

LETS TALK ABOUT

Imposter Syndrome

WORKSHEETS TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT
OF "IMPOSTER SYNDROME" AND TO PRACTICE
SELF-LOVE AND SELF-CARE

WHAT IS IMPOSTER SYNDROME?



Have you ever felt undeserving, that you are fooling other people, or that you are a fraud? You're not alone! Studies show that 70% of people will experience at least one episode in their life of imposter syndrome.

People with imposter syndrome often feel like they are undeserving of any achievements or merits, chronic feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and fraudulence despite any objective success. It's hard for them to internalize success and genuinely hold the belief that they're competent and capable.

The thing is, many experience this syndrome; it can be a successful CEO of a company, or even a freshly graduated college student. Anyone can fall prey to the imposter syndrome phenomenon.

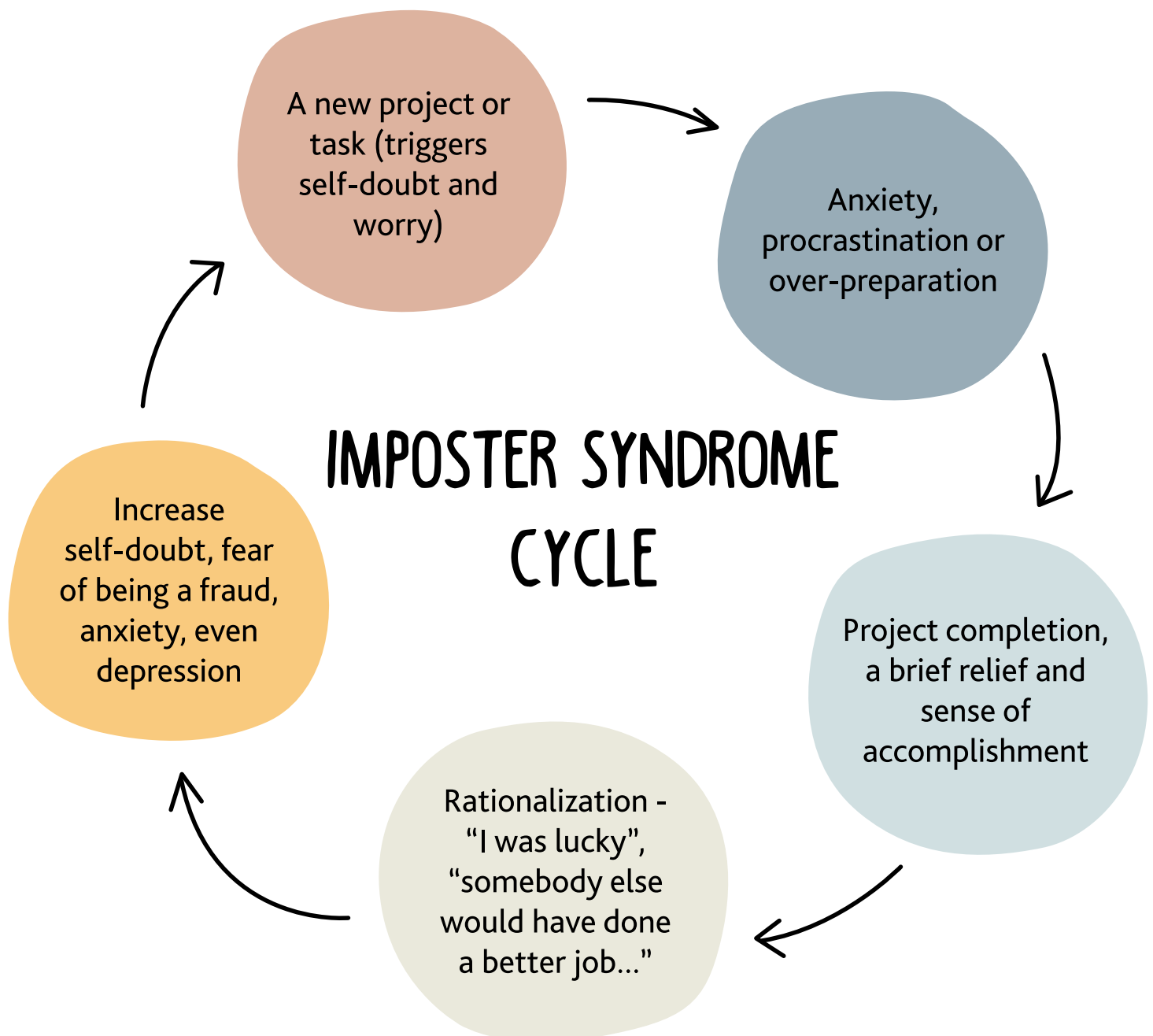
So... what causes imposter syndrome? Whilst there are no official diagnosis, most people experience episodes of imposter syndrome in situations where they are faced with stressing or intimidating factors, for example starting a new job or role, whether they're on a blind date, taking an important exam, or speaking in front of a large crowd.

