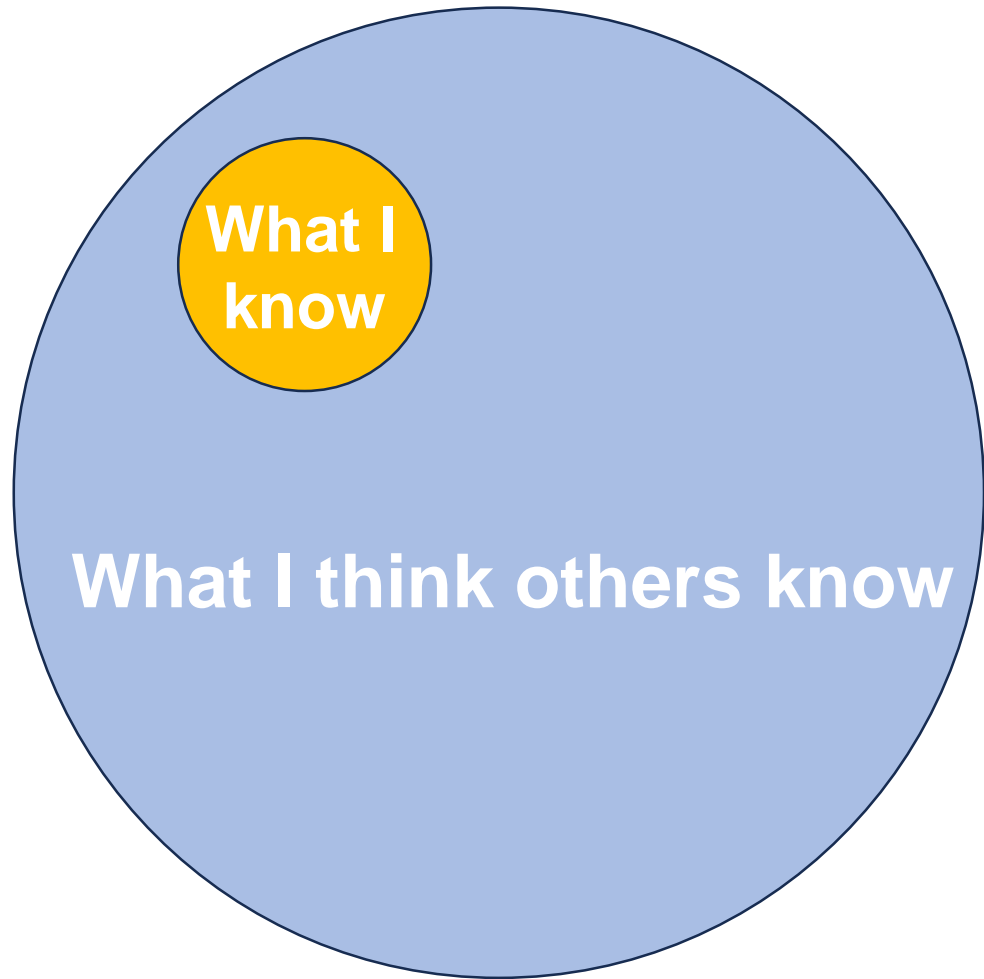
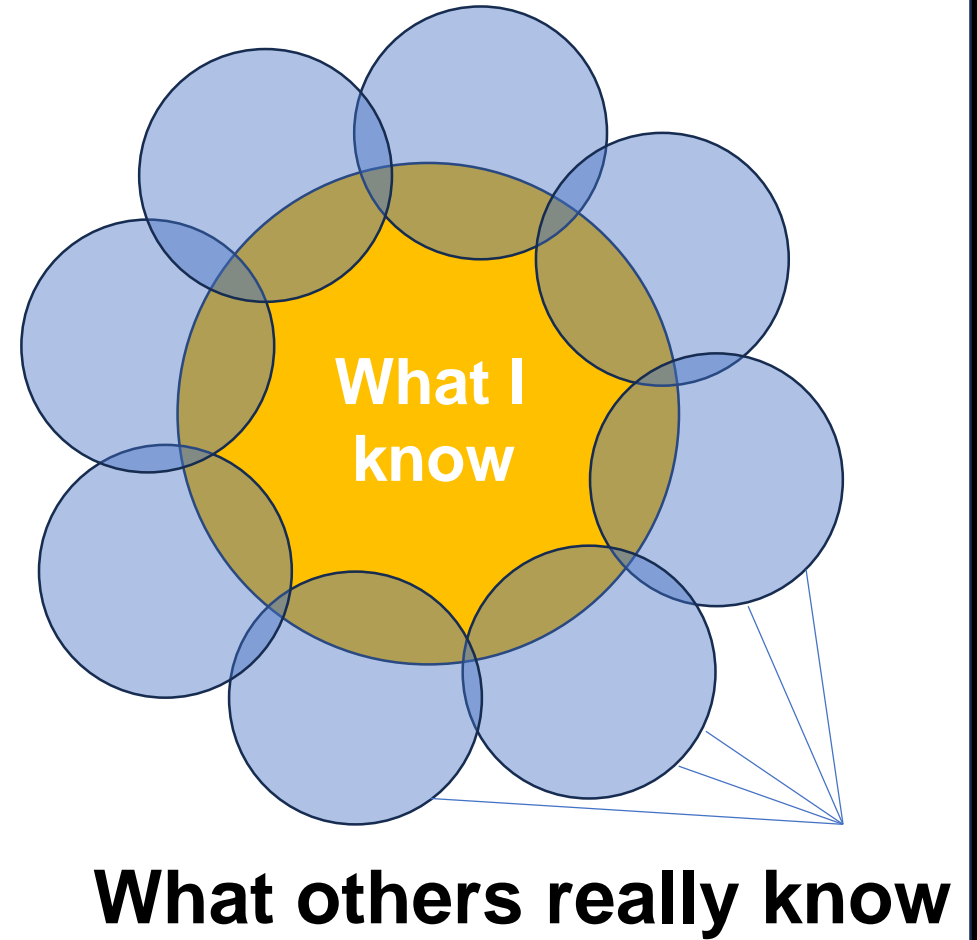


