Imposter Syndrome
What is it?
How to fight it ?

Improve your Career, Confidence and Wellbeing

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Goals and Agenda

What is the Impostor Syndrome?

Why is it problematic?

Why does it happen?

What does it look like in Female Physician Population?

What can you do about it?

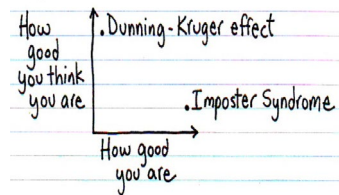Where can you find additional resources?

Is This You?

I attribute my success to luck or timing, rather than my own skills and talents.

I worry that others will find out that I'm not as competent or capable as they think I am.

I've unknowingly deceived people into thinking I'm good enough for this job.

I feel undeserving of my success.

At any moment I will be exposed as a fraud.

Definition

Feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy and incompetence despite contradictory evidence.

Most common among high achieving people.

Commonly occurs at transition points.

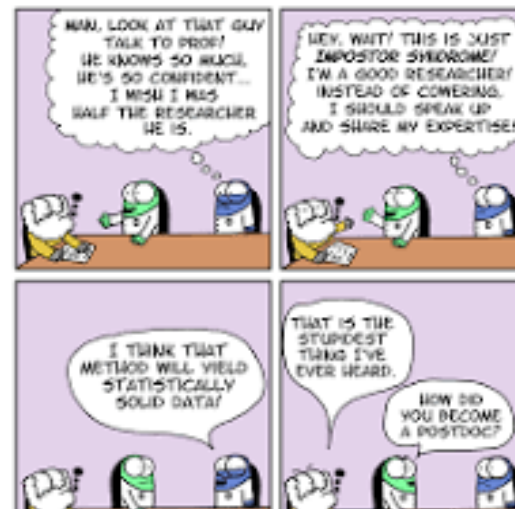Affects both genders (F>M)

Typical Scenario's
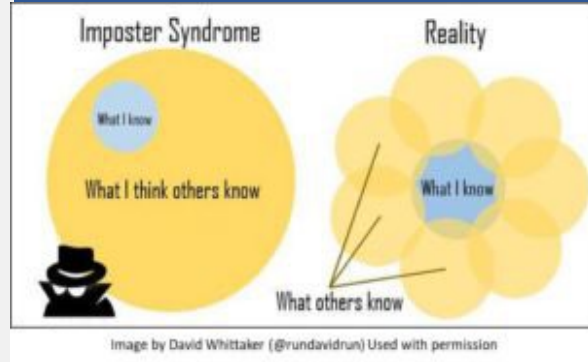
What Does It Look Like?

A vicious cycle of anxiety and short-term relief

Fear of failure

A strong need to be the best

Unwillingness to internalize positive feedback

Fear of success

Constant feeling that you are not good enough

Constant Negative self talk

Why Does It Matter?

Stress

Physical & Emotional Effects
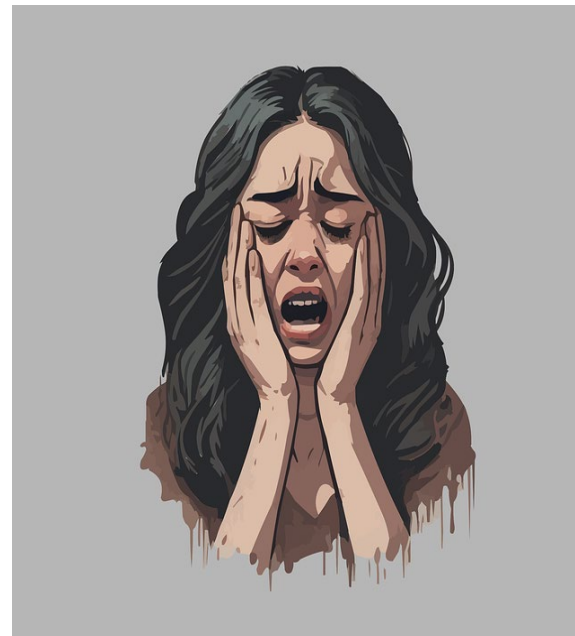
Relationship Issues

Lack of personal & professional satisfaction

Unreached potential

How does this happen?

Early family influences

- Messages about success and failure
- Myths and labels

First in your family

Decision to pursue an alternative path

Pressure to represent your group

- Limited diversity

Unsupportive organizational cultures

- Competition, hostility

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Imposter Syndrome among Female Physicians

Impostor syndrome has been well documented in the health care profession. Approximately 30% of medical students and residents identify as impostors, with higher rates among women and international medical graduates. Impostor syndrome tends to rear its head at the beginning of new jobs, new projects, new careers.

