

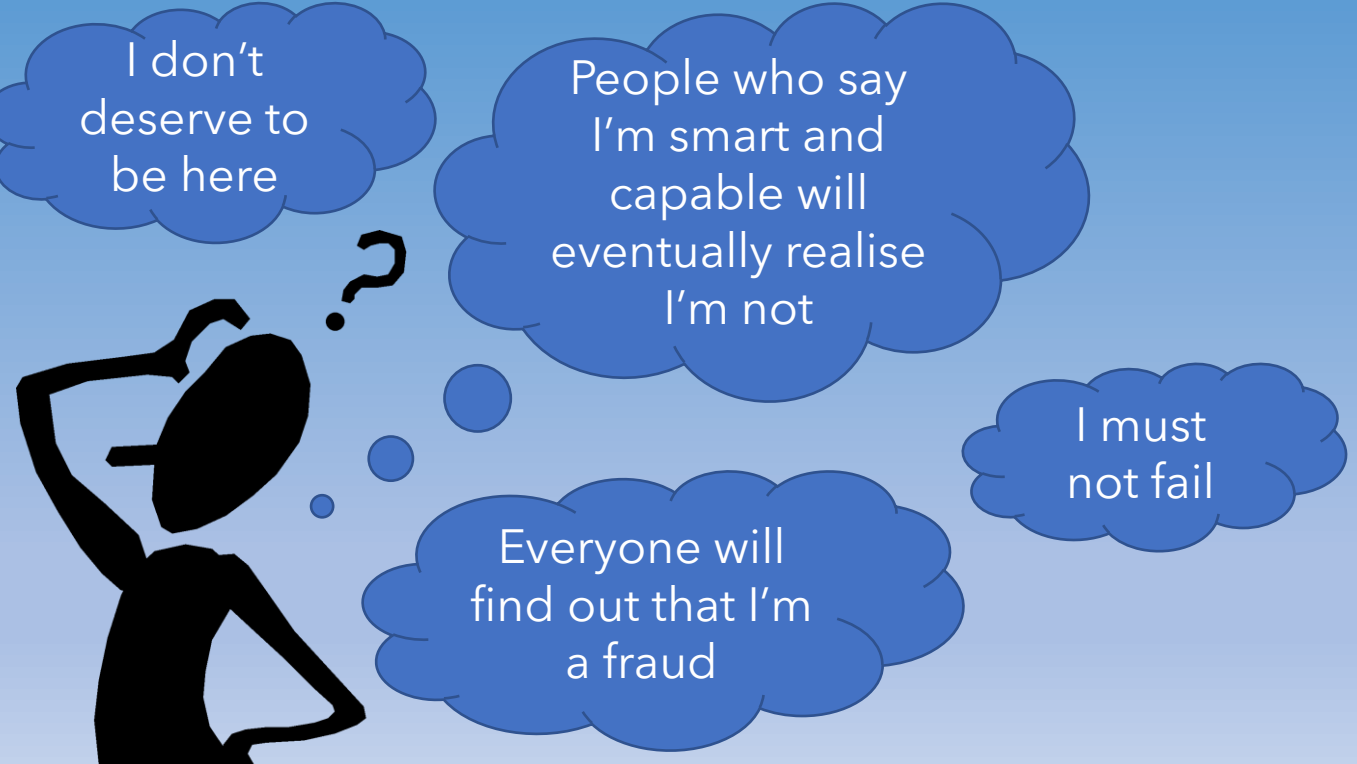


Impostor Phenomenon



What is Impostor Phenomenon (IP)?

- **Impostor Phenomenon** (aka **Impostor Syndrome**) is when someone feels they does not belong somewhere despite having met the criteria saying that they do on paper. People experiencing this phenomenon live in continual fear of being caught as a fraud which often coincides with anxiety and depression.



I don't
deserve to
be here

People who say
I'm smart and
capable will
eventually realise
I'm not

Everyone will
find out that I'm
a fraud

I must
not fail

COMMON BEHAVIOURS

- Not participating in group discussions
- Turning away support from others, because they think they need to solve their problems on their own.
- Overworking in a short amount of time.
 - Procrastination
 - Perfectionism

(Bravata et al., 2020; McAllum, 2016; Parkman, 2016)

Why is understanding IP important?

- Although IP is a universal experience that is very common amongst students and young professionals starting a new course or job (or even A Levels), if left to run wild it can be detrimental to one's psychological wellbeing.

Can be experienced if already suffering from anxiety disorder or depression.

Lack of self-confidence

Self-sabotaging behaviour (e.g. procrastinating to the last min).

Increased risk of developing anxiety or depression

Low self-esteem

Negative general self-concept

How IP Impacts Black-Heritage Pupils

- As much as the world is changing and being made more aware of institutionalised racism, there is still a very long way from overcoming it completely.

Higher levels of IP were reported amongst students in ethnic-minority groups (Bravata et al., 2020).

