

Feeling like a little mermaid in a big ocean

(Shr)Imposter  
Syndrome  
and You



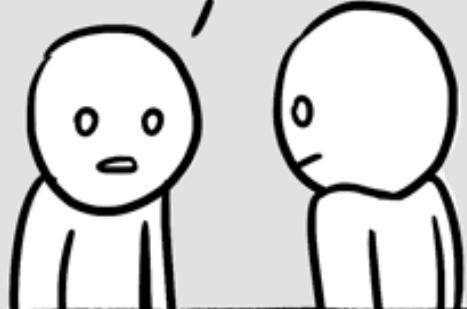
Rachael Livermore

# What is Imposter Syndrome?

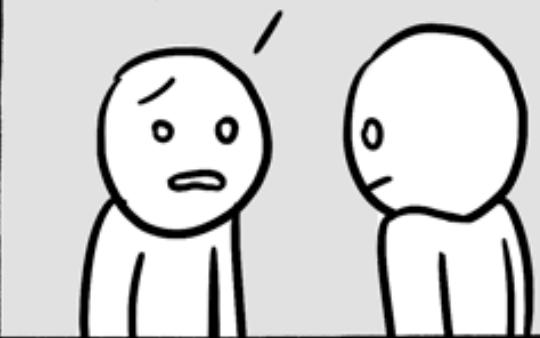
- First described by Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes in 1978

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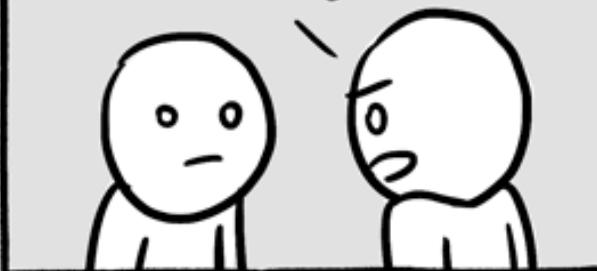
really feeling my  
impostor syndrome  
lately



what if i'm not  
as good as everyone  
says i am?



what are you talk-  
ing about, everyone  
says you're the worst,  
including me



# What is Imposter Syndrome?

- Sufferers of Imposter Syndrome do not internalize their accomplishments
- They remain convinced that they do not deserve their success and are frauds
- Proofs of success are dismissed as luck, timing, or the ability to deceive others
- They constantly fear being “found out” as imposters



# Do you suffer with Imposter Syndrome?

- Do you think your accomplishments are a “fluke” or “no big deal?” Perhaps you’ve only been successful because people “like” you?
- Do you hate making mistakes or being less than fully prepared? (More than is rational)
- Do you worry that others will find out that you’re not as capable as they think you are?
- Is your reaction to success relief?



# Do you suffer with Imposter Syndrome?

- Do you feel crushed by criticism, even when it's constructive?
- Do you believe other people are smarter or more capable than you?
- Do you shy away from challenges (or applications) due to self-doubt?
- Do you live in fear of being unmasked?



