

Fighting Impostor Syndrome

A Practical Handbook

17:05 PM – 17:40 PM

17 November 2022 // SymfonyCon 2022



// Horoscope for the next 35 minutes



// Horoscope for the next 35 minutes



1. Let's get acquainted!
2. A little bit of history
3. Ok but... What is it?
4. The practical bit (finally)
5. "Not a question, more of a comment"
6. **Sources???**

// 1. Let's get acquainted!

I promise, that's kinda relevant

Marine Gandy

DevRel engineer at Platform.sh



That is me!



// My journey



- I come from **a literary background**
- I switched to web development **at 25**
- I'm the current **President of the French Drupal Association**
- I've been **working remotely** for 3 years
- I love and do **many things** outside of work!

**So why am I talking
about this?**

Because all these elements heavily influence

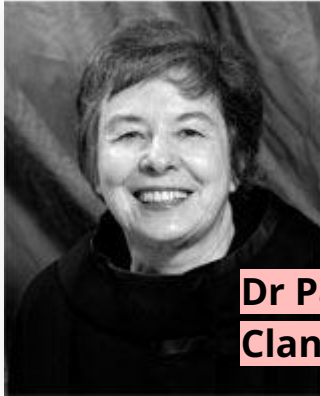
how I feel at work

// 2. A little bit of history

"Your past is just a lesson, not a life sentence." - Deep Life Quote

// It all began in 1978

with two psychologists



**Dr Pauline Rose
Clance**



Dr Suzanne Imes

At first, they thought it only touched women...

The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: dynamics and therapeutic intervention

Pauline Rose Clance & Suzanne Imes

But since then, more research has been conducted

It turns out...

**The feeling is spread equally
among men and women**

// Nowadays, we estimate that

70%

of all humankind experiences this feeling

**It's not a disease,
it's a common human experience!**

This is why Dr Clance herself now uses the term 'impostor phenomenon'
(and so should we)

// Isn't it more **widespread in tech** though?

I mean...

Yeah, some factors
don't help →

The field of competence is very wide



It's impossible to master everything



The tech and tools are evolving fast



We're constantly becoming 'juniors' again



// 3. Ok but... What is it?

Oh you wanted an actual definition?

It's kinda like

atychiphobia

It's kinda like

~~atychiphobia~~

It's kinda like

kakorraphiophobia

Ok fine listen, it's like

The fear of failure

// OK, we need Wikipedia

“ Impostor syndrome [...] is a psychological occurrence in which an individual doubts their skills, talents, or accomplishments and **has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a fraud.**

Despite external evidence of their competence, those experiencing this phenomenon **do not believe they deserve their success or luck.**

[...] **they may think that they are deceiving others** because they feel as if they are not as intelligent as they outwardly portray themselves to be. ”

Have you ever heard of the **fundamental attribution error?**

It's the tendency for people to **under-emphasize situational and environmental explanations** [...] while **overemphasizing dispositional- and personality-based explanations.**

(Thank you Wikipedia, again)

Screenshot:

**“L'effet Julien Lepers”,
Horizon Gull**



Screenshot:

**“L'effet Julien Lepers”,
Horizon Gull**



So the impostor phenomenon is pretty much the opposite!

Because you

overestimate external explanations

(aka: you're just lucky)

while you **underestimate internal explanations**

(aka: you're actually doing fine!)

Careful though!

Not everything is 'impostor syndrome'!

**There's a difference between
the impostor phenomenon and...**

a bad work environment

It's normal

to have doubts sometimes!

Underrepresented groups

Fancy new tech you don't understand (yet)

Colleagues with 20+ years of experience

Switching careers

First job after school

Starting over at a new company



Oh no

Here comes the part where you have to contribute



// 4. The practical bit, finally

Oh you wanted an actual definition?

// **Is it me, or is it the context around me?**



Do I know what is expected of me?

- Is communication fluid?
- Is my job description clear?
- Are my goals realistic and explicit?

Is the feeling recurrent?

- Am I sensitive to a specific context (a new project, a new stack, a subject I don't feel comfortable with?)

Is the feeling linked to someone in particular?

Do I get regular feedback?

- Is the feedback always negative?
- Do I always feel like I don't deserve the praise I get, or do I enjoy some of my achievements?

// Getting past comparison & competition



The Internet stars are not the only talented people!