The imposter syndrome can also present itself more often on those with certain personality traits, for example, someone who is especially a perfectionist. Some theories/research shows that imposter syndrome is rooted in families that value achievement above all else or that it begins when families are characterized by low support and high conflict.

Studies also show that around 25 to 30 percent of high achievers may suffer from imposter syndrome. And around 70 percent of adults may experience impostorism at least once in their lifetime.

Imposter syndrome

- THE VICIOUS CYCLE -



IMPOSTER SYNDROME CAN SOUND LIKE...

Imposter syndrome can plague many people, especially those that are high achievers. The syndrome can make us believe that we should be full of self-doubt to trust our own skills and talents and thus it makes us hold back by making us too scared to say yes to opportunities.

But, while research focuses mainly on high-achieving individuals, what about those that are not? Aren't we all plagued with questions such as:

- Am I good enough?
- Why should anyone listen to me?
- Doesn't everyone know more than I do?

Simply put, we might to some extent think we're fake.

Those of us that suffer from imposter syndrome find it difficult to consider ourselves as good achievers, or deserving of merit. Even worse - we might feel worse when we are doing something really well.

One study by Gail Matthews and Pauline Clance show that:

- Men and women are equally affected
- Some evidence suggests the perception of imposter syndrome reduces with age
- An association with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and social dysfunction

IMPOSTER SYNDROME CAN SOUND LIKE...

"I don't want to be presumptuous. Who am I to tell people what to do? I don't even know what I am doing!"

