

DEALING WITH IMPOSTER SYNDROME



'Imposter Syndrome is when someone feels like they are "undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are, in fact, generally held. They feel that they aren't as competent or intelligent as others might think—and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them." - *Psychology Today*.

As we receive exam and assessment results, this growing pressure can also bring with it feelings of perfectionism, and with that, imposter syndrome. Despite putting in the work and getting rewarded because of it, you may still feel like you are not measuring up to your peers. Imposter syndrome can affect everyone and anyone, but can disproportionately impact people from minority groups.

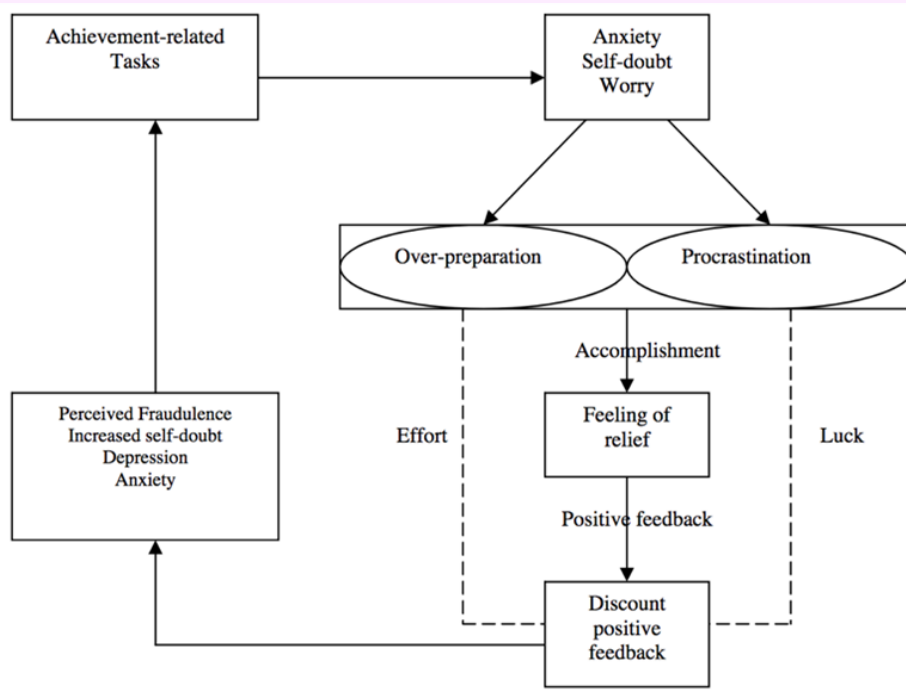
These added factors can make you more likely to experience imposter syndrome: being underrepresented on your course, being part of an access programme, being a first-generation university student and even perhaps pervasive stereotypes about particular communities can also stand in as a model of comparison, further encouraging self-doubt. This can all lead to one feeling like one is either a token (a ticked box) or an exception.

Imposter syndrome can make you feel detached from your own achievements. One can experience self-doubt, second-guessing decisions, attributing all achievements to sheer luck and ignoring other people's praise. (Feeling like you have fooled them into believing this).

The good thing about imposter syndrome is that it is not uncommon. Talking about it is a good place to start. If we create a dialogue surrounding imposter syndrome, you'll realise that you are not the only one that feels that way. Therefore by logical conclusion, the world can't be full of people pretending. Want proof that you're not alone? Check out this video where [women of colour share their experiences with imposter syndrome](#). Just in knowing that many people experience the same things, can ease feelings of self-doubt.



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Clance's (1985) model of the Imposter Cycle, as shown in Sakulku & Alexander (2011).

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When we rationalise what we are feeling, it can help us to understand and then move past toxic thinking. One way that can help you rationalise your feelings of being an imposter, is taking a look at this diagram that depicts the model of the 'Imposter Cycle'. In understanding the thought patterns that occur, it can be easier to break the cycle. [Watch this video](#) to further understand the psychology behind imposter syndrome, and what you can do to combat it.

Some other ways that you can rationalise your feelings:

Write a list. Jot down the actions you take as well as your achievements. This can act as a reminder of your progress for when you begin to doubt it. So the next time you think your success is down to luck, you'll have a list of reasons that prove otherwise.

Make a bank of positive feedback. Of course, you're going to take on any constructive criticism as it can help us improve. However, it is easy to quickly dismiss positive feedback. It's important to allow yourself to take ownership and take pride in your achievements.

Avoid comparing yourself to others. The feeling of being an Imposter is fueled by the feeling of not measuring up to those around you. When you re-frame the way you value yourself, it can help boost self-confidence.

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Maybe you're reading this and thinking, "I'm not in the mood and don't have time to decipher Clance's model of the Imposter Cycle or write a list." If so, that's okay, it's more important that you are taking pressure off of yourself and not adding more. Maybe, instead, you could take a quick look at this video of [Michelle Obama talking about imposter syndrome](#) for some uplifting self-motivation.