# Bingo!



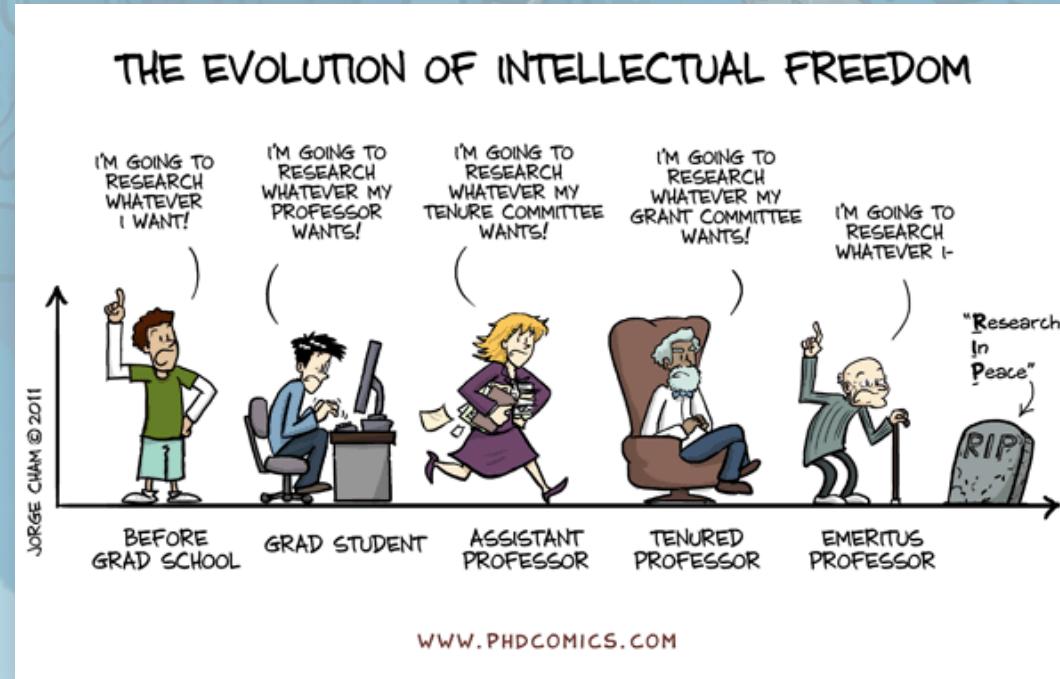
# Join the club...

- Around 70% of academics suffer with imposter syndrome.
- 70%.
- Seventy.
- Percent.



# Why so many?

- Short lifespan of career stages mean we never really feel on top of things



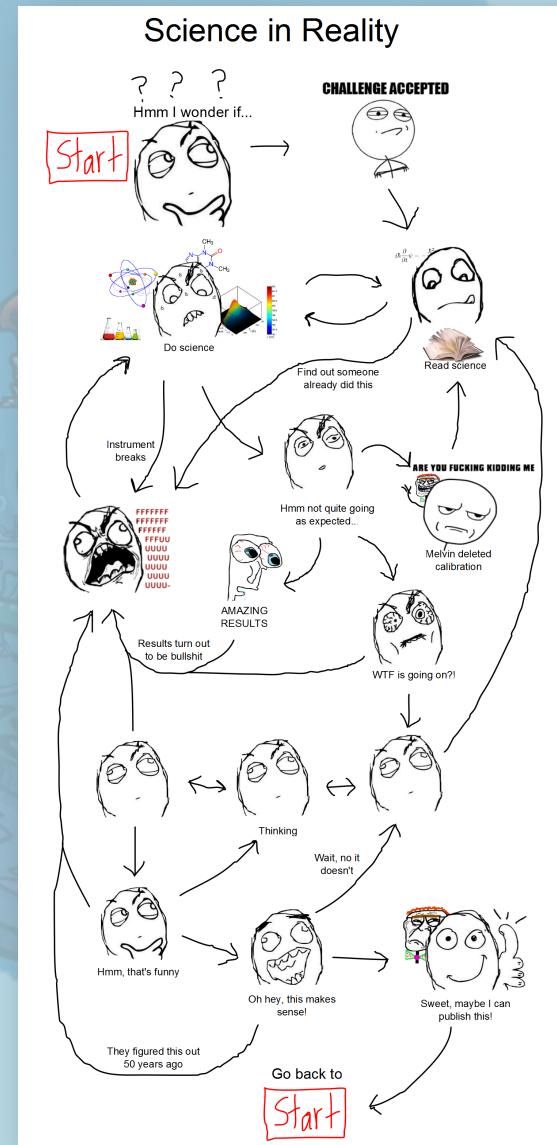
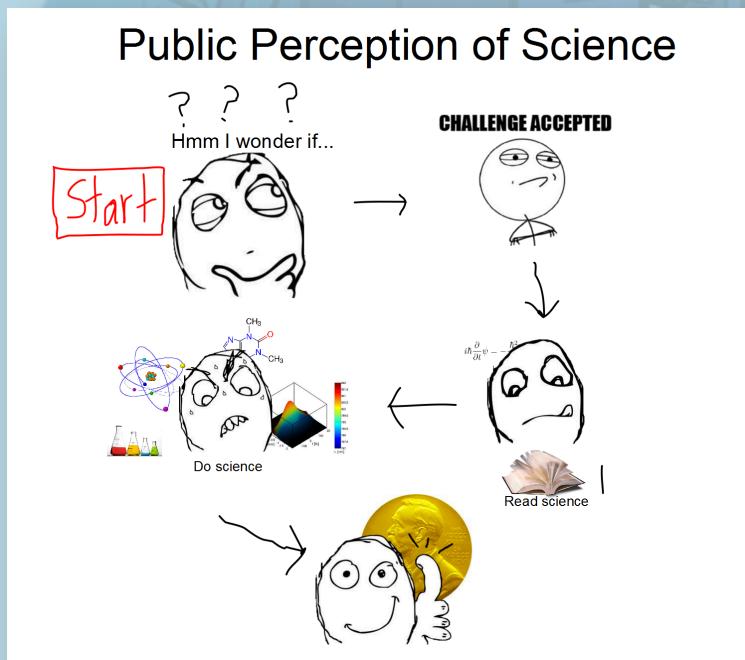
# Why so many?

