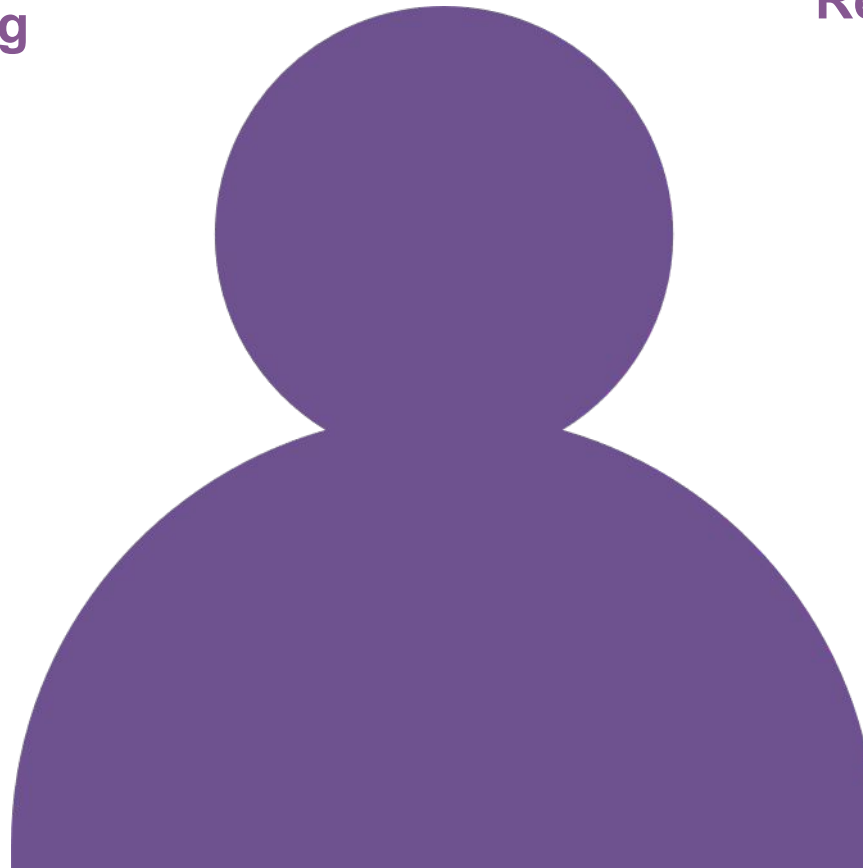
Holding back opinions

Difficulty accepting compliments

Overworking to prove worth

Excessive reassurance seeking

Difficulty handling criticism

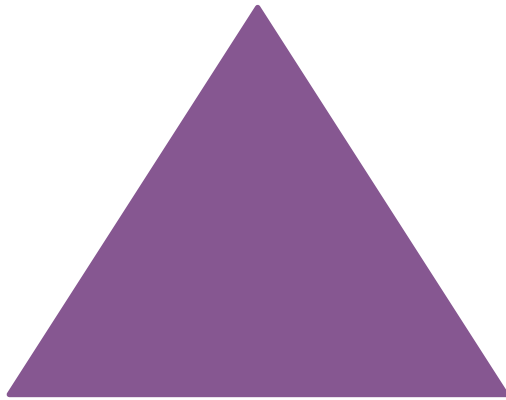




Types of imposter



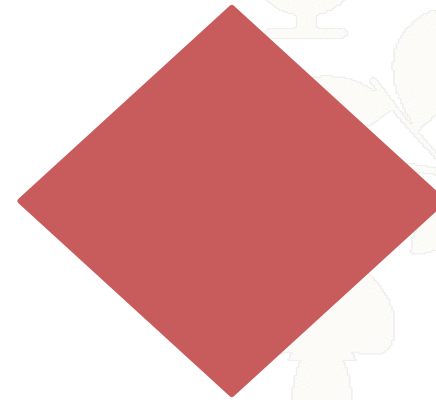
The
Perfectionist



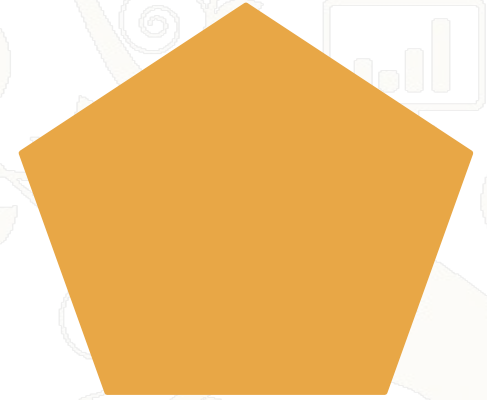
The Expert



The
Superhero



The Natural
Genius



The Soloist



Activity – Scenario one

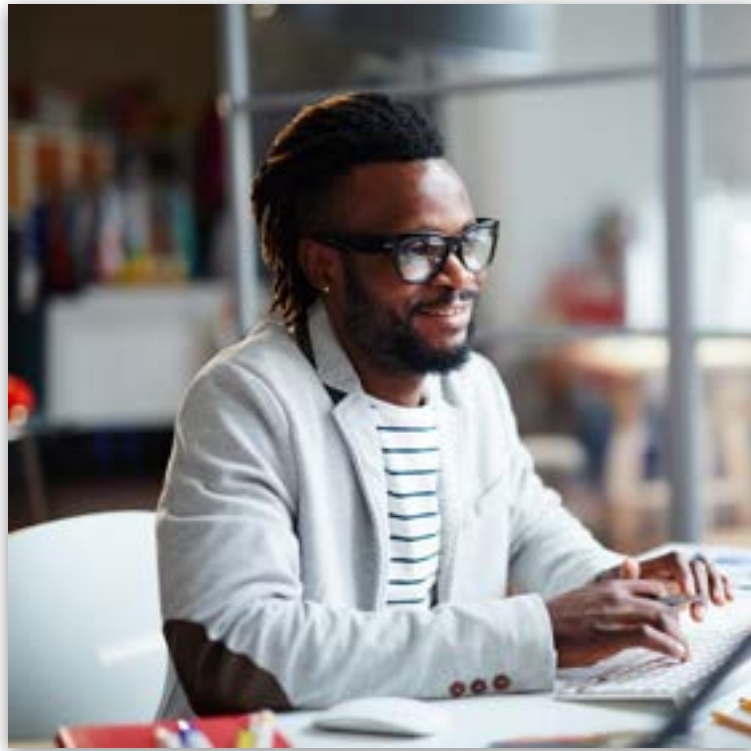
Sarah, Marketing professional

Sarah consistently exceeds her targets and receives praise for her innovative marketing campaigns. Despite her success, she often attributes her achievements to luck and feels anxious about being exposed as inexperienced. She hesitates to share her ideas in team meetings, fearing they won't measure up to her colleagues' expectations.

Do you think they are experiencing the Imposter phenomenon?



Activity – Scenario two



Morgan, Small business owner

Morgan founded a successful small business and is admired for their entrepreneurial achievements. However, Morgan often compares the business to competitors and feels a constant need to prove their worth. Morgan avoids industry events and networking, fearing that peers will discover a lack of expertise.

Do you think they are experiencing the Imposter phenomenon?



Activity – Scenario three

Chris, Sales Representative

Chris is a successful sales representative consistently meeting and exceeding sales targets. Chris is confident in presenting products to clients, actively participates in team meetings, and views challenges as opportunities for growth. Chris accepts positive feedback graciously and recognises personal contributions to the team's success.

Do you think they are experiencing the Imposter phenomenon?





The Clance IP scale

1 - Not at all true, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Very true

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task
2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am
3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me
4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future
5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people
6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am
7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best
8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it
9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error
10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments



The Clance IP scale

1 - Not at all true, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Very true

11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck
12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more
13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack
14. I'm often afraid that I may fail as a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt
15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success
16. If I received a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done
17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am
18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examinations, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well
19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact
20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involved achievement



