

IMPOSTER SYNDROME: KNOW IT, NAME IT, TAME IT

NIKI IRISH, LICSW
SENIOR COUNSELOR
D.C. BAR LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
LAP@DCBAR.ORG





IS THIS YOU?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME BINGO

WHAT IS IMPOSTER SYNDROME?

- “A reaction to a situation where individuals struggle to settle into a role— and feel as though they are faking ownership of it.” - Robert T Muller, Ph.D.
- “A collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Impostors’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence.” — Harvard Business Review
- “The experience of not belonging- competency wise.” — Neha Sampat

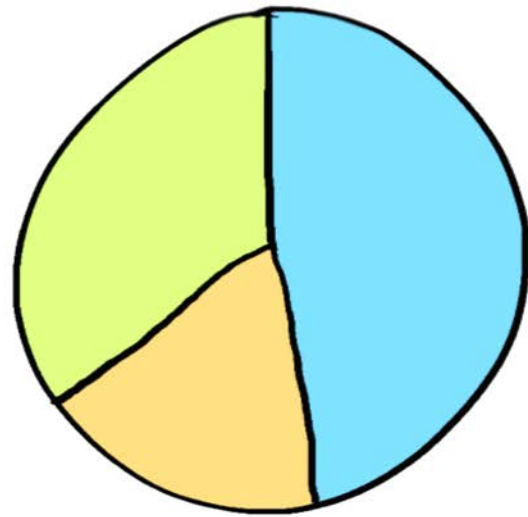
What Impostor Syndrome Feels Like

What I know

What I think others know

HAVE YOU FELT
THIS WAY?

YOU AND EVERYONE ELSE



- PEOPLE WHO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- OTHER PEOPLE WHO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME
- LITERALLY EVERYONE ELSE (THEY ALSO GET IMPOSTER SYNDROME)

EVERYONE FEELS LIKE AN IMPOSTER
SOMETIMES, AND THAT'S OKAY

ERRANTSCIENCE.COM

“I HAVE SPENT MY YEARS SINCE PRINCETON, WHILE AT LAW SCHOOL AND IN MY VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL JOBS, NOT FEELING COMPLETELY A PART OF THE WORLDS I INHABIT. I AM ALWAYS LOOKING OVER MY SHOULDER WONDERING IF I MEASURE UP.”

- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Believing everyone around you works harder, is smarter, does a better job than you
- Terrified of making mistakes and believing you are going to make them no matter how experienced you are
- Worry that others will find out you are not as capable as they think you are
- Avoiding challenges because of self-doubt

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Dismissing accomplishments as “no big deal” or attributing them to the fact that people just “like” you
- Hate being less than fully prepared, making mistakes, or not doing things perfectly
- Feeling crushed by even constructive criticism, seeing it as evidence of your “ineptness”

WHERE DO WE SEE IMPOSTOR SYNDROME?

- Underrepresented groups like women, people of color, LGBTQ populations, and first-generation college students
 - People who have the pressure of “accomplishing firsts” or being representatives of a larger group
- High-achieving professions, academia, creative careers, and students
- Prevalent when “you are your work”
 - When your identity becomes intertwined with your work and there is judgment based on your work

HOW DID I GET HERE?

- Childhood

- Messages we receive from parents, teachers, caregivers. Particularly related to hearing your value is in your intelligence/accomplishments.

- Human nature

- Personality traits: anxiety or neuroticism
- The brain can be a jerk. It lies to you.
- Hard-wiring: Negativity bias

HOW DID I GET HERE?