## IMPOSTER PHENOMENON



## REALITY



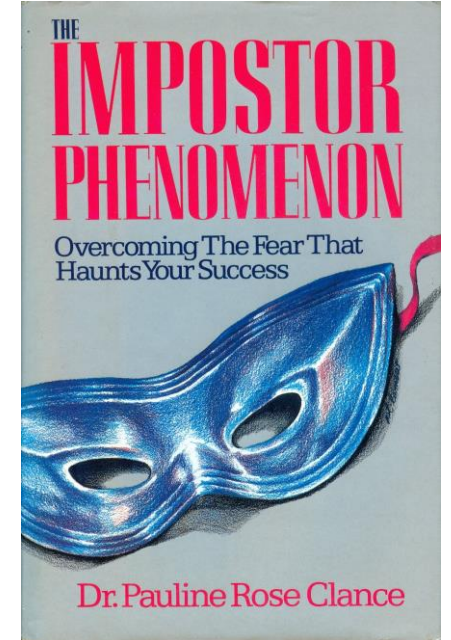
How to recognize and manage imposter phenomenon

# What is imposter phenomenon?

- First defined in 1978 by psychologists Pauline Rose Clance & Suzanne Imes
- An internal experience of feeling like a fraud

*“(Those) who experience .. impostor phenomenon maintain a strong belief that they are not intelligent; in fact they are convinced that they have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise. For example, students often fantasize that they were mistakenly admitted to graduate school because of an error by the admissions committee.”*

*“clinical symptoms most frequently reported are generalized anxiety, lack of self- confidence, depression, and frustration related to inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement.”*



## **The Impostor Phenomenon in High Achieving Women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention**

Pauline Rose Clance & Suzanne Imes

Georgia State University  
University Plaza  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

1978

# What is imposter phenomenon?

- Estimated 70% of people experience imposter feelings at some point in their lives.
- Traditionally attributed to women, multiple studies have since revealed there is no gender-related difference in imposter feelings
- Not a pathological disease (not inherently self-damaging or self-destructive), rather it interferes with our psychological wellbeing
- Limits acceptance of our success/ability, contributes to feelings of self-doubt/anxiety

