

“I’m not a real data  
scientist.”

Colin Jemmott

UCSD DSC96, Spring 2019

# Imposter Syndrome

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Doubting accomplishments and having a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a "fraud"

I got lucky

I was at the right place at the right time

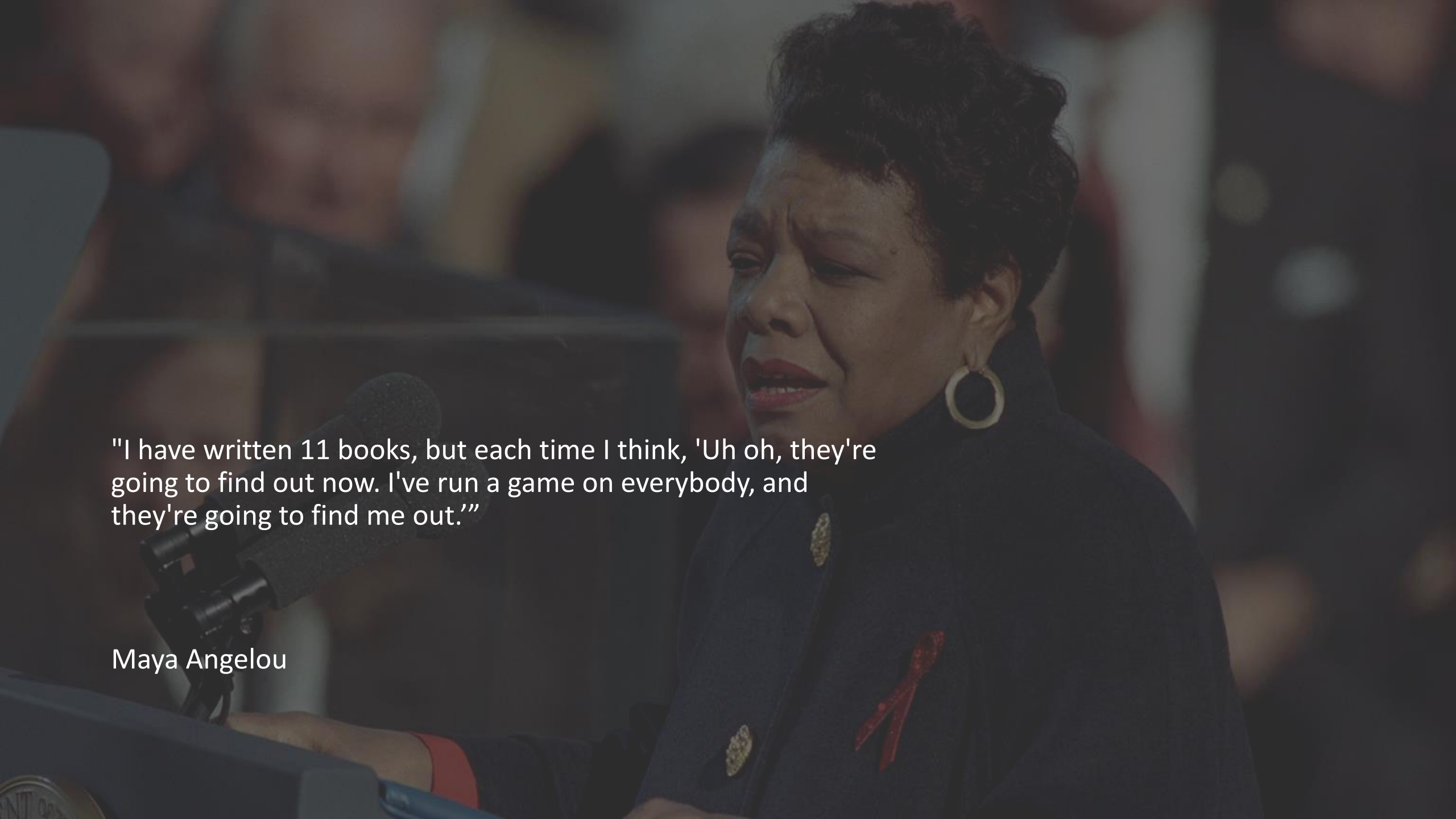
its because they like me

If I can do it, anyone can

they must let everyone in

I had connections

they felt sorry for me

A close-up photograph of Maya Angelou speaking at a podium. She is wearing a dark blue jacket with gold buttons and a red ribbon. She has short, dark, curly hair and is wearing large hoop earrings. Her expression is one of deep emotion, with her eyes closed and her mouth slightly open as if she is crying or speaking passionately. The background is blurred, showing other people in the audience.