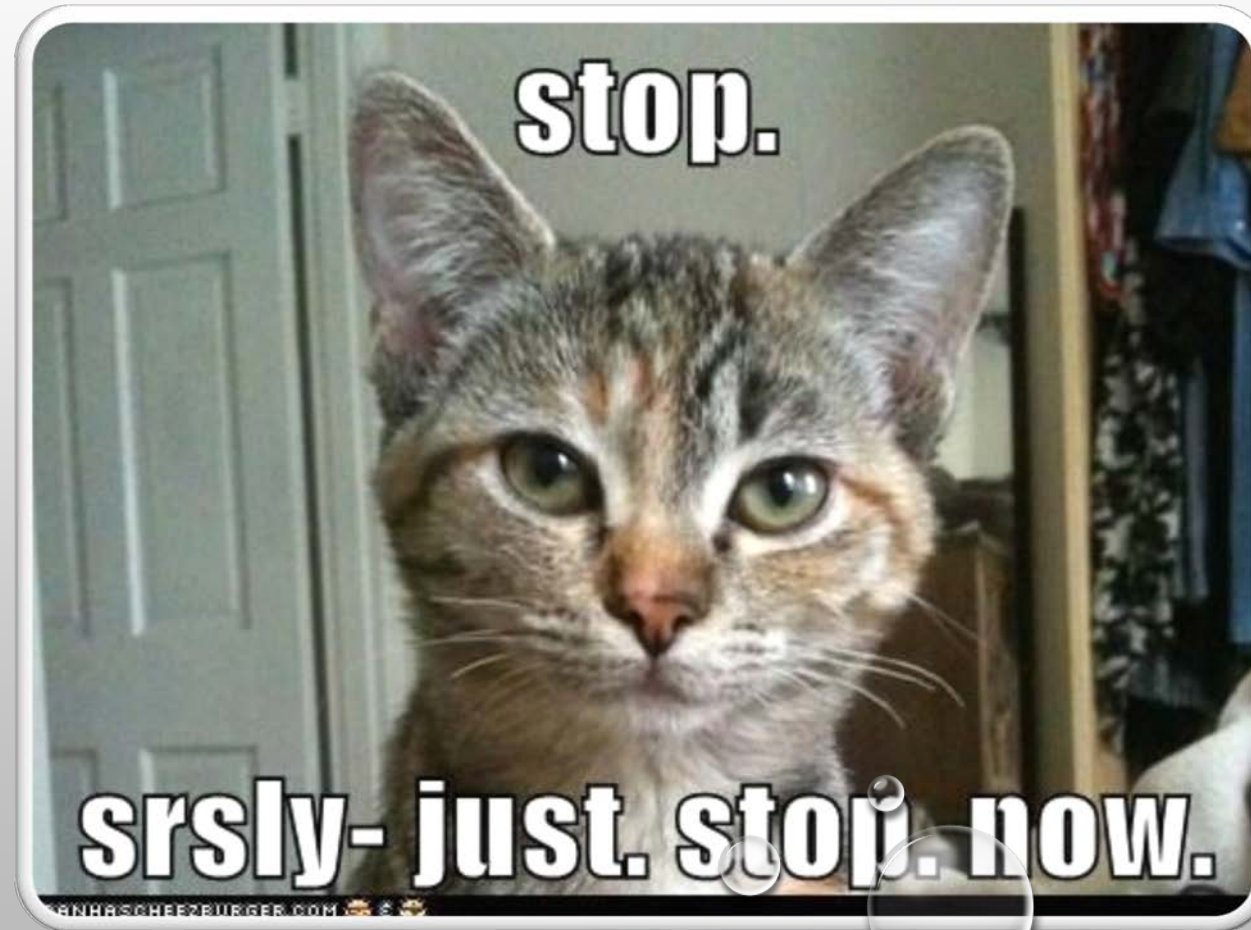
- Society
 - Belonging fosters confidence. Differing from peers can fuel sense of being a fraud.
 - Stereotypes and social cues.
 - Unconscious bias of classmates, teachers, employers throw off your own baseline of assessing your own performance.
- Social media
 - Others' highlight reels versus your bloopers

THE IMPACT



- FREEZES YOU FROM ACTION
- DIMINISHES CAPACITY
- AVOIDANCE OF RISK AND CHANGE
- LOSS OF SENSE OF SELF
- PROPENSITY TO PROCRASTINATE
- INCREASES ISOLATION
- STRESS-RELATED PROBLEMS (PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY)

WHAT DOESN'T WORK?



HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THE PROBLEM?

- SHIFT MINDSET
 - NAME IT
 - CULTIVATE ACCEPTANCE
 - EXAMINE INTERNAL DIALOGUES
 - EXPLORE UNHELPFUL PATTERNS
- INCREASE CONNECTION
- IDENTIFY WARNING SIGNS/TRIGGERS
- CONNECT WITH VALUES



HELLO!
My name is



NAME IT TO TAME IT

- NEXT TIME YOU FEAR BEING EXPOSED AS A FRAUD, NAME IT FOR WHAT IT IS – IMPOSTOR SYNDROME.
- GIVE EACH INNER SCRIPT A CHARACTER, SUCH AS “THE JUDGE” OR “THE PERFECTIONIST”

CULTIVATE ACCEPTANCE



- WE ARE ALL IMPOSTORS
- EMBRACE THAT YOU HAVE DOUBT
 - DOUBT IS A NORMAL REACTION TO STEPPING OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE
- TAKING RISKS IS FRIGHTENING
- FEAR IS A NORMAL HUMAN EMOTION

WHAT'S IN YOUR RULE BOOK?