Even experienced physicians are not immune and might struggle despite receiving positive feedback from peers and patients. As teachers and mentors, it is important to identify and support learners most at risk of burnout, before their academic and professional performance is affected. As impostor syndrome can be thought of as a risk factor for burnout and psychological distress

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Official Publication of
The College of
Family Physicians of Canada

Doctor who?

Reflecting on impostor syndrome in medical learners

Charissa Chen, MD CCFP

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Imposter Syndrome among Female Physicians

Prevalence Rates: Several studies have indicated that imposter syndrome is common among female physicians. For example, a study published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine found that 86% of female medical students and residents experienced imposter feelings at least occasionally.

Another study in the Journal of Women's Health reported that 66% of female physicians experienced imposter syndrome symptoms.

Impact on Career Satisfaction and Advancement: Research has shown that imposter syndrome negatively affects female physicians' career satisfaction, confidence, and advancement. A study published in Academic Medicine found that imposter feelings were associated with lower career satisfaction and higher burnout among female medical faculty. Additionally, imposter syndrome has been linked to reluctance to pursue leadership roles and opportunities for career advancement.

Imposter Syndrome among Female Physicians

Contributing Factors: Various factors contribute to imposter syndrome among female physicians, including gender bias, stereotype threat, work-life balance challenges, and societal expectations. Research suggests that female physicians may experience heightened pressure to prove themselves in male-dominated specialties or leadership positions, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.

Intersectionality: Intersectional factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, intersect with gender to shape the experience of imposter syndrome among female physicians. Studies have highlighted disparities in imposter syndrome prevalence and experiences based on intersectional identities, underscoring the importance of addressing multiple dimensions of diversity and inclusion in healthcare settings.

Protective Factors and Coping Strategies: While imposter syndrome poses significant challenges, research has identified protective factors and coping strategies that can help mitigate its impact. Supportive mentorship, peer networks, self-reflection, and cognitive-behavioral interventions have been shown to promote resilience and self-efficacy among female physicians facing imposter feelings.

Measuring IS

The **Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)** is a validated questionnaire designed to assess the presence of **Impostor Phenomenon (IP)** characteristics and the extent to which an individual experiences feelings of being an impostor despite real achievements. The CIPS consists of **20 statements**, and respondents rate each statement based on how true it is for them.

If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person's life.

The 4 P's (Pillars) of Imposter Syndrome

Perfectionism

Paralysis

People-pleasing

Procrastination.

Source: Clara Josa
Research & Training Director | Soultuitive® Leadership

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What Can You Do?

- Acknowledge the presence of the Impostor Syndrome
- Share your feelings with others
- Understand the roots of your feelings
- Own your success
- Accept external validation
- Leverage your resources
- Evaluate your environment

Action

Plan

Self Help Technique's-Address Perfectionism

The impact of language..

- Should…
- Must…
- Have to…
- Will…

- Would be good if…
- Would like to…
- Have the opportunity to…
- Will try…

Self Help Technique- Address People Pleasing
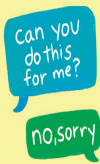

How to Quit People-Pleasing

Set clear boundaries

Help when you want to do so

Think before committing

Practice positive self-talk

Start small

1.Set healthy boundaries. Decide what you are and aren't willing to do. ...
2.Prioritize your needs. ...
3.Say no when necessary. ...
4.Practice self-compassion. ...
5.Start with small changes. ...
6.Avoid over-apologizing. ...
7.Embrace discomfort. ...
8.Seek support.

Self Help Technique- Address Procrastination

■ Procrastinators chronically avoid difficult tasks and deliberately look for distractions

■ It is psychologically more acceptable to never tackle a task than to face the possibility of falling short on performance

■ Sometimes, perfect is the enemy of the good.

Self Help Technique- Address Procrastination

1. Reduce the Number of Decisions You Need to Make Throughout the Day. Every decision we make has an energy consequence. ...

2. Finish Your Day Before It Starts. ...

3. The Nothing Alternative. ...

4. The Next Action Habit—focus on something doable. ...

5. Adjust Your Environment

Self Help Technique's   Address Paralysis

Acknowledge you are experiencing this feeling of being paralyzed in your actions and thoughts. Recognize you aren't able to move forward or act. Don't dismiss this feeling.

Ask yourself, what is the task or situation you are currently experiencing this paralyzed feeling in? It may seem like a given, but in the beginning, with your thoughts swirling, you may not be able to clearly recognize why this is occurring or where this paralysis stems from.

Reflect on the skills, knowledge, abilities, and resources you have for this project. Think about what you can do and do well. Do not compare to anyone else, and do not discount any knowledge, or ability. Write down everything that is related to this project that you know you can do.

