

What is the Imposter Phenomenon?

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WHAT IS IMPOSTER PHENOMENON?

- Imposter phenomenon is a psychological pattern in which an individual does not believe or acknowledge that their own achievements are a result of their own effort and skill
- Despite external evidence of competence, individuals experiencing imposter phenomenon have a persistent feeling of intellectual “phoniness”
- Typically affects high achieving individuals
- A study in 2004 showed that people at high risk of experiencing imposter phenomenon were more likely to develop psychological distress leading to burnout

TYPES OF “IMPOSTER”

- The Perfectionist – refuses to accept anything other than perfection
- The Soloist – exhibits an inability to ask for help
- The Expert – thinks they need to know everything to accomplish anything
- The Genius – consistently thinks that if accomplishment does not come with naturally and with ease then they are not will to try it
- The Super – perfectionist on overdrive resulting in overflow into personal life

THE IMPOSTER CYCLE

- Begins with an achievement-related task accompanied by a creeping sense of dread – “I can’t do this”
- Subconsciously the individual is telling themselves they are an imposter
- Negative self-talk reinforces feelings of failure and self-doubt
- Anxiety and self-doubt leads to either overwork or procrastination
- Even when completion of the task results in a positive response, this response is discounted.
- This further reinforces anxiety and feelings of self-doubt and as the cycle continues, increased success leads to increased sense of self-doubt

CREATING NEW THOUGHT PATTERNS/NEUROPLASTICITY

- Individuals who experience imposter phenomenon tend to be stuck in a pattern of thinking characterized by blanket statements such as “I can’t do this”
- But this pattern of thinking can be changed by reflecting and identifying specific occurrences that have brought about feelings of self-doubt
- By being specific, the individual’s mindset can be shifted and they will feel less consumed by the thinking that they should not be doing what they are doing

RESOURCES

- drjessicametcalfe.com
- one-on-one coaching
- cognitive behavioral therapy exercises that relate to medical professionals
- 6 week workshop to help change mindset