- IF I WERE REALLY INTELLIGENT, CAPABLE, COMPETENT ...
 - I should know everything in my field
 - I should get it right the first time
 - I should excel in everything I do
 - I'd always know the answer
 - I'd always understand what I'm reading
 - I'd always feel confident
 - I'd never make a mistake
 - I'd never be confused
 - I'd never need help





INTERNAL DIALOGUES



RECOGNIZE UNHEALTHY PERFECTIONISM



LEARN TO
REALISTICALLY
ASSESS
YOURSELF



TALK TO OTHER PEOPLE

FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING





**PROCEED
WITH
CAUTION**

**WHAT ARE YOUR
TRIGGERS AND
WARNING
SIGNS?**

**WHEN YOUR VALUES ARE CLEAR TO YOU,
MAKING DECISIONS BECOME EASIER.**



CLARIFY YOUR VALUES



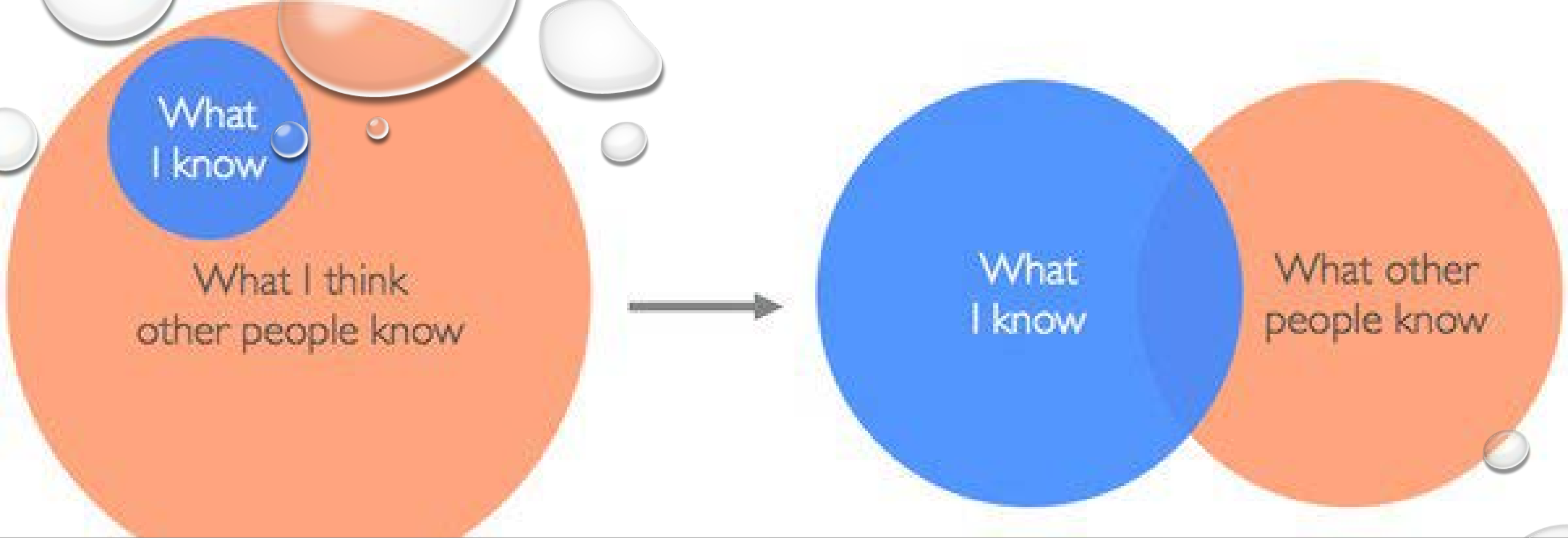
PRACTICAL TIPS

- KEEP A RECORD OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK
- ASK QUESTIONS
- KNOW AREAS OF VULNERABILITY
- PRACTICE ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS
- POWER POSES

PRACTICE.
PRACTICE.
PRACTICE.

- WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU DID IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS YOU ARE PROUD OF?

- DESCRIBE AT LEAST THREE WAYS YOU PERSEVERED TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL



IN SUMMARY

IT IS NORMAL TO FEEL LIKE YOU ARE IN IMPOSTOR.

SERVICES OF THE D.C. BAR LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP)

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referral, short term
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support/follow up,
monitoring.

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and understands what
a person is
experiencing.

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parties about possible
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LAP@dcbar.org.

REFERENCES

- THE ADA INITIATIVE IMPOSTER SYNDROME TRAINING, [HTTP://ADAINITIATIVE.ORG/CONTINUE-OUR-WORK/IMPOSTOR-SYNDROME-TRAINING/](http://adainitiative.org/continue-our-work/impostor-syndrome-training/)
- DR. SARAH BALLARD [HTTP://SPACE.MIT.EDU/~SARAHBA/DOCUMENTS/IMPOSTOR.PDF](http://space.mit.edu/~sarahba/documents/impostor.pdf)
- VALERIE YOUNG, [HTTPS://IMPOSTORSYNDROME.COM/BLOG/](https://impostorsyndrome.com/blog/)
- THE RESILIENT LAWYER WITH JEENA CHO PODCAST RL 87: NEHA SAMPAT— IMPOSTER SYNDROME: THE MINDSET AND CULTURE THAT IS PLAGUING LAWYERS