"I have written 11 books, but each time I think, 'Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.'"

Maya Angelou

“Huh, maybe the company really would be better off if I quit.”

- Me, in a meeting today

Why might  
imposterism  
be more  
common in  
data science?

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Data science is a new field,  
and not well defined.

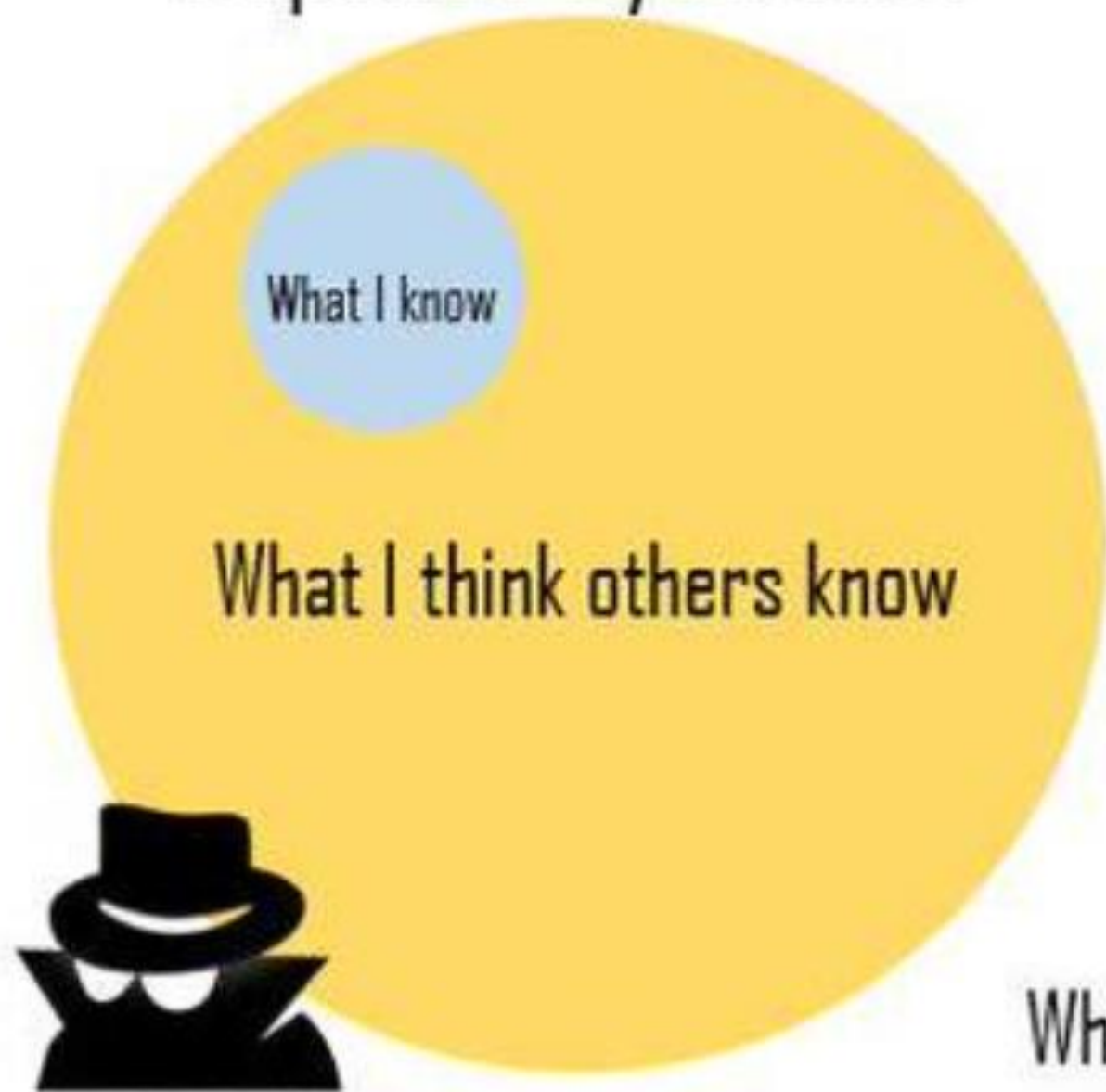
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Data science is a combination  
of many other fields.

