

UCSB SOCIETY OF WOMEN ENGINEERS
+ DPHS WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY

Imposter Syndrome

[BIT.LY/WIT-IMPOSTER-SYNDROME-NOTES](https://bit.ly/wit-imposter-syndrome-notes)

- WHAT IS IMPOSTER SYNDROME?
- WHY DOES IMPOSTER SYNDROME DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECT WOMEN IN STEM?
- HOW TO RECOGNIZE IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- HOW TO COMBAT IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Today's
Topics

What is imposter syndrome?

Imposter syndrome was first identified in 1978 by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes.

They defined it as a tendency of high-performing women in academic settings to underestimate their own abilities, feel like their successes were due to mistakes or luck, and believe themselves to be "intellectual phonies."

In their study, Clance and Imes interviewed women in academic positions, primarily professors, graduate, and undergraduate students.

Clance and Imes summarize that

"We have been amazed at the self-perpetuating nature of the impostor phenomenon — with the pervasiveness and longevity of the impostor feelings of our high achieving women, with their continual discounting of their own abilities and persistent fear of failure. We have not found repeated successes alone sufficient to break the cycle."

Why does imposter syndrome disproportionately affect womxn in STEM?

Imposter syndrome is a universal feeling. But certain demographics and circumstances make a person more likely to experience imposter syndrome:

DEMOGRAPHICS

- identifying as a womxn
- being a racial or ethnic minority



Being a part of the majority allows you to easily attribute your success to a quality inherent in yourself. But since gender and racial minorities are unable to do so, they project these causes outward to external causes: luck or mistakes.

CIRCUMSTANCES

- studying a STEM field
- being deeply involved in academia



Since the intellectual bar is set higher in these circumstances, it is easier to put yourself down by comparison.

How to recognize imposter syndrome

Some common sentiments by those with imposter syndrome.

I MUST NOT FAIL.

Failing is not seen as an opportunity to learn; rather, the consequences are seen as being found out as a fraud.

I FEEL LIKE A FAKE.

Those with imposter syndrome feel they have given an exterior impression of competence that is actually unfounded.

IT'S ALL DOWN TO LUCK.

Success is often attributed to chance, rather than personal ability or effort.

SUCCESS IS NO BIG DEAL.

Downplaying personal successes is common, and is often attributed to the help of others or the quality of being "advantaged."

How to combat imposter syndrome

- Recognize it! Be conscious of your tendencies. ✓

- Join a minority group or organization. ✓

- Celebrate your own successes.

- Keep an open perspective on where you are on your academic and professional path.