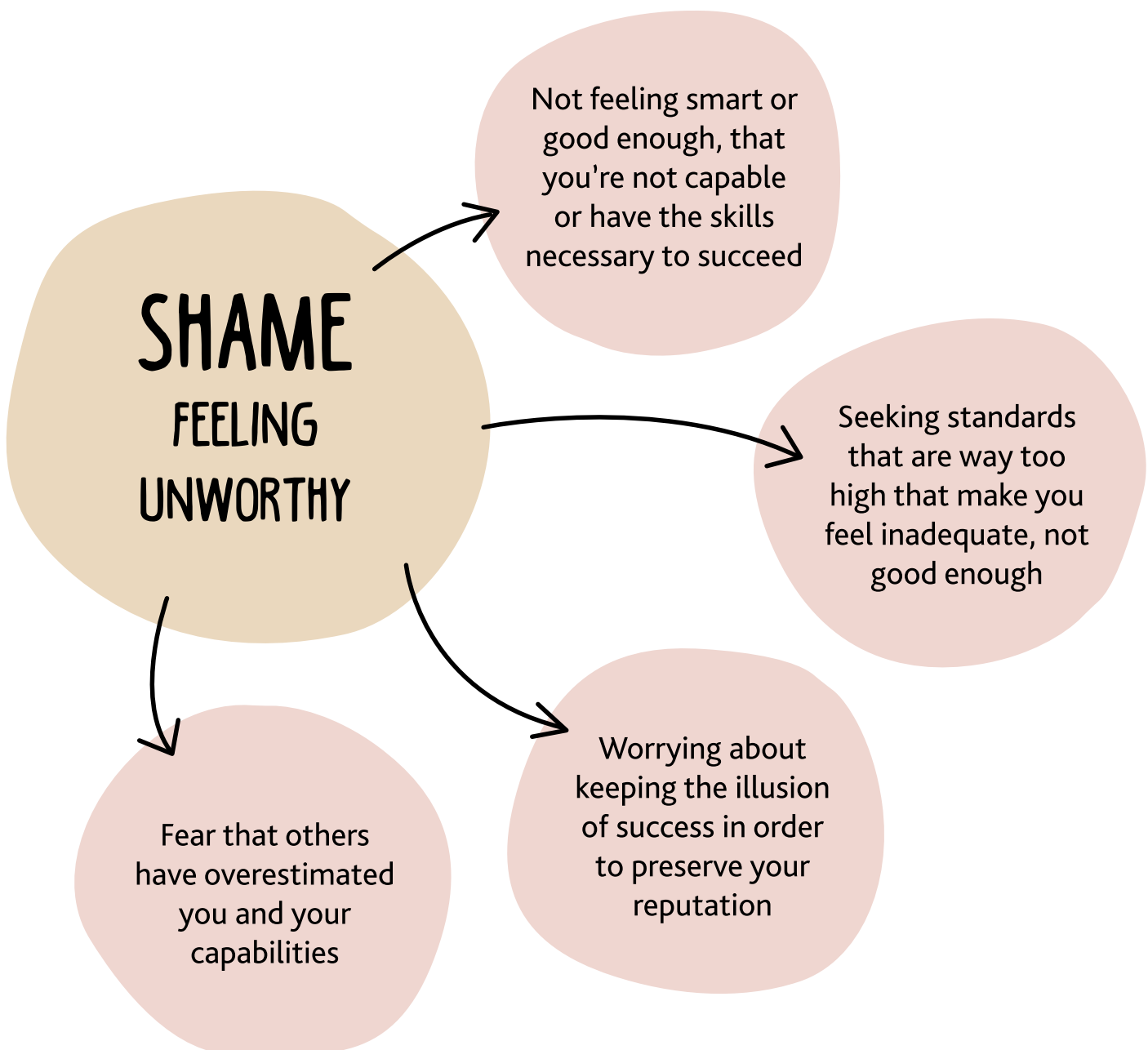
"I don't have the training or expertise to apply for that job."

"I'm not ready for that high-level position. There are so many people who would be better than me."

"Even when I have something important to say, I feel like I am the last person that anyone would want to hear from."

IMPOSTER SYNDROME CAN BE A FORM OF SHAME

Imposter syndrome can many times show itself as a type of shame. It can make us feel that deep down we are inadequate, a feeling as if we are not really up to the job. It's no surprise that this can make us feel stressed and miserable.



IMPOSTER SYNDROME STRUGGLE - YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

Imposter syndrome is a condition that happens to anyone, even seen in highly successful professionals, and experts and leaders in their areas.

