

Fighting Impostor Syndrome

A Practical Handbook



21 May 2025



Horoscope
for the next
40 minutes

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"Not a question,
more of a comment"

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01

Let's get acquainted!

I promise, that's kinda relevant

My journey



I'm a PHP / Drupal developer but...

- I come from a literary background
- I switched to web development at 25
- I'm the current vice-president of the French Drupal Association
- I've worked remotely for 5 years
- **I love and do many things outside of work!**

So why am I telling you all this?

**Because these elements
heavily influence**

how I feel at work

02

A little bit of history

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

It all began in 1978...



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

*Georgia State University
University Plaza
Atlanta, Georgia 30303*

But since then, more research has been conducted

It turns out...

This feeling is

equally

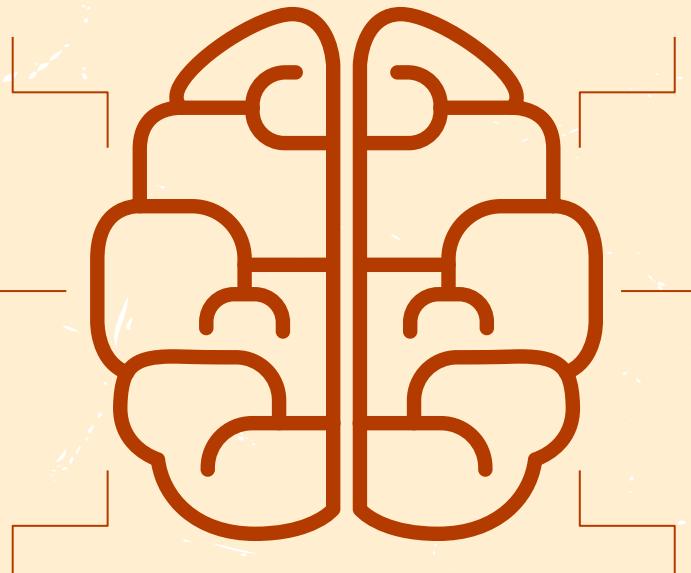
spread

among men and women

Nowadays, we estimate that

70%

of people will experience it



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

That's why

Dr Clance herself uses the term '**impostor phenomenon**'
(and so should we)

Isn't it more widespread in tech though?



The field of competence is very wide

The tech and tools are evolving fast

It's impossible to master everything

We're constantly becoming 'juniors' again & we feel vulnerable



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03

OK but... what IS it?

Oh! You wanted an actual
definition?

It's kinda like...

atychiphobia

It's kinda like...

citychiphobia

It's kinda like...

kakorrhaphiophobia

It's kinda like...

~~kakorrhaphiophobia~~

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.

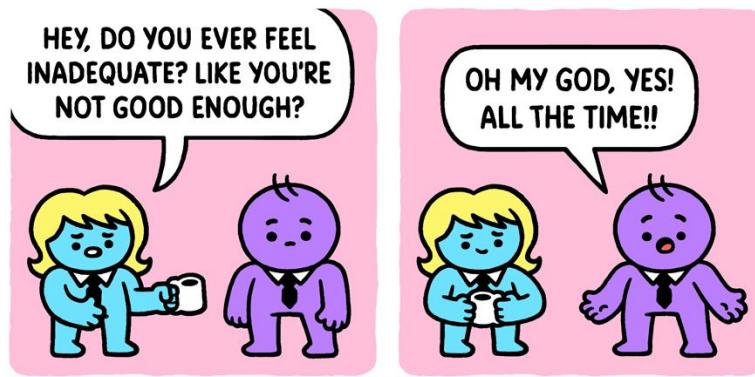
Despite external evidence of their competence, those experiencing this phenomenon do not believe they deserve their success or luck.

[...] 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.”

Careful though!

Not **EVERYTHING** is ‘impostor syndrome’!

'Assurance Fraud' by Mr. Lovenstein



@MRLOVENSTEIN

SO YOU'LL
UNDERSTAND WHY WE
HAVE TO LET YOU GO



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More seriously...

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



a bad work environment

Also,

Underrepresented
groups

First job
after school

Fancy new tech you don't
understand (yet)

Starting over at
a new company

Colleagues with
20+ years of
experience

It's VERY
normal to
have doubts!

Switching
careers



Oh no.

Here comes the part where YOU have to contribute



04

The practical bit (finally)

OK FINE, I'll tell you!



**FIRST,
is it me,
or is it
the context
around me?**

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 it me, or is it the context around me?

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

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

Do I get regular feedback?

- Is the feedback actually always negative?
- Is the feeling linked to someone in particular?

Pro tip

Take the Clance Impostor
Phenomenon Scale Test



Getting past comparison & competition

Getting past comparison & competition

The Internet stars are not the only talented ones!

