

## Imposter Syndrome – A View

Articles about Imposter Syndrome and tips to overcome it are plentiful. We read about the fear of being found out as incompetent for the role we have or ill-equipped for our latest venture or just not *enough*, whatever the elusive measure of enough might be.

Something about this syndrome has perplexed me for a while. And try as I might, I can't resile from the view that something normal has been swapped for pathology. A lie hiding in plain sight now has the status of an "ology"<sup>1</sup>. Isn't it *normal* for a human being to feel apprehensive when taking on an unfamiliar endeavour or entering a new space and wondering whether we are equipped to handle all that lies ahead? Now it seems we have a syndrome and I'm still wondering how we became an embodiment of walking dis-ease.

### **Walk with me**

I wonder if we need to be vigilant about easily bestowed syndromes, drama and lies that can slip subtly into our minds and manifest in our lives? Maybe that question is wide of the mark. Perhaps it is truer to say we make our way in life as best we may: whole, renewed, some of us in confusion clothed in courage that's hidden from view. Whatever the journey, is it perhaps true that Imposter Syndrome strides in like a choreographer inviting us to join the (un)merry dance crew?

An imposter is someone who pretends to be other than who they are or who claims accomplishment and expertise they do not have. Any of us could claim to have expertise we do not have and be an imposter *in that way*. When we start something new beyond places and faces that we already knew we might feel like we're pretending but the truth is we're learning *and* doing. We fall often before we rise, this is the flow of life before our final demise. We don't always understand ourselves and maybe we never will. Our wisdom is born of our awkward and inelegant learning. In that mêlée I am content to be found as one living while alive and above the ground. This is my real (not an imposter's) journey, does that resonate sisters? Tell me your story.

### **Is it time for a breakup?**

We learn. We grow. We fall and rise. Is it time to break up with the Syndrome? That's for you to decide.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to a BT advertisement that ran on television in the 1980s in which the character Beattie (played by Maureen Lipman) concludes that her grandson is a scientist when he tells her he passed Sociology and she exclaimed that he has an "ology".

If it feels right to let it go, I've written a breakup poem just below:

*Imposter Syndrome,  
We're breaking up with you  
No one elected me to end the toxic dance  
But I've noticed  
Your shadow dims our brilliance*

*It's normal  
To wonder if  
Outside our comfort zone  
We can complete the tasks we've taken on  
Thrive in situations previously unknown*

*And we're not broken  
And we won't be found out  
That idea poisons our reason  
Racks us with doubt*

*And just so you know  
Sometimes we're ill at ease  
Because our environment is diseased*

*We're taking our thoughts back  
Now we run free  
And that's what it means to  
Finally, be me  
You  
Her  
Him  
Us  
We*

**Leila Pilgrim**  
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If you are interested in exploring Imposter Syndrome (IS) watch an extract from the [2023 Commencement Speech](#) delivered by Reshma Saujani at Smith College. She compares IS to 'Bicycle Face', a supposed affliction experienced by female cyclists. Further, she states that IS results from 'structural inequality not individual inadequacy' and our job is not to fix ourselves. It is to fix the system.