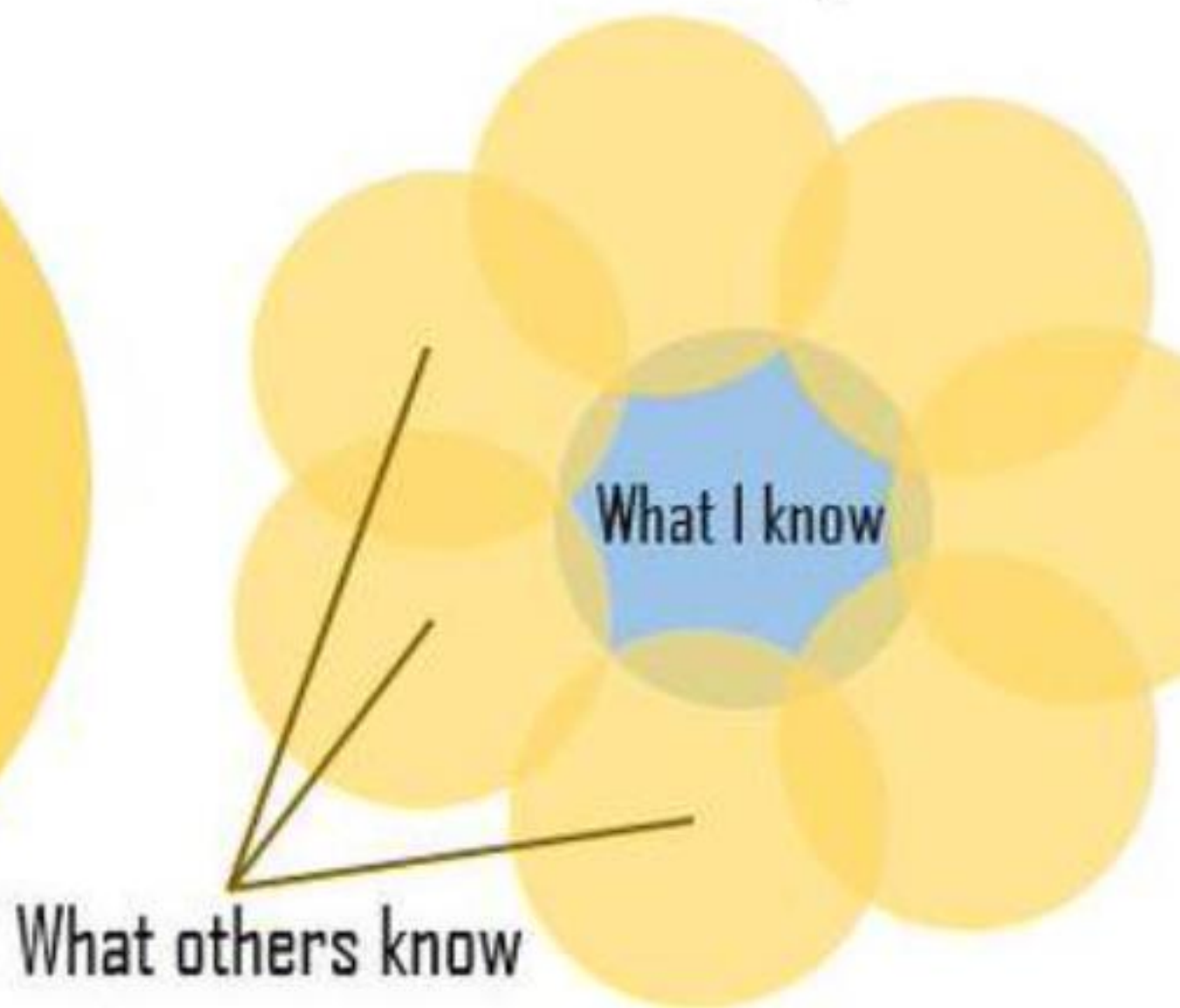
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Data science is constantly  
expanding with new  
technologies

# Imposter Syndrome



# Reality



So now what?