- Comparing yourself to others is very difficult/fruitless
- The field is competitive and praise is rare.



# Why so many?

- The scientific method doesn't work the way we were taught it should

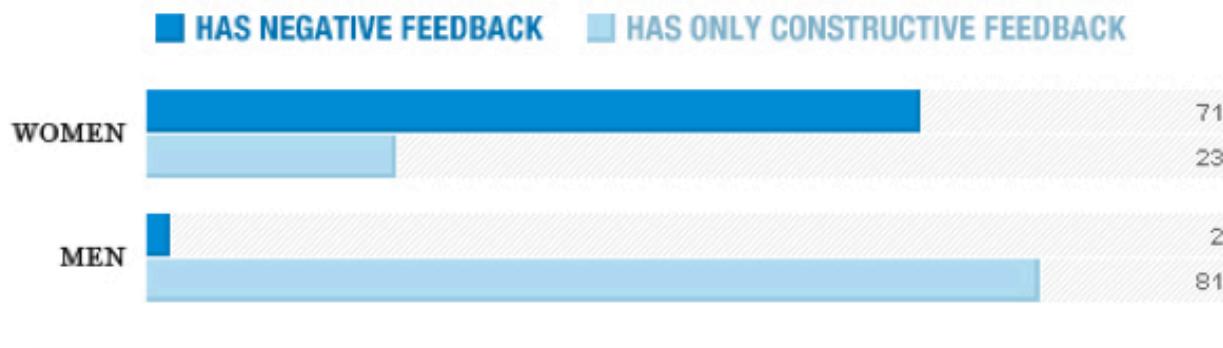


# The Confidence Gap

- Men tend to overestimate their abilities and performance, whereas women underestimate both<sup>[1]</sup>.
- Men apply for jobs when they meet 60% of qualifications; women apply when they meet 100%<sup>[2]</sup>.
- Men initiate salary negotiations 4 times as often as women, and when women do negotiate they ask for 30% less money<sup>[3]</sup>.
- Male business students think they deserve \$80k on average. Female business students think they deserve \$64k<sup>[4]</sup>.

