

PhD Imposter *Syndrome*



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Stopping It Dead In Its Tracks!

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Preface

This book is separated into 6 distinct sections. The first section outlines what the imposter syndrome is. It then briefly goes through five different categories of it. That's right, there are five different ones and each of those can be linked together or they can exist by themselves.

The book helps you identify which imposter syndrome you have and why.

Then, it covers how to **stop your imposter syndrome dead in its tracks.**

So, let's get started!

Introduction – What Is The Imposter Syndrome?

It seems like no matter how much you achieve in your PhD, no matter how good your work is, there's always some little nag in the back of your mind holding you back from feeling like you're as good as you truly are. That you don't really deserve compliments, or even your PhD.

Would you believe that some research shows that almost all PhD students feel this way at least once during their time.

So, to that end it's an incredibly important topic. Let's get into it more to get to the bottom of it.

No matter how you slice it, the imposter syndrome makes your PhD worse. Let me explain.

There have been numerous studies investigating how people perform based on their opinion of themselves. There was one in particular that was shocking.

It was conducted by a couple of Dutch researchers. These two researchers took some students, not unlike yourself, and divided them into two groups.

They tested each one of the students by getting them to answer 42 Trivial Pursuit questions. Now, the two groups were in no way different to each other, the members were equally smart and educated, it was just that they were separated into two groups.

Now here's the interesting bit. For the first group, they told each of the students to think about what it would be like to be a professor. For the second group, they told each of the students to think about what it would be like to be a soccer hooligan. In other words,

the first group were thinking of themselves as smart and educated, while the second group were thinking of themselves as stupid and wild (for lack of better terms).

After five minutes of thinking about their respective topics, they answered the 42 Trivial Pursuit questions. Can you guess what the results were? I'll give you a hint, they were astonishing.

The average Hooligan group member got 42.6% of the questions right. **THE PROFESSOR GROUP AVERAGED 30.5% MORE RIGHT ANSWERS.**

I'm going to say that again because it's unbelievable. The professor group got a 30.5% higher mark for no other reason than that they associated themselves with a smart personality, while the hooligan group associated themselves with a stupid personality.

In other words, the opinion that each of these students had of themselves had a HUGE impact on how well they did in the test. Simply thinking that they were smart for five minutes made them 30.5%

smarter, in effect, than those who were thinking that they were stupid for five minutes. Imagine if those five minutes wasn't just five minutes, but five weeks, or five months, or five years...That's why you need to snap out of the imposter syndrome now! And that's what this book does.

You can read the study yourself, it's called "The Relation Between Perception and Behavior, or How to Win a Game of Trivial Pursuit", and it was done by Dijksterhuis and Knippenberg.

Many other studies have investigated this strange effect, and in different environments, and concluded the same thing. And it's not only because that thinking that you're smart will make you smarter, but also that thinking that you're stupid will make you more stupid.

The imposter syndrome, which is little more than thinking that you're not good enough, has a massive impact on the quality of your work, and your pass rate as well. The more you feel like you're a fraud, the worse your work will become, which will reinforce

the feeling that you're a fraud and your imposter syndrome.

So we now know that the imposter syndrome makes the quality of your PhD worse, but what is the imposter syndrome exactly?

The best way to explain this phenomenon is to use the original idea that Doctors Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes published back in the 1970's.

They explained this phenomenon as when a student feels like a fraud, and thinks that they are unworthy of any accolades. And that sooner or later everyone is going to find out that they somehow managed to fool people into believing that they're worthy of a PhD.

How strange a phenomenon. PhD students are very smart and managed to pass the entry exams and fulfil the requirements to do PhDs. Yet, almost all of them feel to some degree like a fraud. Incredible, isn't it?

But, when you actually dig into the PhD process and think about why the imposter syndrome is so rampant, it becomes a little less surprising.

Maybe the most compelling reason is due to the entire academic structure. Think about it. You put so much effort into doing your work, all the deep thought, all the planning, all the hard work and mental strain. Then, you present the work in some form, whether that's as a conference presentation, journal presentation, or some other type of publication, only to have people actively trying to poke holes in it. They try to poke a hole here, a hole there, and holes everywhere.

You're left there trying to defend against any and every type of criticism. But the unfortunate reality is that even if you successfully refute 100 different pieces of criticism, the next one could still invalidate your work. Is there no getting away from these people?

But actually, the imposter syndrome is even more complex than that, and many PhD students feel like imposters for different reasons. There are actually

five different types of imposter syndrome categories. Each one has its own caveats and ticks.

Let's introduce them here. In the subsequent chapters, we'll go more into detail about what they are and how to overcome them.

***That's the end of the sample version.
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