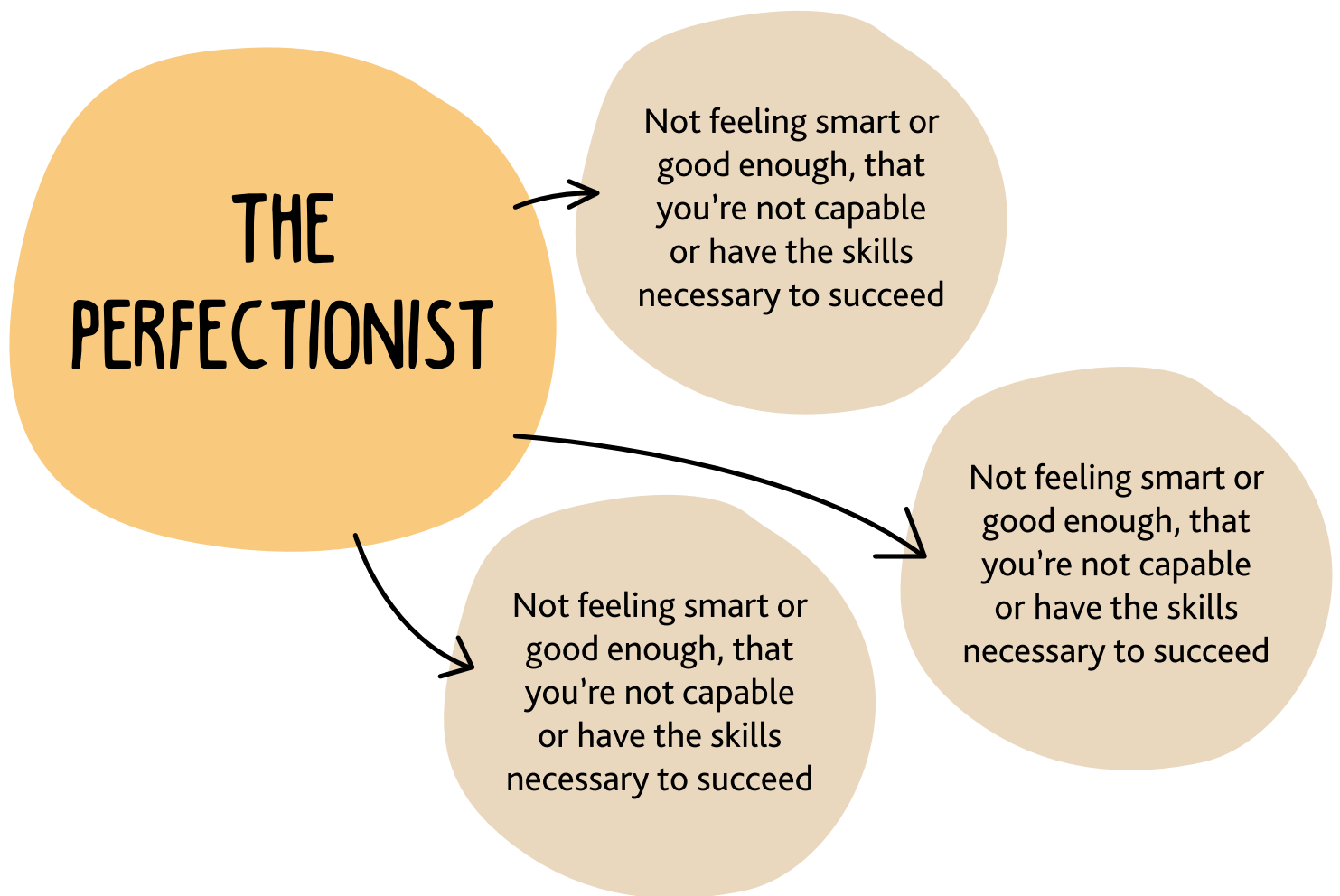


HERE ARE SOME PUBLIC FIGURES THAT HAVE ALSO STRUGGLED WITH IT...

- Tom Hanks
- Michelle Obama
- Tina Fey
- Natalie Portman
- Serena Williams
- Amy Schumer
- Albert Einstein
- Robert Pattinson
- Howard Schwarts
- Lady Gaga
- Penélope Cruz
- Sheryl Sandberg
- Matt Higgins
- Awkwafina
- Dr. Margaret Chan
- Kate Winslet
- David Bowie
- Emma Watson
- Agatha Cristie
- Lena Dunham
- Maisie Williams
- Sophia Amoruso
- Lupita Nyong'o
- Seth Godin
- Michelle Kennedy
- Howard Schultz
- Maya Angelou
- Jodie Foster
- Meryl Streep
- Sonia Sotomayor
- Arianna Huffington
- Jessica Chastain
- Padma Lakshmi

TYPES OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME ON THE PERFECTIONIST

Research on imposter syndrome has especially focused on high-achievers and perfectionists. Here is what drives the perfectionist when it comes to the imposter syndrome:

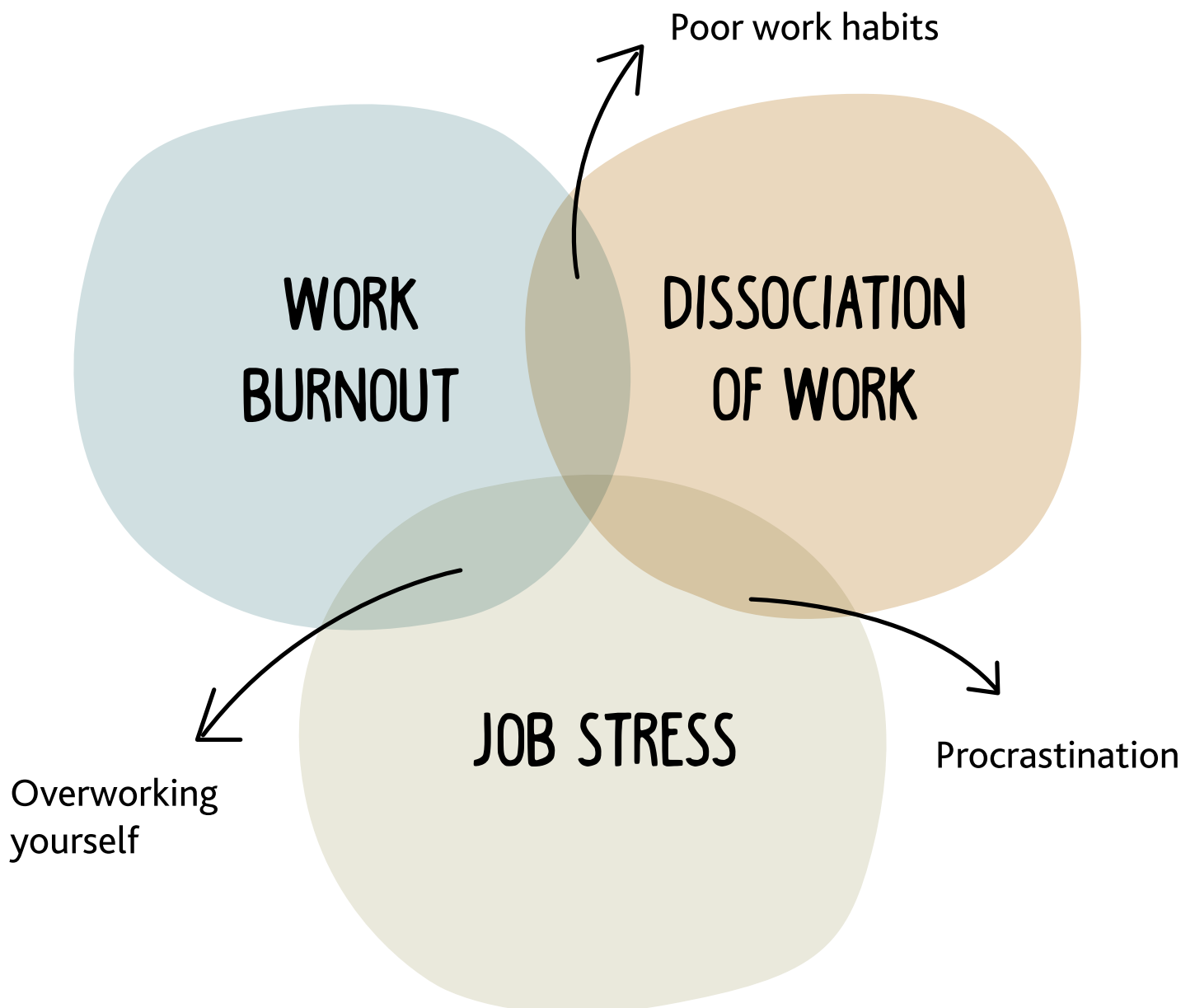


The perfectionist usually will be triggered by their own hypercritical tendencies and are triggered by situations such as:

- When they make a mistake
- When they perceive a flaw in something they did
- When there are inconsistencies in their work

IMPACTS OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME ON OUR MENTAL HEALTH

It's no surprise that imposter syndrome can cause a negative impact on our mental wellbeing which can increase levels of stress and anxiety on our daily life, accelerating burnout. Visually, it can be represented like this:



SIGNS OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Be it unconsciously or consciously, imposter syndrome can wreck havoc in our mental health wellbeing.

