

# Imposter Syndrome

I'm not smart enough to talk about this

# What is imposter syndrome?

“ Impostor syndrome, also known as impostor phenomenon or impostorism, 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 ”

2. Not attractive.

## Homer

*\noun\*

1. American bonehead

2. **Pull a Homer**—  
to succeed despite  
idiocy

## Homogeneous *\adj\*

1. Like in nature  
or kind.

2. Uniform



HOMER SIMPSON

## TLDR;

Despite your accomplishments, you still feel like it was all chance and at any moment, the rug will be pulled out from under you, leaving you with your pants down and all aware of your utter incompetence

# What are some of the signs?

- Recurring self-doubt and negative self-talk
- A flawed assessment of your competence and skills
- Attributing your success to external factors
- Berating your performance
- A constant fear that you won't live up to the expectations of others
- Sabotaging your own success
- Overreaching or setting very challenging goals and feeling disappointed when you fail

# But why?

- Depression and Social Anxiety
- Low self esteem
- Discrimination
- Your family upbringing
- Lack of access to quality mentorship
- Highly competitive environments
- Social isolation
- Highly critical jobs

# Triggers

- A new job
- A new project
- Recent promotion or lack thereof
- Unfamiliar codebase/project
- Negative experiences at work
  - Not feeling heard
  - Being interrupted
  - Given mundane tasks

# Why it's a big deal

- Ignoring opportunities out of fear
- Performance anxiety
  - Perfectionism
- Overwork and burnout
- Reluctance to participate
  - Group discussions

# What can we do?

- Set realistic life and career goals
- Acknowledge your current progress and how far you've come
- Find a good mentor
- Take stock of your negative self-talk



# About those negative thoughts

Let's steal some techniques from Cognitive/Dialectical Behavior Therapy

# Take stock of your thoughts

What is the Automatic thought rattling in your head?

Recognize and write it down. Awareness is the first step.

**E.g. "I don't know Javascript well enough, I can't do this"**

# Reality Check

Consider the Automatic thought as a separate individual, the Joker to your Batman.

Seeing this thought from an external perspective will help you in being more objective.

# Feelings vs Reality

E.g. "I don't know Javascript well enough, I can't do this"

Note, this is a **Feeling** and consider re-writing it as:

**I feel like I don't know Javascript well enough and I feel I can not do this**

Because I feel something does not mean I am. It's a feeling, not a reality

# Chronicle your achievements

Write down what you achieved in a day and embrace your accomplishments.

We'll come back to this.

# Refer to your achievements

**E.g. "I don't know Javascript well enough, I can't do this"**

Refer to your accomplishments.

- You shipped out a feature, you paired with someone and they gave you positive feedback.
- You got a glowing Lattice review.
- You got a #prop

# Decatastrophizing

**E.g. "I don't know Javascript well enough, I can't do this"**

- What's the worst thing that could happen?
- How likely is that to happen?
- What does it mean if it does happen?

# Choose my actions

The triggers will never go away, but how we choose to act is within our control

**E.g. "I don't know Javascript well enough, I can't do this"**

I can choose to: Work late hours

Or I can choose to: Reach out to my team for assistance



# What would you do if

One of your closest friends came up to you and shared that they were experiencing imposter syndrome?

We are victims of our own cognitive biases

We favor information that conforms to our existing beliefs and discount evidence that does not.

When we actively reframe our cognitions, our behavior will follow suit — and sometimes, what facilitates this process is to place ourselves in someone else's shoes.

# Is there anything WE can do for each other?

- Be open about your lack of knowledge
- Be open about having imposter syndrome
- Prop up our fellow colleagues
- Lend a hand when we see our colleagues need it, even if they don't ask

# The END

You're all fixed now