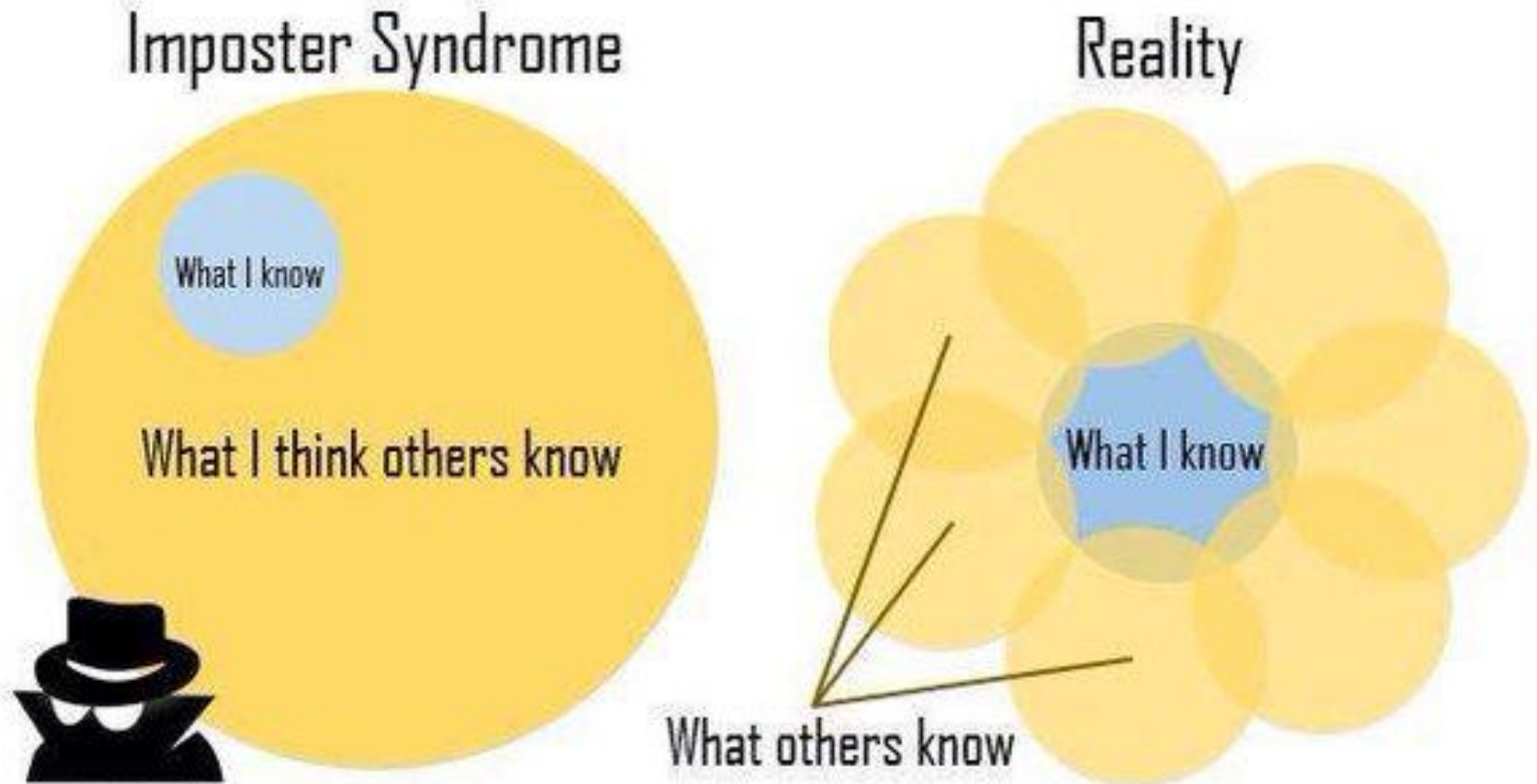
- Lots of anonymous devs are experts in their fields
- By the way, being famous is not a proof of expertise...

There's a reason we work in teams.

- The differences in profile, experience and seniority enrich the team. Diversity is the key!

Accept that the others don't know everything either

// Getting past comparison & competition



// Getting past comparison & competition



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Take an interest in other people's journey

- How did they get here, what challenges did they overcome, what did they study, what was hard for them...
- Get inspired! That might kickstart your own growth.

// Working on your (perceived) weaknesses



Target

- What is a cause of stress every single time?
- What do I have to do often?
- What is expected of me?

Prioritize

- Choose one topic at a time and delve in it
- Wandering means you will stay on the surface
- Being recognized in your speciality is fulfilling!

Split!

- Transform that mountain in small, manageable steps

Track your progress :)

// Work on different skills



The aim: seeing your own progress

Go for dev-adjacent skills

- Agility, communication, a new (human) language, web quality, accessibility, DevOps...
- Bonus: it adds to your resume!

Or... go for something else entirely!

- Pottery, gardening, knitting... doing something tangible for a change feels good
- It's a way to clear your mind, stop thinking about work
- It's not stressful: you're doing something for yourself, there's nothing at stake

// Don't stay alone



Tell your team you need them!

- Ask for regular feedback
- Get help in order to reach your goals

Find your community

- For me, it's Duchess France, a women in tech network
- Because it's sometimes easier to be vulnerable with people outside your work team
- Because you need people who have had similar experiences

Knowing that others enjoy working with you is the boost you need to see that you do belong!

// Sharing is caring



Help others grow!

- Support juniors / interns / new members
- Offer pair programming sessions
- Share the articles you read
- Explain your job in schools, inspire new generations

Become a speaker, write articles

- Choose a subject and deep-dive or present it with a different angle
- You know you master your subject when you can explain it to others :)

// **Knowing that it has a name :)**



YES you are normal!