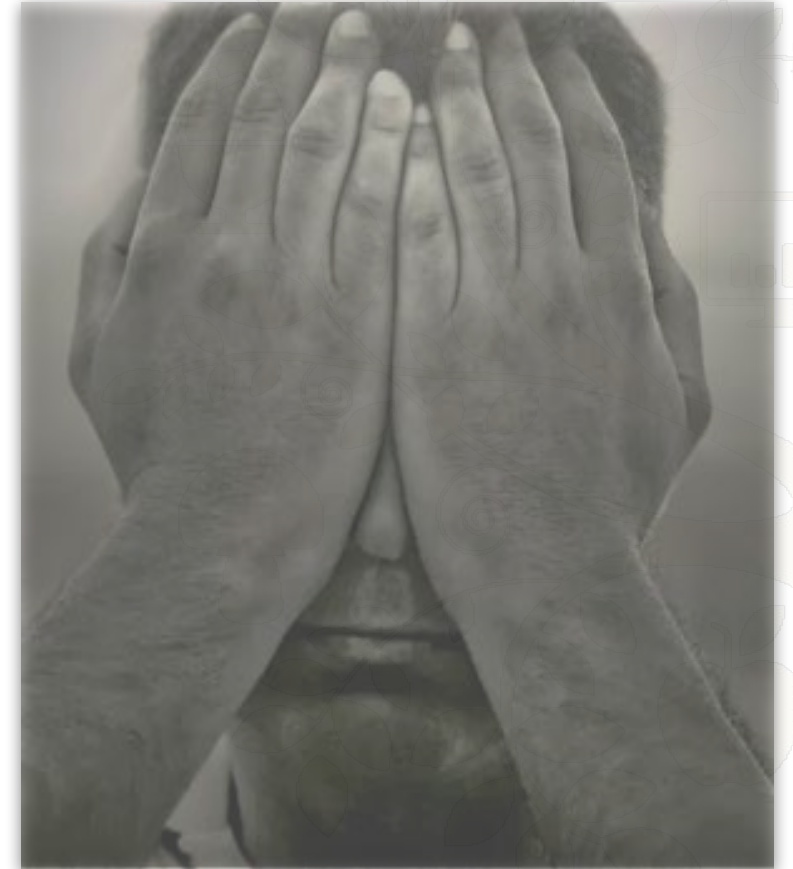
What is the impact of IP?





Negative effects on mental health

- **Increased stress and anxiety:** Studies indicate a **significant association** between elevated **stress scores**, heightened **anxiety scores**, and increased **IP scores**.
- **Symptoms of depression:** A study revealed a robust **correlation** between individuals **experiencing IP** and the **presence of depression**.
- **Burnout and exhaustion:** Research with medical students indicates that those with IP were more likely to experience **burnout**.



Negative effects on job performance



- **Reduced productivity:** A study found that individuals with high levels of perfectionism, a common aspect of imposter phenomenon, reported **lower task completion rates** and **decreased overall productivity**.
- **Reduced job satisfaction:** According to research individuals experiencing Imposter Phenomenon reported **lower levels of job satisfaction** and **lower overall career satisfaction**.
- **Possible increased absenteeism:** While specific statistics on reduced absenteeism may vary, a study suggests a connection between **high stress levels** and **increased absenteeism**.
- **Impaired interpersonal relationships:** According to research individuals with imposter phenomenon reported **challenges in interpersonal relationships at work**, affecting collaboration and teamwork.



Strategies for overcoming IP



Strategies for overcoming IP

Cognitive
behavioural
techniques

Mindfulness &
self-compassion
practices



Mentorship &
support networks

Professional
development
opportunities

Regular
check-ins

Cognitive behavioural techniques

Cognitive behavioural techniques involve identifying and changing negative thought patterns to promote healthier behaviours and emotions.

- **Identify & challenge negative thought patterns:** *keep a thought journal, identify patterns and triggers, challenge irrational thoughts by considering other perspectives*
- **Develop healthier cognitive habits:** *replace negative self talk with positive self-talk, focus on strengths and achievements, positive visualisation of success*



Assessing the evidence

Negative opinions



Evidence I'm not competent



Evidence I am competent





Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of staying present in the moment, helping overcome imposter phenomenon by fostering self-awareness and reducing negative self-judgment.



Incorporate mindfulness techniques: *deep breathing, meditation, practice staying present in the moment, use mindfulness apps*



Self-compassion practices

Self-compassion involves treating oneself with kindness and understanding, supporting the overcoming of imposter phenomenon by promoting a positive and nurturing relationship with one's own abilities and experiences.