[1] Ehrlinger 2012, [2] HP 2009, [3] Babcock 2010, [4] Davidson 2012

## FEEDBACK RECEIVED IN CRITICAL REVIEWS



## REVIEWS INCLUDING CRITICAL FEEDBACK



**248**

REVIEWS

141 BY MEN / 107 BY WOMEN

**180**

PEOPLE

105 MEN / 75 WOMEN

FROM

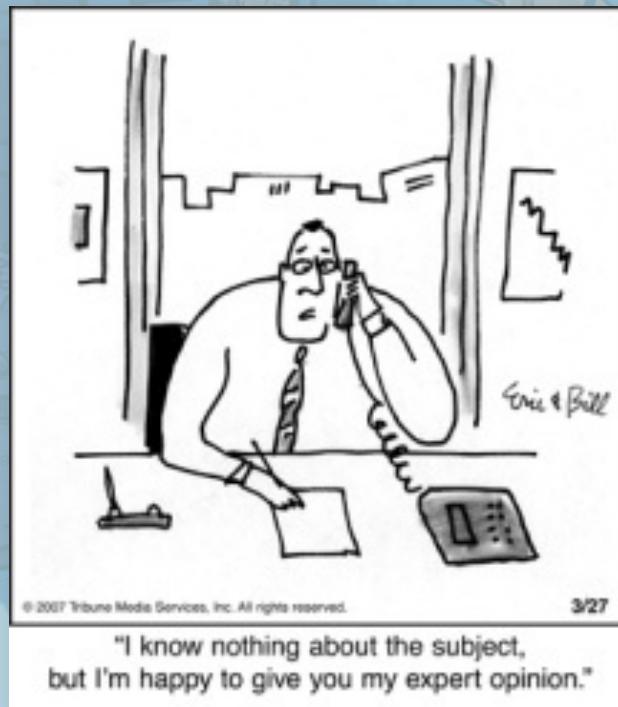
# **...and it's a race issue too...**

- Ethnic minorities are especially susceptible to imposter syndrome, and imposter feelings predict mental health problems more strongly than any other stress related to being a minority<sup>[1]</sup>.

[1] Cokley et al. 2013

# ...but it can affect anyone

- Although initially thought to primarily afflict women, many studies have found that it's prevalent among men too



# At-risk Groups

- People for whom success came quickly
- First generation professionals
- People with high-achieving parents
- People in a minority in their field or workplace
- People who work alone
- Students
- People in jobs that are atypical for their gender
- People in creative fields

# Why this Sucks

- Imposter syndrome can make you less likely to apply for that fellowship or faculty position



# Why this Sucks

- It can make you afraid of trying new things or taking scientific risks



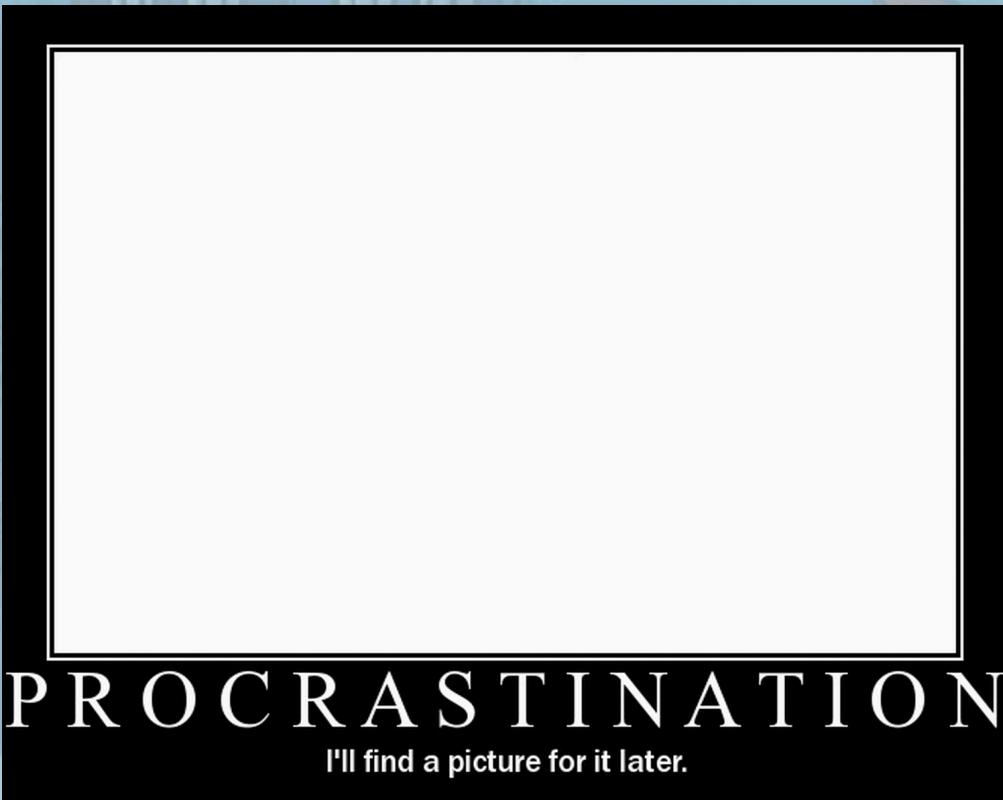
# Why this Sucks

- It can make you wary of offering potentially useful insight or asking valid questions