IP is particularly salient in black-heritage students attending predominantly white universities whilst using high-effort coping mechanisms. (Bernard et al., 2020)

- Black-heritage students have an added difficulty dealing with racism, discrimination, feelings of isolation and alienation on top of the normal challenges of adjusting to university/work life. Certain racial aspects can increase the feelings of self-doubt that come with IP.

The thoughts of others and what happens at an institutional level cannot be controlled, but being aware of one's own strength and abilities can be. With Insight Education can give the support, strength and self-confidence needed to help minimise the effect IP can have on one's wellbeing.

Elements That Increase Effects of IP in Black Heritage Students

- Stone et al. (2018) interviewed 12 black graduate students and found 5 themes that indicated increased feelings of self doubt.

Awareness of Low Racial Representation

Questioning Intelligence:

Very prevalent if there is a feeling of being the only black student on a course or a question of others doubting their intelligence. There could also be feelings of self-doubt whereby one might think one has been accepted on account of one's race and not by one's merit or ability.

Expectations: Might have an internal expectation to act as a role model or "perfect student" to give back to the community or to disprove false negative stereotypes. Can lead to difficulties in trusting positive feedback from white faculty members as there is a belief that the praise is ingenuine or based on exceeding low expectations.

Psychosocial Costs:

Specifically occurs when attending a predominantly white university, reflecting a continual struggle of feeling like they don't belong at that university and perhaps feeling isolated and disconnected from their peers. It can also be mentally exhausting to deal with those thoughts along with a need to prove themselves in the face of negative stereotypes.

Explaining Success Externally

Coping Mechanisms

One of the key features of impostor phenomenon is the feeling of self-doubt, and the difficulty believing in your own capabilities. To the right, there are some ways you can overcome this so your imposter thoughts become nothing but a whisper.

You are not alone

- As mentioned before, impostor phenomenon is a natural thing to experience when starting something completely new.
- Don't be afraid to talk about these feelings to your peers and advisors.

Identify your Imposter Thoughts

- It is easy mistake your imposter thoughts as facts.
- Take the time to write down any thoughts or worries you have and then go over them and identify which ones are real and which ones could be a part of the impostor phenomenon.
- Create your own imposter monster you can send your thoughts to and a radical hero to combat them (inspired by Lou Solomon Ted Talk)
- You can do this on your own or with your mentor.

Establish a positive racial identity.

- An increased positive racial identity can lower levels of impostor phenomenon.
- Join societies that support the black-heritage community that will help you feel less alone dealing with certain racial pressures.

Write down your accomplishments and wear them as a mark of pride

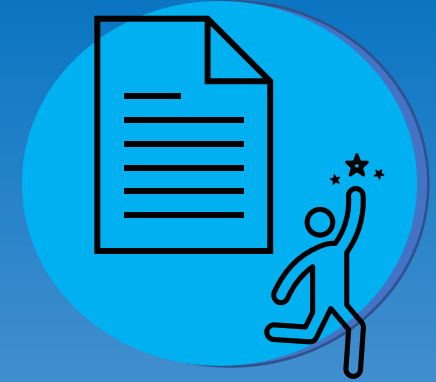
- When struggling with impostor phenomenon, it is easy to diminish the accomplishments you have made so far.
- Grab a notebook and dedicate it to writing all of your achievements and accomplishments (grades, certificates, social etc.).
- Look at worksheet provided for inspiration.

Other Resources



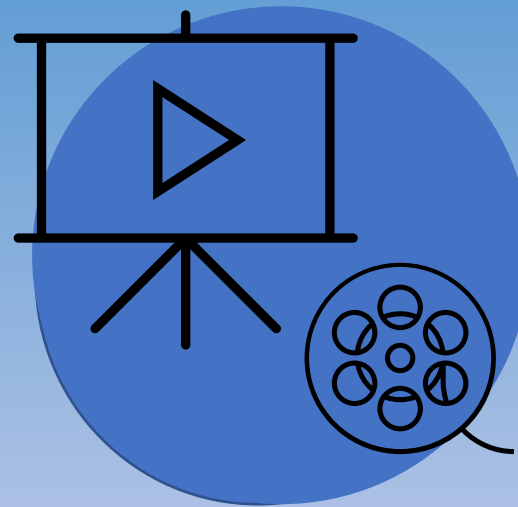
Imposter Monster Worksheet

To help identify your thoughts.



Accomplishment Acknowledgement Worksheet

To help internalise all of the achievements you have made so far.



Video Playlist

To find out more about IP including how other people experiencing IP overcame it.

Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)

- The term “Impostor Phenomenon” was first coined by Clance and Imes (1978) and there has been an extensive amount research looking into the effects of IP.
- If you are interested to know if you are experiencing IP or want to find out more about Dr Clance’s research then you can do so by going onto their website
- http://paulineroseclance.com/impostor_phenomenon.html
- You can also have a go at filling out a CIPS form that can help you understand these thoughts more!

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