Cultivate self-compassion:
treat yourself like you would a friend, acknowledge imperfections without criticism, practise self-compassionate talk





Mentorship

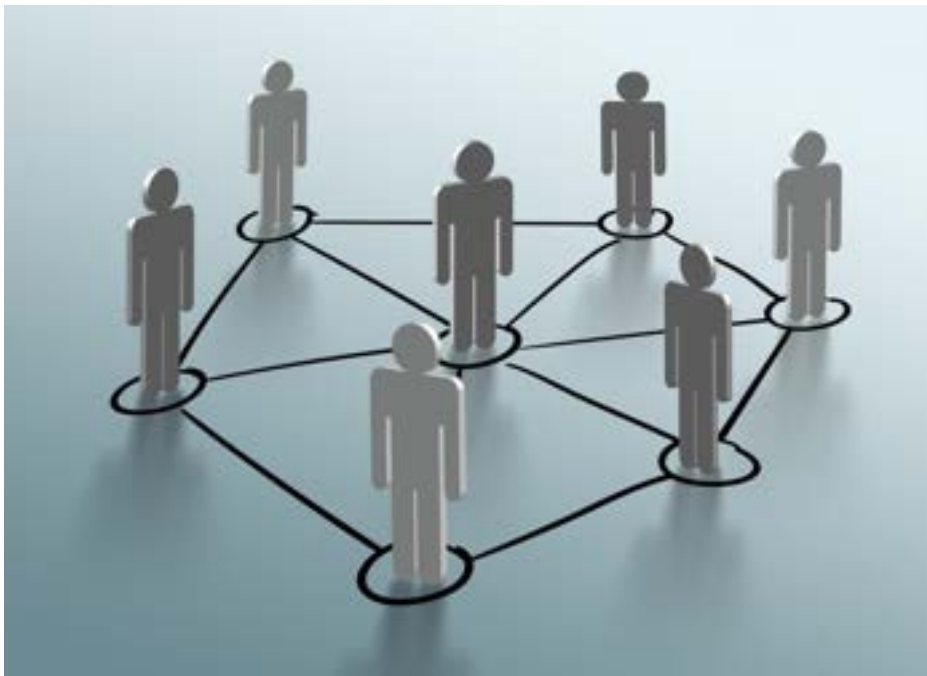
Mentorship provides guidance and support, aiding in overcoming imposter phenomenon by offering valuable insights and encouragement from experienced individuals.



Establish mentorship programs: *pair less experienced colleagues with more experienced colleagues, provide guidance, advice, goal-setting.*

Support networks

Support networks offer a sense of belonging and understanding, aiding in overcoming imposter phenomenon by providing a community where individuals can share experiences, receive encouragement, and gain perspective.



Look for support networks:
participate in team building activities, join in open discussions, seek out informal support groups, work on building relationships in different parts of your life

Professional development

Professional development facilitates skill enhancement and confidence-building, helping to overcome imposter phenomenon by empowering individuals to acquire and strengthen their competencies in their chosen field.



- **Provide/find resources for ongoing development:** *try online courses, offer access, create library of resources, support attendance on training*
- **Support workshops:** *join in with or even host workshops on confidence building etc, invite guest speakers, industry experts*

Check ins

Check-ins, through regular communication and feedback, contribute to overcoming imposter phenomenon by creating a supportive environment where individuals can openly discuss challenges, receive reassurance, and acknowledge their achievements.



- **Ask for or implement regular check ins:** *rather than performance evaluation ask for what you or the other person needs to feel supported.*
- **Create a feedback loop:** *help create a culture of constructive feedback eg through anonymous surveys, suggestion boxes.*



Strategies for your imposter type

The Perfectionist

- Set realistic goals
- Learn to accept & celebrate small victories
- Understand perfection is unattainable & mistakes = growth!