You can ignore it and live with it, too.

// **Getting (professional) help**



Coaching, mentoring

Private classes, trainings, certifications

Mental health care

// 5. “Not a question, more of a comment”

We don't have time for questions anyway.

Thank you!

//

Marine Gandy (aka Mupsi)

DevRel Engineer, Platform.sh

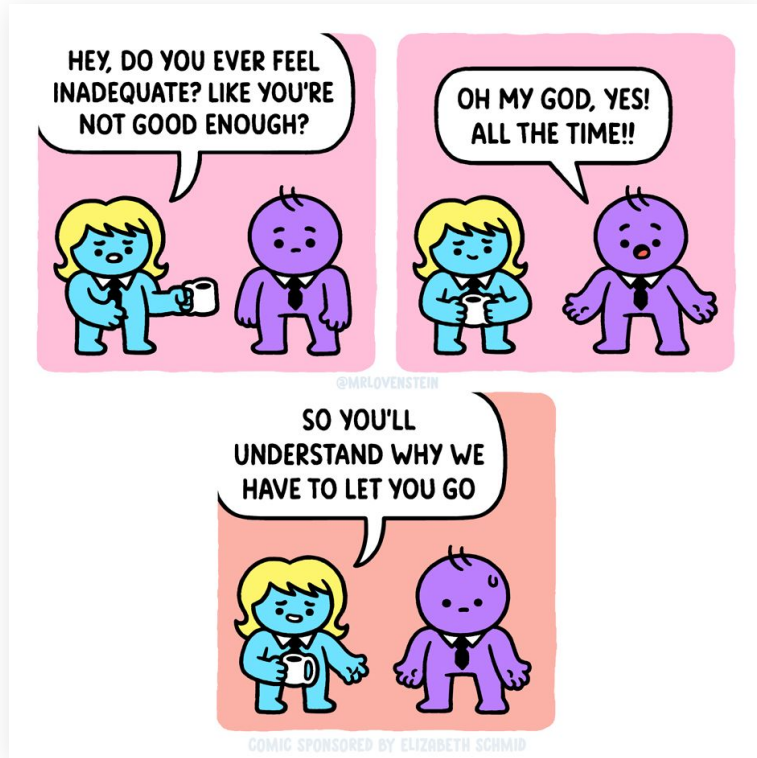
marine.gandy@platform.sh

[Mupsi.dev](https://mupsi.dev)

[Twitter](#)

[Linkedin](#)

// 'Assurance Fraud' by Mr. Lovenstein



// 6. Sources???

I promise I didn't make it up!

// The origins

- Wikipedia article on impostor syndrome
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impostor_syndrome
- Compilation of research on the impostor phenomenon, Dr Pauline Rose Clance
https://www.paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html
- Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale
<https://www.paulineroseclance.com/pdf/IPTestandscoring.pdf>
- 'The Imposter Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention', Pauline Rose Clance & Suzanne Imes
https://www.paulineroseclance.com/pdf/ip_high_achieving_women.pdf

// Articles

- 'Why Learning to Code is So Damn Hard'
<https://www.thinkful.com/blog/why-learning-to-code-is-so-damn-hard/>
- 'Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome'
<https://hbr.org/2021/02/stop-telling-women-they-have-imposter-syndrome>
- 'The Dangers of Feeling Like a Fake' <https://hbr.org/2005/09/the-dangers-of-feeling-like-a-fake>
- 'Feel like a fraud?' <https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2013/11/fraud>
- 'Feeling Like a Fraud: The Impostor Phenomenon in Science Writing'
<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2016/11/15/feeling-like-a-fraud-the-impostor-phenomenon-in-science-writing/>
- 'It's not fucking imposter syndrome, you just worked with assholes.'
<https://dearfuckers.substack.com/p/its-not-fucking-imposter-syndrome>

// Videos

- 'What is imposter syndrome and how can you combat it?', Elizabeth Cox
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQUxL4lm1Lo>
- 'How you can use impostor syndrome to your benefit', Mike Cannon-Brookes (Atlassian)
<https://youtu.be/ZkwqZfvbdFw>
- '6 Signs You Might Have Impostor Syndrome', Psych2Go
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvGawC0eS4w>
- "L'effet Julien Lepers", Horizon Gull (FR) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrXtwcGkrol>
- "Pourquoi les américains nous paraissent-ils idiots ?", Horizon Gull (FR)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lc3xHn1E8EE>

// Random

- "'Among Us': Academic edition' by PhD Comics
<https://phdcomics.com/comics/archive.php?comid=2042>
- 'Assurance Fraud' by Mr. Lovenstein <https://tapas.io/episode/2640963>
- Fundamental attribution error https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fundamental_attribution_error
- 'Batman: The Imposter' trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9L_70vpquQ
- Dave Gahan's 'Imposter' album
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLK8pmlLAfsrgtiIxu9NmIXg-Indm4iDvA>