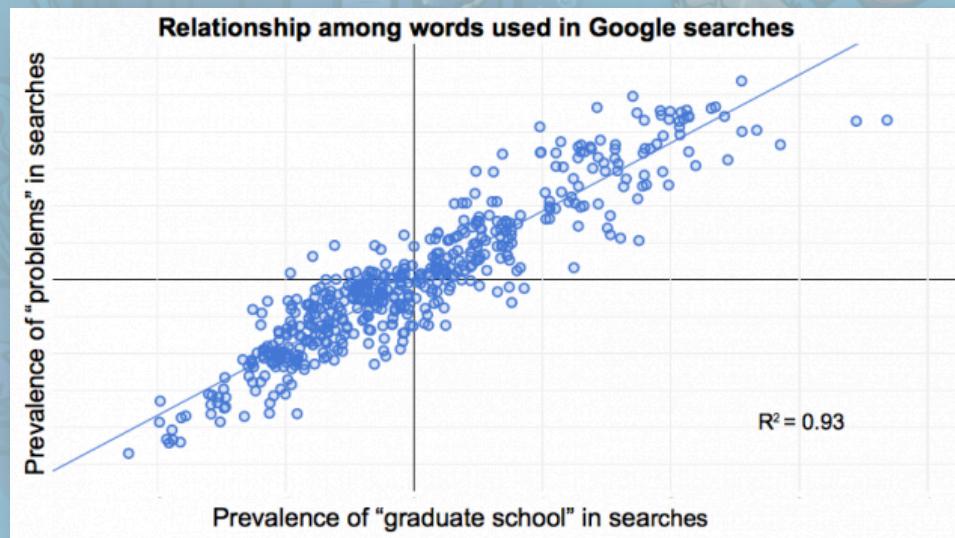
# Why this Sucks

- It can actually affect your work



# Why this Sucks

- Graduate students are especially prone to psychological stress and 44% report mental health issues\*



[insidehighered.com](http://insidehighered.com)

\*Hyun J, Quinn B, Madon T, Lustig S (2007) Mental health need, awareness, and use of counseling services among international graduate students. Journal of American College Health.

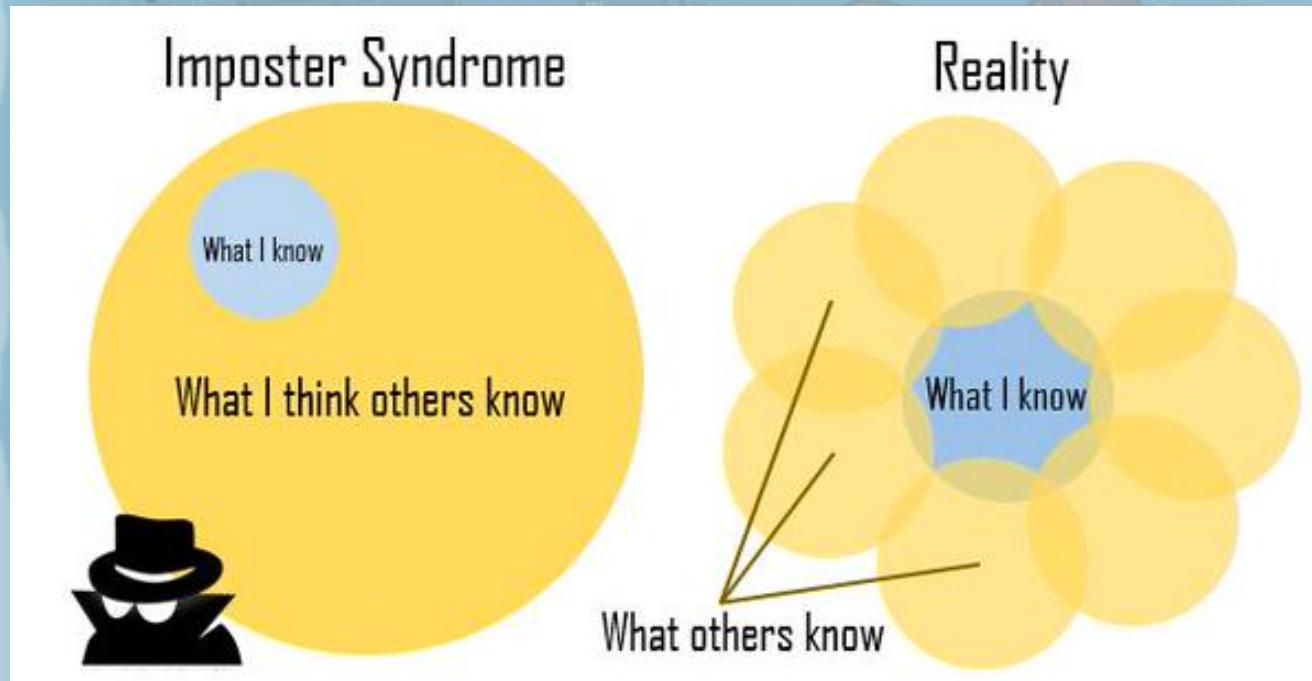
# What can we do about it?