The Expert

- Acknowledge that's it's ok not to know everything
- Embrace continuous learning
- Seek feedback and recognise your expertise in certain areas

The Superhero

- Set realistic boundaries & prioritise self-care
- Learn to delegate & ask for help when needed
- Recognise that taking breaks & work-life balance is crucial for success

The Natural Genius

- Understand that effort is essential for success
- Break down tasks into manageable steps & focus on the process (not end result)
- Celebrate the learning journey

The Soloist

- Develop a support system by seeking guidance & mentorship
- Share achievements with trusted people
- Recognise the value of collaboration & teamwork for success

10 WAYS TO OVERCOME 'IMPOSTOR SYNDROME'



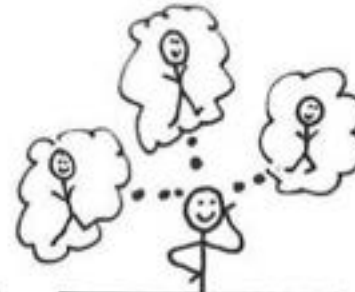
KEEP A
JOURNAL



SET SOME
GOALS



BUILD A
PROFESSIONAL
SUPPORT NETWORK



GET 360°
FEEDBACK



UPDATE YOUR
CV



GET A
COACH



RECOGNISE
LEARNING &
FAILURE ARE
OKAY



KEEP A
POSITIVE
FEEDBACK
FILE



DO THINGS
OUTSIDE OF
WORK THAT
MAKE YOU
FEEL GOOD.



SAY IT OUT
LOUD TO
SOMEONE YOU
TRUST
"I FEEL LIKE
A FRAUD"...

THEY'LL PUT
YOU RIGHT!



“One who has previously considered themselves an Imposter begins to allow themselves to state and feel,

‘I am intelligent. I have learned and achieved a tremendous amount. It is alright for me to believe in my own intellectual abilities and strengths’

They begin to be free of the burden of believing they are a phony and can more fully participate in the joys, zest, and power of their accomplishments.”

Additional Resources

Imposter Phenomenon Worksheet
The Clance IP Scale - Question 1 to 10

☐ 1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

☐ 2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.

☐ 3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

☐ 4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

☐ 5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

☐ 6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.

☐ 7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

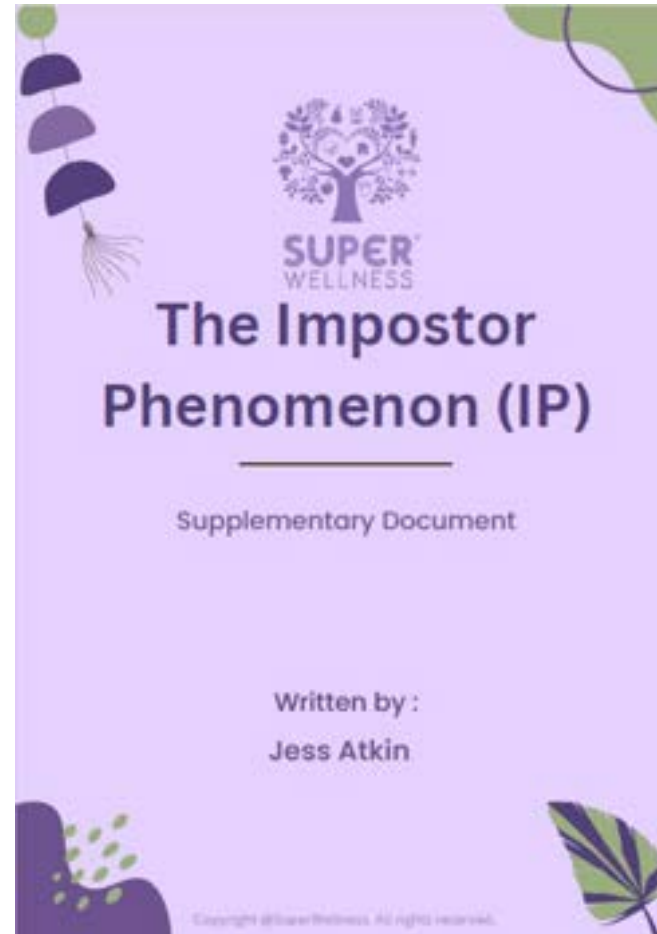
☐ 8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

☐ 9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

☐ 10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

1 - Not true at all 2 - Rarely 3 - Sometimes 4 - Often 5 - Very true

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