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

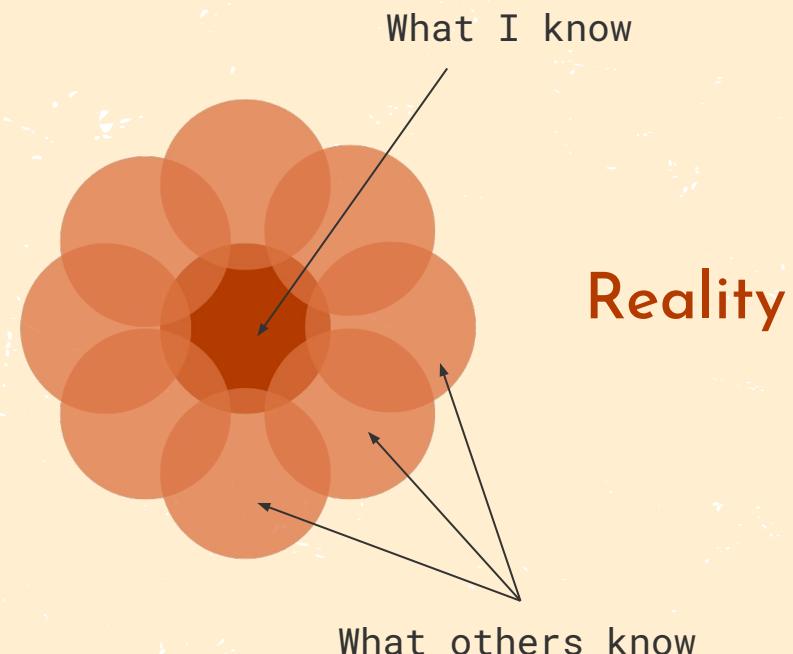
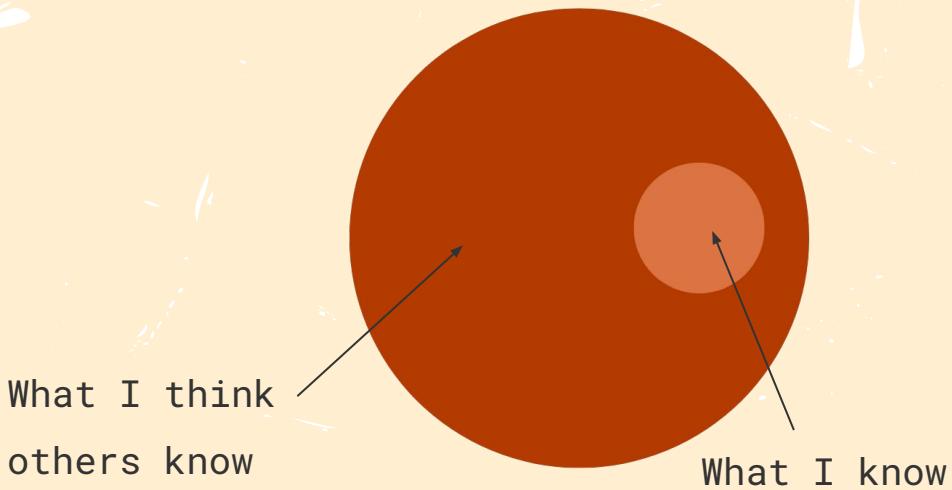
Getting past comparison & competition

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

Impostor phenomenon



Getting past comparison & competition

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... No one starts with all the answers.
- Get inspired! That might kickstart your own growth.



Working
on your
(perceived)
weaknesses

Working on your (perceived) weaknesses

Choose the right target

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

Working on your (perceived) weaknesses

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!

Working on your (perceived) weaknesses

Split it up!

- Transform that mountain in small, manageable steps
- Track your progress :)



Working on
different skills

Working 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!

Working on different skills

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!

Don't stay alone!

Tell your team you need them!

- Ask for regular feedback
- Get help in order to reach your goals
- Knowing that others enjoy working with you is the boost you need to see that you do belong!

Don't stay alone!

Find your community

- For me, it's you Drupal folks! + Compositech (a women in tech association I co-founded)
- Because it's sometimes easier to be vulnerable with people outside your work team
- Because you need people who have had similar experiences

Don't stay alone!

Knowing that it has a name :)

- YES you are normal!
- You can ignore it and live with it, too



Sharing
is caring

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

Sharing is caring

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 :)



Getting (professional) help

Getting (professional) help

- Coaching, mentoring
- Private classes, trainings, certifications
- Mental health care



Thanks!

Find me online:

LinkedIn: [Marine GANDY](#)

Drupal.org: [Mupsi](#)

Mastodon: [drupal.community/@Mupsi](#)

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05

“Not a question, more of a comment”

We don't have time for questions
anyway.

06

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
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- ‘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

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- ‘Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome’
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- ‘Feeling Like a Fraud: The Impostor Phenomenon in Science Writing’
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Videos

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQUxL4Jm1Lo>
- ‘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”, Hacking Social (FR) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrXtwcGkrol>
- “Pourquoi les américains nous paraissent-ils idiots ?”, Hacking Social (FR)
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Random

- “Among Us”: Academic edition’ by PhD Comics <https://phdcomics.com/comics/archive.php?comicid=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=PLK8pmrLAfsrgtiJxu9NmIXg-Jndm4iDvA>