Remember similar tasks, projects, or situations of your past, and your successful outcomes. Do not downplay any aspect, such as "Yes, but they could have been better", or "But I just got lucky." This will strengthen your imposter thoughts and paralysis. Focus only on your achievements and success and link your skills and abilities to them.

Determine your next 3 steps to start moving forward. Write them down, so you can see and acknowledge what those next steps will be. Once you get to the third, then write the next 3 steps. Keeping yourself to a few steps will reduce the fear and help you see with clarity what is manageable in this project.

Be good at doing it how you want to. If it doesn't work, adjust. There is no one way for each project, and you will develop what works best for you. Don't worry or care what others are doing. Just focus on what you are doing.

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Practice Reaffirmation

- Make lists of your achievements, and things in your life that you are proud of.

- Acknowledge your personal strengths and talents and remind yourself of them often.

- Set realistic goals for yourself.

- Practice positive self-talk.

Reaffirm your Self Worth

- Write an affirmation statement
- Ask for evidence of your achievement and ability
    - Write it down
    - Practice accepting it
- When people give you positive feedback, just say 'thank you'

Imposter Syndrome among Learners

• Anticipate impostor syndrome among learners and help by normalizing these feelings and providing reassurance that learners are not alone in their experiences.

• Encourage self-reflection and include impostor syndrome in wellness curricula through peer support groups or planned reflective opportunities during teaching. Formal screening with the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale could be considered during formal medical education evaluation.

• Optimize feedback to learners with immediate and specific evaluation.

Lot Remains to be done....

Research on imposter syndrome in physicians especially female physicians underscores the importance of addressing systemic barriers, promoting gender equity, and fostering supportive environments that validate and empower female healthcare professionals.

By raising awareness, providing resources, and implementing interventions, healthcare organizations can create inclusive cultures where all physicians can thrive and fulfill their potential.

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Scholarly articles

Salana K, Maty S, Hage R. Alive and Well: Encouraging Long Term Health Habits Through Implementation of Student Driven Wellness Programs in Medical Schools. Glob Adv

Health Med. 2020 Nov 18;9:2164956120973622. doi: 10.1177/2164956120973622. PMID: 33282544; PMCID: PMC7683844.Rivera N, Feldman EA, Augustin DA, Caceres W, Gans

HA, Blankenburg R.

Do I Belong Here? Confronting Imposter Syndrome at an Individual, Peer, and Institutional Level in Health Professionals. MedEdPORTAL. 2021 Jul 6;17:11166. doi:

10.15766/mep_2374-8265.11166. PMID: 34277932; PMCID: PMC8257750.Shill-Russell C, Russell RC, Daines B, Clement G, Carlson J, Zapata I, Henderson M.

Imposter Syndrome Relation to Gender Across Osteopathic Medical Schools. Med Sci Educ. 2022 Jan 9;32(1):157-163. doi: 10.1007/s40670-021-01489-3. PMID: 35186436;

PMCID: PMC8814230.Chrousos GP, Mentis AA, Dardiotis E.

Focusing on the Neuro-Psycho-Biological and Evolutionary Underpinnings of the Imposter Syndrome. Front Psychol. 2020 Jul 20;11:1553. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01553. PMID:

32848987; PMCID: PMC7396514.

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Recommended Reading
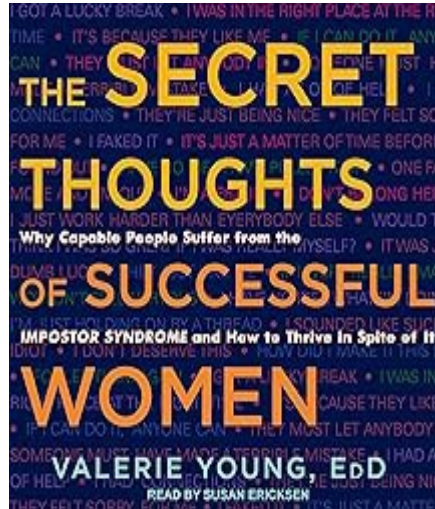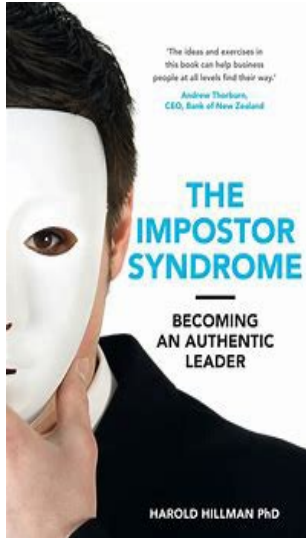
Other Resources

IPTestandscoring.pdf

Mike Cannon-Brookes: How you can use impostor syndrome to your benefit | TED Talk

Casey Brown: Know your worth, and then ask for it | TED Talk

Email Panditad@hs.uci.edu
X- @MdDeepti

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