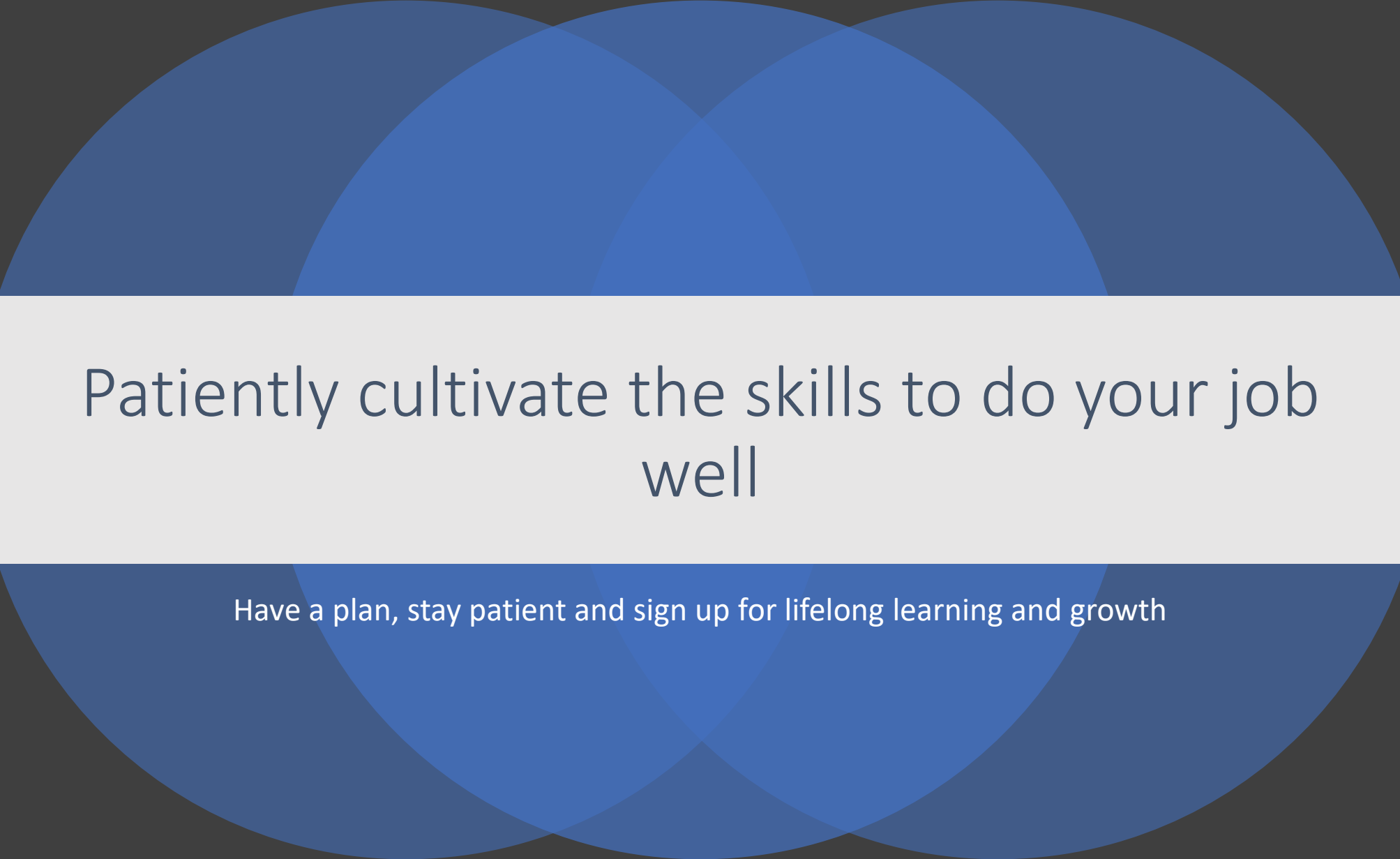
So now what?

Just naming it and  
talking about it helps.

# Recognize when imposterism is a problem

Humility is healthy.  
Luck and privilege  
do play big roles in  
your life!

Paralyzing fear  
isn't helpful.



