Learn Braver, Stronger, Smarter

Recognising and overcoming the Impostor Phenomenon

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So, you secretly feel like you shouldn’t be here...
The impostor phenomenon:
An intense feeling of intellectual phoniness, despite successes.

(Clance, 1985)
“I got lucky”
“They were just being kind”
“They’ve made a mistake”
“I’m just doing my job”
“Anyone could have…”
“Oh, it was nothing!”
The Impostor Cycle
• Invitation
• Acceptance
• Work
• Completion
• Feedback

Adapted from Clance (1985)
Where does it come from?
Social Learning
(Bandura, 1977)
Sensemaking: Making sense of the world and our place in it  (Weick, 1995)
Implicit learning
Unconscious bias
Stereotyping
Behaviour
Impacts on career decision making

(Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994)
4%
12%
25%
9%
45%
80%
217 years
Plausibility eats accuracy for breakfast
“...stories are a parasitical life form, warping lives in the service only of the story itself.

It takes a special kind of person to fight back...”

(Pratchett, Lords and Ladies: 9)
What stories have you created?
Individually?
In the workplace?
As a community?
“...I think of how far I could have gone if I hadn’t had all these internal dialogues...

Thinking about it I’ve been successful... my great determination and individual talents got me there.”
Confidence v Self Efficacy
Calling it out
Counter Stories

Externalise ‘problems’ and internalise ‘successes’

“Narrative acts of insubordination”
(Nelson, 2001 in McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2014)

Re-author preferred identities

Revise understanding (Nelson, 2001)

Explores how the story came into being
Homework!!

Consider what counter stories you can start to replace your ‘old’ stories with.
Consider this...

Change your language
Get a mentor
Stop with the ‘...buts’
Just say ‘thank you’
Note your achievements and add to your ‘new’ story
ULTIMATELY, WE BELIEVE OUR DECISIONS ARE CONSISTENT WITH OUR CONSCIOUS BELIEFS, WHEN IN FACT, OUR UNCONSCIOUS IS RUNNING THE SHOW
Questions & Comments
Further Reading

- “Daring Greatly” by Brene Brown
- “The Impostor Phenomenon” by Dr Pauline Rose Clance
- “The Pursuit of Perfect” by Tal Ben-Shahar
- “Lean Out” by Dawn Foster
- “The Invention of Difference” by Binna Kandola & Jo Kandola
- “Inferior” by Angela Saini
- Amy Cuddy’s TED talk & research on body language