

# Imposter Syndrome

*“It’s only a matter of time until I’m called out. I’m just a fraud.”*


*“It’s a fluke that I got this job interview.”*

*“I have been preparing for weeks, but I still don’t know anything.”*

Ever had any feelings of failure and pretending? Don’t worry. You are not alone.

An estimated 70% of us are likely to experience at some point or another these feelings of inadequacy and fakeness; the feeling like you’re just on the verge of being exposed for what you really are — an impostor, a fraud. It’s a battle that most of us are often fighting internally, but very few have the courage to talk about it. Because of course, if we do, we will be discovered and the mask will come off. This internal battle has a name, Imposter Syndrome.

If you end up with these feelings just before or during an interview, it can BLOW UP everything that you had been working for. This is why I decided to talk about this with you. I do not want you to give up at the very last moment. I do not want you to stop asking questions for the fear of being “discovered”, I do not want you to shut your mouth and stay away from speaking up because there is a voice in your head saying that you do not belong here. I want you to understand where that voice is coming from and how you can deal with it. Because let me tell you one thing: you are NOT an imposter.



I have written 11 books but each time I think ‘Uh-oh, they’re going to find out now. I’ve run a game on everybody, and they’re going to find me out.’

—Maya Angelou

Every time I was called on in class, I was sure that I was about to embarrass myself. Every time I took a test, I was sure that it had gone badly. And every time I didn't embarrass myself — or even excelled — I believed that I had fooled everyone yet again. One day soon, the jig would be up ... This phenomenon of capable people being plagued by self-doubt has a name — the impostor syndrome. Both men and women are susceptible to the impostor syndrome, but women tend to experience it more intensely and be more limited by it.

—Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In*

I am not a writer. I've been fooling myself and other people.

—John Steinbeck

Ultra-successful people are also plagued with these doubts and feelings. Almost no one is totally immune to the awful Imposter Syndrome. But what is really behind it?

### **Where are these feelings coming from?**

We live with cognitive-biases about knowledge and learning. We have this notion in our heads of the things that we SHOULD know. We should know all the algorithms, we should be pros at all the latest tools and technologies, we should be proficient in this and that.

Fields like Data Science are so vast that you can't possibly know everything. Also, the more you learn, the more things you will find to learn further. The knowledge gap will seem to widen more and more. And this can result in making you feel like crap; like someone who isn't just able to keep up with everything they must learn.

There is another huge factor behind it, our urge to compare ourselves with others. We feel as if all the people around us have way more knowledge than we do, they are way better than us, they belong here while we just got the ticket by pure luck. Sounds like a devastating state of mind to be in? Well, it is.

Luckily, like most syndromes, there are cures for Imposter Syndrome as well.

## Steps you can take to deal with Imposter Syndrome

Once we have identified the symptoms and diagnosed ourselves as “Imposter Syndrome Positive”, one of the first steps is to **ACKNOWLEDGE** the thoughts and put them in perspective. Observe them silently and ask yourself, ‘Does that thought help or hinder me?’ Then redirect your **FOCUS**.

Imposter Syndrome makes you focus on all the things you do not know, especially before an interview. When you detect the red alarm, redirect your focus from the limitless possibilities of things you do not know to all the things you do know, and are good at. It’s not the kind of thoughts you want before an interview. Remind yourself that you have your own positive strengths, and you do not need to compare yourself with Tom and Harry. Tom and Harry might be great at skills “x,y,z” but you might be awesome at “a,b,c” — we all have our own unique strengths and weaknesses.

It’s good to remember that people who don’t feel like impostors are no more intelligent or competent or capable than the rest of us.

**We all have knowledge-gaps, we cannot possibly learn EVERYTHING and answer ALL the interview questions perfectly.** Let’s not let ourselves be deceived by these feelings.

A big warning here: I’m NOT telling you to adopt an attitude of arrogance. Far from it! We all have a lot to learn, and this is where the beauty of **Continuous Learning and Growth Mindset** come into play. ***Keep learning, stay humble, and BELIEVE in yourself.***