

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

Hutchins (2015)



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?

P. R. Clance and Imes (1978)

Ted Thompson (1998)

Trotman (2009) initially discovered in high achieving women studying and in academia later found in to be in other populations too
Maybe higher in women, research goes both ways Maybe higher in some ethnic groups, studied in African Americans

Minorities

Weir (2013)

New endeavour

Weir (2013) neighbourhood organiser and suggesting I be a council candidate

What are the characteristics?

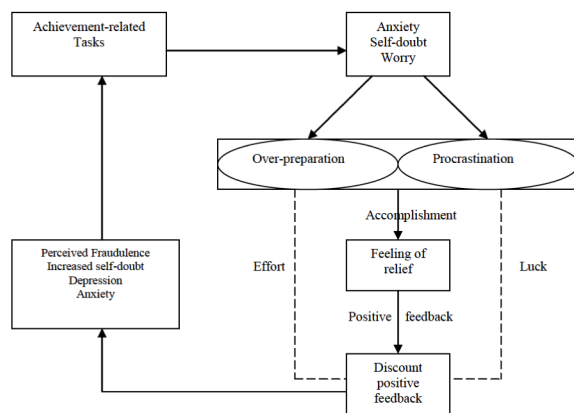


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

How does it work? attribute successes to outside factors - luck, colleagues

attribute failures to themselves

found to be far more common in women than men

women viewing ourselves as phony is consistent with societal view that we aren't competent
worse for African American women

easier to not internalize success than go against the views of society!

often believe that intelligence is fixed rather than malleable

motivated by performance goals, try to prove intelligence

when fail - react 'helpless' way, blame selves, withdraw from task, anxiety, shame

overriding concern with others' impressions, idealised self image

self worth unusually dependent on others - external validation goes away, fall apart

Hutchins (2015)

J. L. . P. Clance (1993)

Trotman (2009)

Success does not fix it

P. R. Clance and Imes (1978)

Sakulku and Alexander (2011) because they dismiss the success disregard if there is any gap between their expectations and performance
repetitions of success show dif between actual and ideal standards, make it worse deny our competence, discount praise

Desire to be the best will be the biggest fish in a small pond (school) then go to uni - lots of bright people, not the best anymore
conclude that they are stupid because they aren't the best anymore

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

Fear and guilt about success

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

Defence

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) mistrusting others

Low affiliation

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) in women. enjoyable involvement with other people

Low play

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) don't do things for fun

Impulsivity

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) low in women, high in men

Need for change

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) low in women, high in men

Low need for order

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) in men

What childhood circumstances create it?

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

J. L. . P. Clance (1993) Generally either has a sibling or close relative that was the designated 'intelligent' family member the woman is then told that she is the 'sensitive' or socially adept one, not the smart one or, told that they are superior in every way and success will come easily

Then they can't cope with when it doesn't

Family valueing success with little effort

discrepancy between feedback and actual success

lack of positive reinforcement - "nothing you do is ever good enough"

IP higher when family cohesion and expressiveness are low, family conflict and control high. Accounted for 12 of variation if not supported or approved may feel achievements are dismissed, unimpressive, unimportant.

shame, humiliation and inauthenticity common with lack of +ve reinforcement

IP highly correlated with need to please others in family

try to live up to idealised image to win approval

Personality traits "common among individuals with particular personality traits (e.g. neuroticism, achievement-orientation),

have perfectionist expectations over work" inverse with conscientiousness

Hutchins (2015)

Sakulku and Alexander (2011)

Work circumstances that contribute highly competitive, stressful occupations

what about peer review?

higher in untenured faculty - probably maps to staff on fixed term contracts

not studied in tech, but higher in systems librarians than other librarians

high tech knowledge requirements, constant technical change, feel out of date

translate to devs - expectation to keep up with emerging tech

tendency to focus on what colleagues know that we don't

how many new js frameworks should we learn per week?

Hutchins (2015)

Melanie Clark and Barba (2014)

Racial issues

Trotman (2009) studied in African Americans

people's presumed incompetence in African American women

vital for them to establish self worth and self reliance - others assessment will be unfairly negative

Group counselling with other African American women is very effective

more comfortable with people like them, see the ridiculousness of others IP

similar situation - share strategies

Self presentation

Sakulku and Alexander (2011) Do not want to appear imperfect, but actually openly disclose their imperfection.

Is it an interpersonal strategy rather than self evaluation?

could be to avoid negative interpersonal implications of future failures

only express lower performance expectations when they know others see it

correlated with other favourable impression management strategies

makes *lots* of sense for women in tech, since being seen as competent makes you less likeable

Behaviours that preserve it

Intellectual Inauthenticity

P. R. Clance and Imes (1978) chose not to reveal ideas or opinions

tell people what they want to hear

intellectual flattery - writing according to their teachers' biases

or for a developer - implementing it how the more senior developers or tech lead would want, not what you think is best

remaining silent in face of opposing view points

prevents them from finding out what people would think of their authentic views

maintains imposter syndrome

Charm

P. R. Clance and Imes (1978) aim to be liked as well as recognised intellectually

finds a candidate she respects, then tries to impress to gain approval

Reality check
 Caltech Counselling Centre (n.d.) question the thoughts
 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.) discuss feelings, get perspective
 Reduce dependency
 J. L. . P. Clance (1993) on external validation for self esteem internalise self worth
 What to do?
 Talk about it discuss it in your workplace, like the group therapy sessions
 Be aware when people show it yourself and others
 I had such bad IP I thought 'they have IP, but I'm right!'
 Challenge people to accept positive feedback
 Get perspective from people that will evaluate you fairly
 don't charm them
 Questions? github.com/biancag/imposter-syndrome bianca.rachel.gibson@gmail.com

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