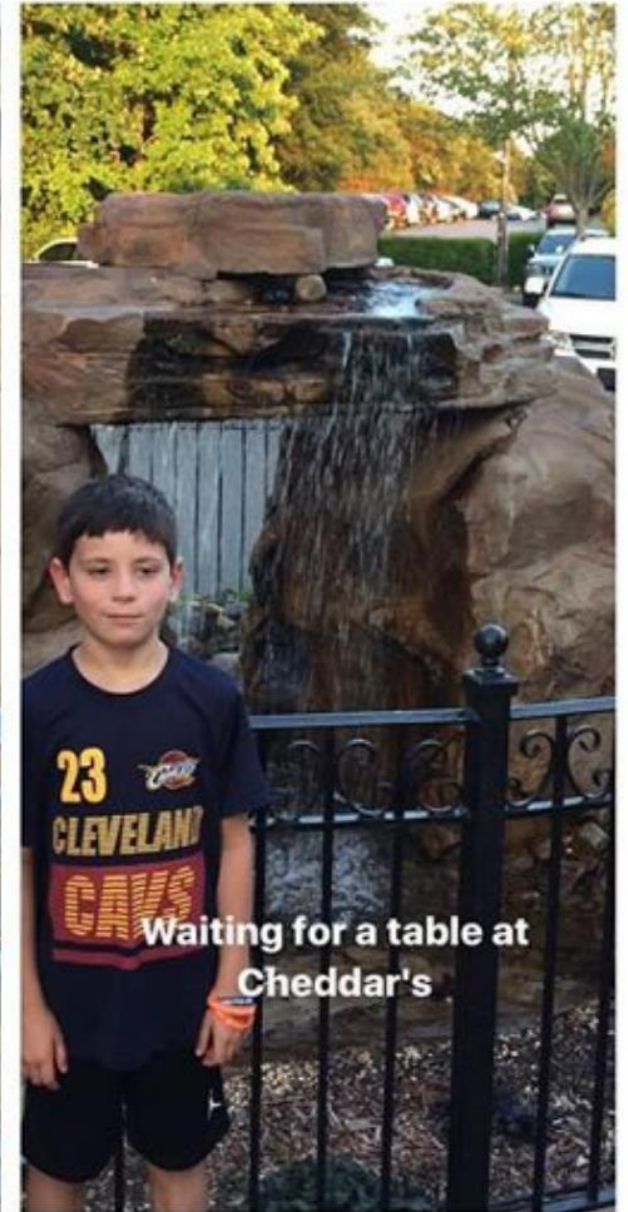
Patiently cultivate the skills to do your job  
well

Have a plan, stay patient and sign up for lifelong learning and growth

Make a personal  
plan and assess  
your progress  
against that

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Recognize that peers public  
presentation may not match  
reality



## Community-wide Techniques for Reducing Imposter Syndrome

- Get comfortable with “I don’t know”
- Don’t “fake it ‘til you make it”
- Encourage questions
- Share what you’re learning

I TRY NOT TO MAKE FUN OF PEOPLE FOR ADMITTING THEY DON'T KNOW THINGS.

BECAUSE FOR EACH THING “EVERYONE KNOWS” BY THE TIME THEY’RE ADULTS, EVERY DAY THERE ARE, ON AVERAGE, 10,000 PEOPLE IN THE US HEARING ABOUT IT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

FRACTION WHO HAVE HEARD OF IT AT BIRTH = 0%

FRACTION WHO HAVE HEARD OF IT BY 30  $\approx 100\%$

US BIRTH RATE  $\approx 4,000,000/\text{year}$

NUMBER HEARING ABOUT IT FOR THE FIRST TIME  $\approx 10,000/\text{day}$

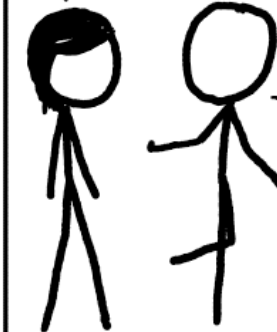
IF I MAKE FUN OF PEOPLE, I TRAIN THEM NOT TO TELL ME WHEN THEY HAVE THOSE MOMENTS. AND I MISS OUT ON THE FUN.

“DIET COKE AND MENTOS THING”? WHAT’S THAT?

OH MAN! COME ON, WE’RE GOING TO THE GROCERY STORE.

WHY?

YOU’RE ONE OF TODAY’S LUCKY 10,000.



HACK LIKE  
A CHAMPION  
TODAY