Very common but the degree it impacts people varies

# Types of Imposter Syndrome



## **SUPERHERO:**

overwork themselves to make up for how inadequate they feel



## **NATURAL GENIUS:**

set exceedingly high goals, feel crushed when they don't meet them



## **EXPERT:**

never satisfied with their level of understanding, always trying to learn more



## **PERFECTIONIST:**

never completely happy with their work, fixated on flaws instead of strengths



## **SOLOIST:**

prefer to work alone, won't ask for help for fear of appearing weak or incompetent

# Impact of imposter phenomenon in managers

- More frequent among those in a new endeavor, with promotion exacerbating imposter feelings
- New first-time managers may doubt leadership ability and manager-worthy skills
- Advice to “seek constructive criticism, embrace vulnerability” can undermine confidence
- Focus on team success can make people uncomfortable in taking credit
- Excessive self doubt can make it difficult to make decisions
- Can manifest in an inability to leverage your skills & talent to advance your career
- Has detrimental impact on creativity & can lead to excessive overworking & burnout

Essential to recognize signs of imposter phenomenon to ensure you reach your full potential

## Individual task:



**Where do you sit on  
the Clance IP Scale?**

**Complete the  
handout  
questionnaire to  
find out!**

**10 min**

# Scoring the imposter test

Add together the numbers of the responses to each statement

< 40 : Few Imposter characteristics

41 – 60: Moderate IP experiences

61 – 80: Frequent IP experiences

> 80 : Intense IP experiences



The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously Imposter Syndrome interferes in your life



# Attribution bias

Systematic errors made when people evaluate or try to find reasons for their own and others' behaviour



We see this car speeding dangerously through traffic, what are your immediate thoughts about the driver?



# Attribution bias leading to Attribution Theory

Attribution theory explains how we determine expected and unexpected events.

1. We attribute the **success of our colleagues**, who we know are intelligent hardworking people, to **stable internal causes –their natural ability**
2. We (the imposters) attribute **our own success**, which we don't expect (no one likes to get their hopes up!), to **nebulous external factors –luck, or own last minute effort (that we still don't believe to be a true reflection of our lack of ability)**

THE HUB HR Interviewed 1,000 people across UK workplaces, with at least 3 years experience in their field:

- 85% of workers felt incompetent at work
- 80% of men and 90% of women experienced Imposter Syndrome
- Only 25% are aware of what it is
- 25% of them believe their success to be down to pure luck
- 19% worry that they will be 'found out'

# Group task:

Discuss the following:



1. How prevalent do you feel Imposter Syndrome is at your organisation?
2. How does it show up and what impact does it have (on you and others)?
3. What can you do about it, for yourself or when seeing it in others?

30 min

# Imposter feelings and automatic negative thoughts (ANTs)

In some cases, imposter feelings get so ingrained, they lead to cognitive distortion – unhelpful thinking patterns/automatic negative thoughts

ANT's include:

- Selective abstraction (drawing conclusions based on one data point)
- Minimisation (downplaying positive)
- Magnification
- Over generalisation

# Killing the ANTs: positive reframing

When we believe our ANTs, we suffer. But when we notice their irrationality, we're able to "kill" them and save ourselves. Dr Amen

Book: Memory rescue (2017)

**The next time you doubt your skills, ask yourself the following questions:**

1. Is it true? (Do you *really* suck? Are you *really* a fraud? ...)
2. Can I absolutely know that it is true? (Is there objective evidence?)
3. How do I feel when I believe that thought?
4. How would I feel if I did not have that thought?

Now ask yourself the opposite question: are your skills quite good in the area you are doubting

# Killing the ANTs: positive reframing

## Steps to killing the ANTs:

1. Recognise the ANT's and accept that some that bias is natural
2. Identify where and when they occur, by being aware of them, thereby anticipating them and being able to deal with them better
3. Reframe the ANT's with an adaptive thought



# Overcoming imposter syndrome – other thoughts

- Recognise that you earned your position and find your personal network to support this
- Try to shut out the inner critic by doing positive reframing
- Stop comparing yourself to others
- Accept and welcome feedback, especially positive and accept congratulations on your achievements
- Share success that you have achieved
- Open up about worries and find the right support (mentoring & coaching)
- Create a positive and open culture, where this can be discussed