

# Imposter Syndrome

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WOOTconf 2017

‘the experience of fraudulent thoughts  
and feelings and the inability to attribute  
and internalize personal achievement’

Hutchins (2015)

**I HAVE NO  
IDEA WHAT  
I'M DOING**



Do you have it?

# How does it work?

# Consequences

# Dealing with it

# Are these true for you?

*The Impostor Phenomenon: When Success Makes You Feel Like A Fake (1985)*



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

At times, I feel my success has been due  
to some kind of luck

I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more

Sometimes I'm afraid others will  
discover how much knowledge or ability I  
really lack

I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt

When I've succeeded at something and  
received recognition for my  
accomplishments, I have doubts that I  
can keep repeating that success

If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done



I often compare my ability to those  
around me and think they may be more  
intelligent than I am

I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well

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

I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not 'the best' or at least 'very special' in situations that involve achievement

# Who has it?

Clance and Imes (1978)

Ted Thompson (1998)

Trotman (2009)

# Minorities

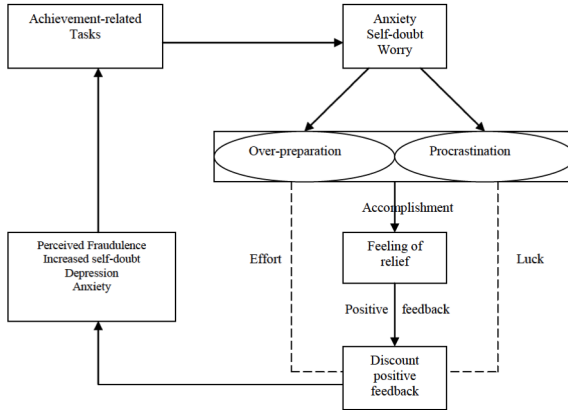
Weir (2013)

# New endeavour

Weir (2013)

# What are the characteristics?





*Figure1.* Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).  
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

# How does it work?

Hutchins (2015)

Langford and Clance (1993)

Trotman (2009)

# Success does not fix it

Clance and Imes (1978)

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

# Desire to be the best

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

“The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else’s highlight reel.” Steve Furtick

# Fear and guilt about success

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

# Mistrusting others

Langford and Clance (1993)

# Low affiliation



Langford and Clance (1993)



# Low play

Langford and Clance (1993)

# Low Impulsivity



Langford and Clance (1993)

# High Impulsivity



Langford and Clance (1993)

# Low need for change



Langford and Clance (1993)

# High need for change



Langford and Clance (1993)

# Low need for order



Langford and Clance (1993)

# What childhood circumstances create it?

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

Langford and Clance (1993)

# Personality traits

Hutchins (2015)

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)



# Work circumstances that contribute

Hutchins (2015)

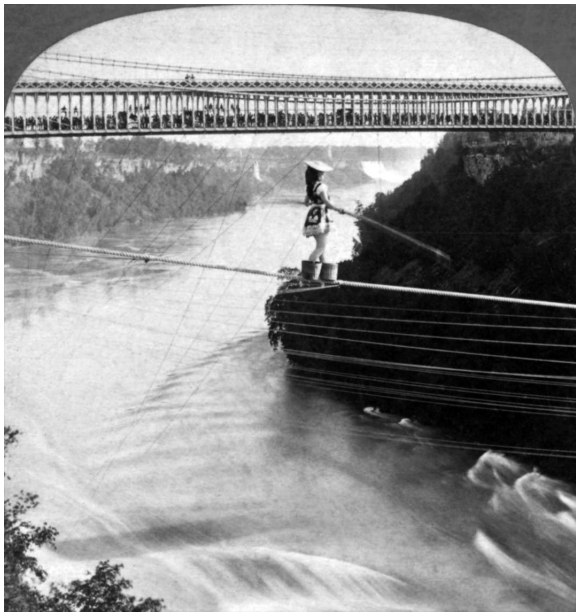
Melanie Clark and Barba (2014)

# Racial issues

Trotman (2009)

# Self presentation

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)



Behaviours that preserve it

# Intellectual Inauthenticity

Clance and Imes (1978)

# Charm

Clance and Imes (1978)

# Avoiding displays of confidence

Clance and Imes (1978)



What are the consequences?

# Poor mental health

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

# Bouts of depression and anxiety

Hutchins (2015)

# Emotional exhaustion

Hutchins (2015)

# Psychological distress

Hutchins (2015)

# Low self confidence

Hutchins (2015)

# Lower job well-being, satisfaction and performance

Hutchins (2015)

# Low self-efficacy

Julie A. Lyden (2002)



# Ways to cope

# Mentoring

Hutchins (2015)

# Positive reinforcement

Hutchins (2015)



# Identify feelings

Caltech Counselling Centre (n.d.)

# Reality check

Caltech Counselling Centre (n.d.)

# Differentiate between feelings and reality

Caltech Counselling Centre (n.d.)

# Humor

Hutchins (2015)



# Distracting thoughts or activities

Hutchins (2015)

# Social support

Caltech Counselling Centre (n.d.)

# Reduce dependency

Langford and Clance (1993)

# Meditation

What to do?

Talk about it

Be aware when people show it

Challenge people to accept positive  
feedback



# Get perspective

Questions?

[github.com/biancag/imposter-syndrome](https://github.com/biancag/imposter-syndrome)

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