

### I'm an Imposter

On the first day of practice, Noah caught every ball that was thrown to him. Travis was able to break away and score on the best goalie in the mountain west. Jordan won every single face off he put his stick down for. Dexter managed to make 27 passes that were over 30 yards long. I caught the ball twice. In two hours, I managed to keep the ball in the pocket of my stick two times. Clearly I'm not good enough to play lacrosse.

Of the nearly one hundred people in the lecture hall, Spencer was asking questions three or four times every day. Jeremiah stayed after class to talk to the professor each and every day. Whenever Kurt was called on "randomly" he always had the perfect answer. The professor would ask a question of the room at large and everyone was able to parrot back the correct answer. Except for me. Clearly I don't belong in computer science.

I tried out for the esports team and was able to play for three practices before they told me "someone else wants to play and they have a higher rank than you." Clearly I'm not good enough for the Overwatch team.

I practiced with the triathlon team where Ryan told me "you should be running forty miles every week." I was able to run five, so I clearly don't belong on the triathlon team.

The first time I heard about Imposter Syndrome was when friends from grad school sat down to help me develop healthy mental habits in order to be successful in my studies. Even from the name itself, I think it should be pretty easy for you to guess what imposter syndrome is, but in case you don't want to be wrong, allow me to share with you this most curious mental blockage.

The field of computer science is vast and has incredible breadth in the topics that are a part of the field. Computer vision, natural language processing, recurrent neural networks, electron hardware traps, mobile software development, and computability theory are subjects so disjointed, they're almost unrelated. When browsing online material related to computing though, all of these subjects are represented. This gives the strong impression that everyone in the field of computer science knows all of these unrelated subjects.

But you don't know them all. Or at least I know that I don't know all of them.

When everyone around you seems to know something, and you are clueless to explain what that concept is, you feel like an outsider.

You feel like an imposter.

You don't belong.

And that's what Imposter Syndrome is. That feeling as though you don't belong with the people you spend time with. That feeling that you're studying the wrong field. That feeling of being the only person on the team that doesn't know what's going on. That the play is going to fall apart because you can't drive this 165 pound, 5'8", 20 year old ten yards to the left of where he's standing right now.

You don't belong.

But why should you belong? Why do you care so much about being an imposter? Why is the idea of sticking out a bad proposition, reader?

I've wanted to play lacrosse since I was eight years old. My dad was flipping through the channels and ended up watching the college finals for the sport on ESPN one day. I remember watching these guys running around on the field with sticks. I remember them snapping balls back and forth so smoothly, it looked as though a string was pulling the ball into their net. I remember reading about lacrosse for hours after I watched that first game, and the next week I was begging my dad to let me play lacrosse.

He called the rec center that day. In my little town, they're in charge of all the kids' sports that happen in town.

"I'm sorry, but nobody plays lacrosse here," they told him. "If we get a lot more people asking for the sport though, we can put together a league."

"If you start talking to your friends about it, and you can get them interested in lacrosse, then you might just be able to play."

But all my friends want to play in the NFL. They just want to play football. I don't want to play football. And so lacrosse didn't have a place in Casper, and I didn't have a place to play the sports I wanted. I tried to get into football, but honestly, I just didn't like it. I always felt like an imposter. I didn't have the love everyone else had for the sport.

But then the oil industry had a boom, and hundreds of people from Pennsylvania and Maryland moved to Wyoming. And they brought the sport of lacrosse with them. And I was hyped. I might finally be able to play with them.

But instead of having the city set up the league, some group of parents set it up themselves. It was effectively a club team, a traveling team if you will, and I was cautiously optimistic about being able to play. I went to a few practices and "learn the game" meetings.

But then I found out how much it would cost to play.

But I was the only one that couldn't pay for it.

Writer's Note: In revisions, this segment of story needs to pull in a couple more threads about feeling out of place.