- **Talk about it**



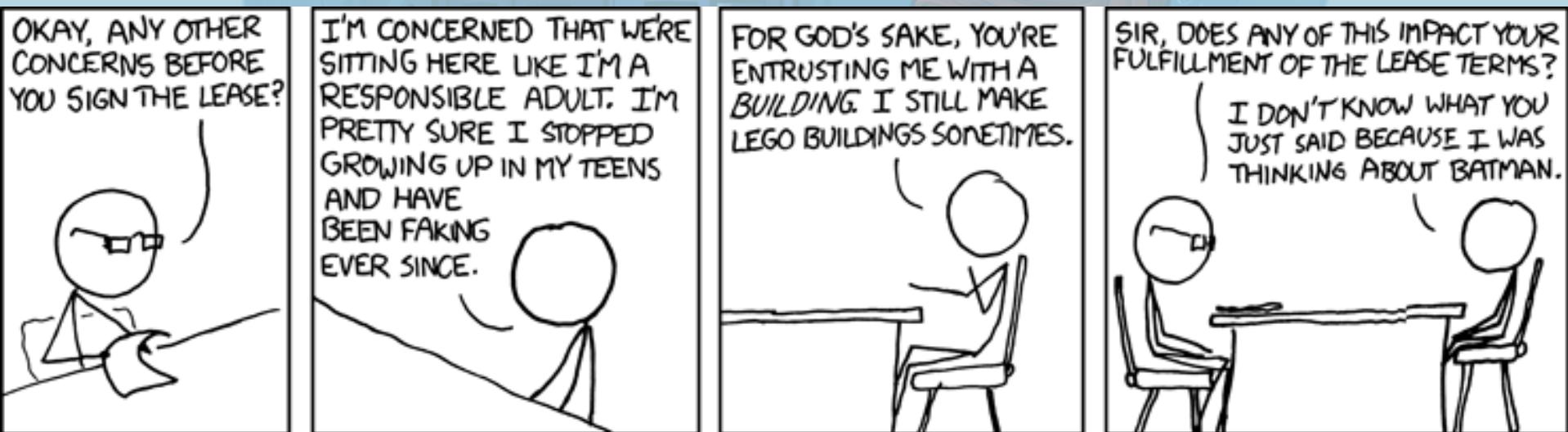
# What can we do about it?

- Intellectualize your feelings (easier said than done...)



# What can we do about it?

- Recognize that self-doubt is normal



xkcd

# What can we do about it?

- Remind yourself of your positive achievements

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# I AM AWESOME

# What can we do about it?

- Change how you think about your weaknesses



# What can we do about it?

- Give equal weight to failures and successes



# What can we do about it?

- Remember that you are allowed a day off

