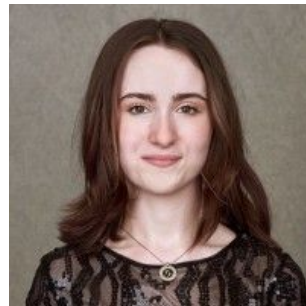


Imposter Syndrome: What it is and How to Deal with it

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RPI Physics Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce



Not pictured: Deric Jones

What is Imposter Syndrome?

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Imposter Syndrome is described by the American Psychological Association as “the persistent inability to believe that one's success is deserved or has been legitimately achieved as a result of one's own efforts or skills”.

Imposter syndrome can be experienced once, off and on, or for an extended period of time.



Signs of Imposter Syndrome

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**Afraid of being
outed as a fraud**

**Feeling unworthy
of success**

**Distrusting of
others**

**Dismissing
positive feedback**

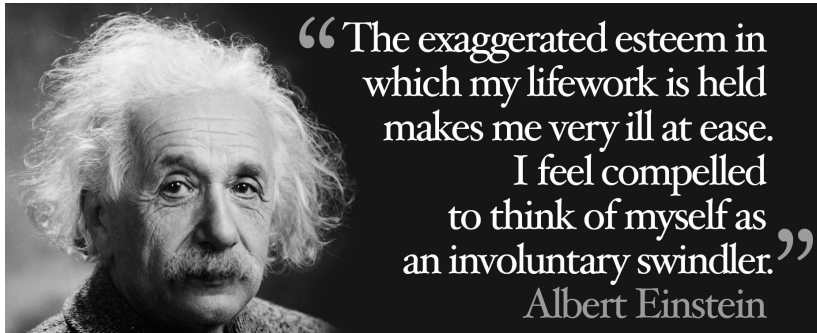
**Blaming
accomplishments
on luck**

Over-preparing

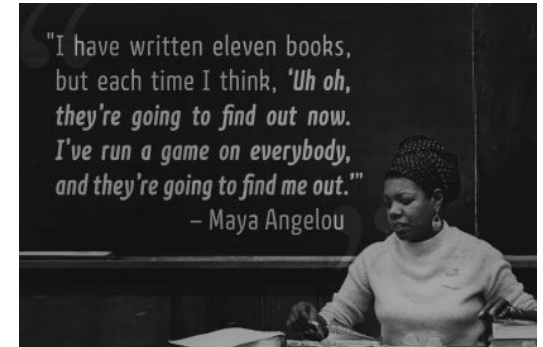


Who does Imposter Syndrome Affect?

- Psychologists estimate that ~70% of the population experience imposter syndrome at some point in their lifetime
- Statistics increase to ~82% when exclusively looking at high achievers
- Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are at higher risk due to lack of representation and the need to overcome bias



<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/research/scholarly-messenger/2016/May/rcr-imposter-syndrome.php>



<https://grad.berkeley.edu/news/announcements/workshop-imposter-syndrome/>

Environmental Factors that Promote Imposter Syndrome

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- Transitional periods such as starting at a new school or job
- Competitive cultures
- Family life and background
- Microaggressions
- Lack of representation
- Biases

The Five Types of “Imposters”

Type	Description	Resulting Issues
The Expert	Will not feel satisfaction until they know everything about a topic. Fears being seen as inexperienced.	Spends too much time becoming an “expert” and is unable to complete the task at hand in a timely manner
The Perfectionist	Sets unattainable goals and thinks that even successes are not good enough.	Increased feelings of anxiety and depression
The Natural	Typically masters skills quickly and feels ashamed when a solution cannot be discovered on the first try	Will often get frustrated and give up on difficult tasks
The Soloist	Prefers working alone as they view asking for help as a sign of weakness.	Can lead to feelings of isolation and can decrease overall quality of work
The Superhero	The “workaholic” who gains validation from doing work and not the work itself	Often leads to burnout and no sense of satisfaction

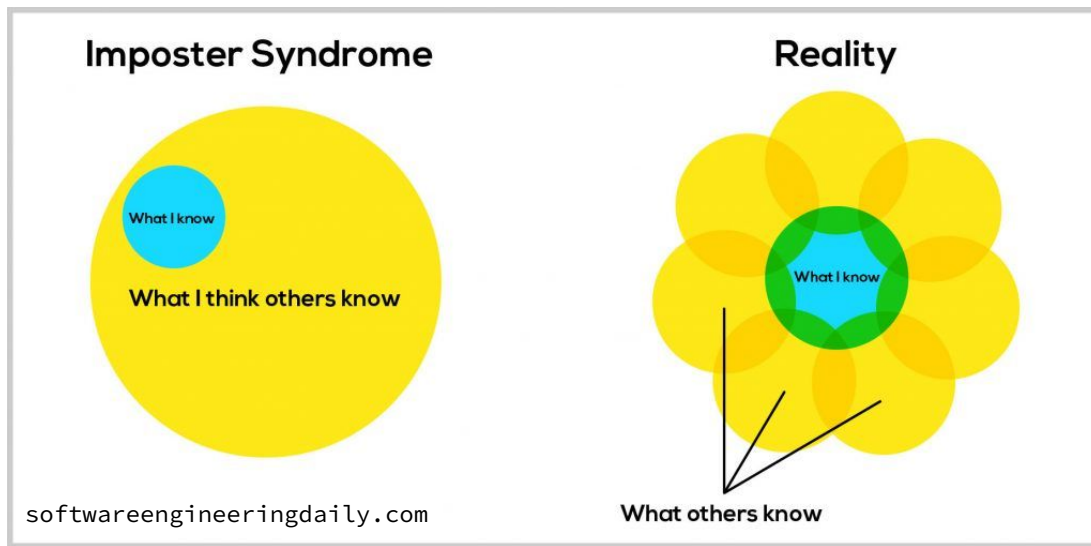
Ways to Improve the Culture and Reduce Occurrences of Imposter Syndrome

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- Focus on developing a more inclusive community
- Create a culture that is collaborative rather than competitive
- Become self-aware of biases and work to rid yourself of them
 - <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- Increase representation

Coping Mechanisms - It's All About Perspective

- Make a list of your accomplishments
- Remember that everyone has different strengths
- Talk to people about how you're feeling and realize you're not the only one feeling this way
- Stop comparing yourself to people at different levels in their career
- Set SMART goals
- Look at failures as learning experiences





<https://plannersweb.com/2013/02/what-does-a-discussion-look-like/>

Discussion Time:
All are welcome to participate
and share experiences,
questions, and insight.

Sources

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- Young, Valerie. *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It*
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- Bravata, Dena M et al. "Prevalence, Predictors, and Treatment of Impostor Syndrome: a Systematic Review." *Journal of general internal medicine* vol. 35,4 (2020): 1252-1275. doi:10.1007/s11606-019-05364-1
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