It can limit ourselves and our growth both in our personal and professional life.

So, at what point can we detect that imposter syndrome has manifested? The answer is when we reflect on the frequency, duration, and intensity of feelings of self-doubt and self-criticism. In other words:

- When self-doubt and self-criticism become constant and pervasive
- When these feelings become incapacitating, holding you back from pursuing new challenges and opportunities
- When these feelings keep you from having satisfying experiences and celebrating achievements / goals

Some questions you can ask yourself:

- Do you agonize over even the smallest mistakes or flaws in your work?
- Are you afraid to forget what you were wanting to say once you start talking?
- Do you constantly feel like an imposter/fraud?
- Do you attribute your success to luck or outside factors?
- Are you sensitive to even constructive criticism?

Do you downplay your own expertise, even in areas where you are genuinely more skilled than others?

CATASTROPHIC THINKING IS A SIGN OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

When we are constantly clouded by imposter syndrome we tend to struggle with thinking positively and instead we catastrophize which basically means we constantly expect the worst, since we're distracted by feelings of inadequacy. It is important to detect that we're doing it in order to break the vicious cycle.

TYPES OF IMPOSTERS



The types of imposters can generally be broken down into five different basic types: the perfectionist, the expert, the natural genius, the soloist and the super person.

THE PERFECTIONIST

Things must always go perfect. Their concern is how things are done and any errors or defects is enough to classify it as a failure which then leads to feelings of shame and guilt. You also feel as an imposter because your perfectionism makes you believe that you're not as good as others might think you are.

THE EXPERT

Experts have to know everything and are concerned about what and how much they know or can do. They feel like an imposter because they don't know everything there is to know about a particular subject or topic and haven't mastered every step in the process.

THE SOLOIST

For them, they have to be able to do things alone without the help of anyone. They feel like a fraud if someone else helps them or they need to seek help in order to reach a certain level or status.

THE NATURAL GENIUS

The genius feels like a fraud if they can't achieve their goals quickly and effortlessly. They feel like a fraud if someone doesn't believe they are naturally intelligent or competent or if they are having a hard time when trying to achieve something.

THE SUPER PERSON

They believe that one must be the hardest worker or reach the highest level of achievement possible in order to not be a fraud. They need to be the best parent, son, partner, friend, etc. They need to always work longer and harder and if they can't be the best, they have failed.

HOW TO COPE WITH IMPOSTER SYNDROME

QUESTION YOUR THOUGHTS

Remember: baby steps are progress, too! Start by assessing your ability to take small steps and question whether your thoughts are rational in a given moment.

Does it make sense to believe that you are a fraud given everything that you know?

STOP COMPARING

If you constantly compare yourself to others in you will find some fault with yourself that fuels the feeling of not being good enough or not belonging. Instead, during conversations, focus on listening to what the other person is saying, be genuinely interested in learn more.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA MODERATELY

When we see others' lives in social media we might fall into the trap of comparing ourselves and feelings of inferiority may arise. If you try to portray an image on social media that doesn't match who you really are or that is impossible to achieve, it will only make your feelings of being a fraud worse.

EXERT SELF-CONTROL

There are many ways to do that, and what example is to practice mindfulness to help regulate emotional distress.

You can do so by practicing exercises such as mindful breathing (apps like The Mindfulness App, Headspace, Calm can be a great way to guide you into these type of exercises).

ASSESS YOUR ABILITIES

If you have constantly put yourself down in social and performance situations, make a realistic assessment of your abilities.

Write down your accomplishments and what you are good at, then compare these with your self-assessment.

STOP FIGHTING YOUR FEELINGS

All feelings are valid and important! Don't fight the feelings of not belonging. Instead, accept them. It's only when you acknowledge them that you can start to unravel the core beliefs that are holding you back. A good exercise is to notice and name your emotions so you can discover what's driving you and address it more effectively.

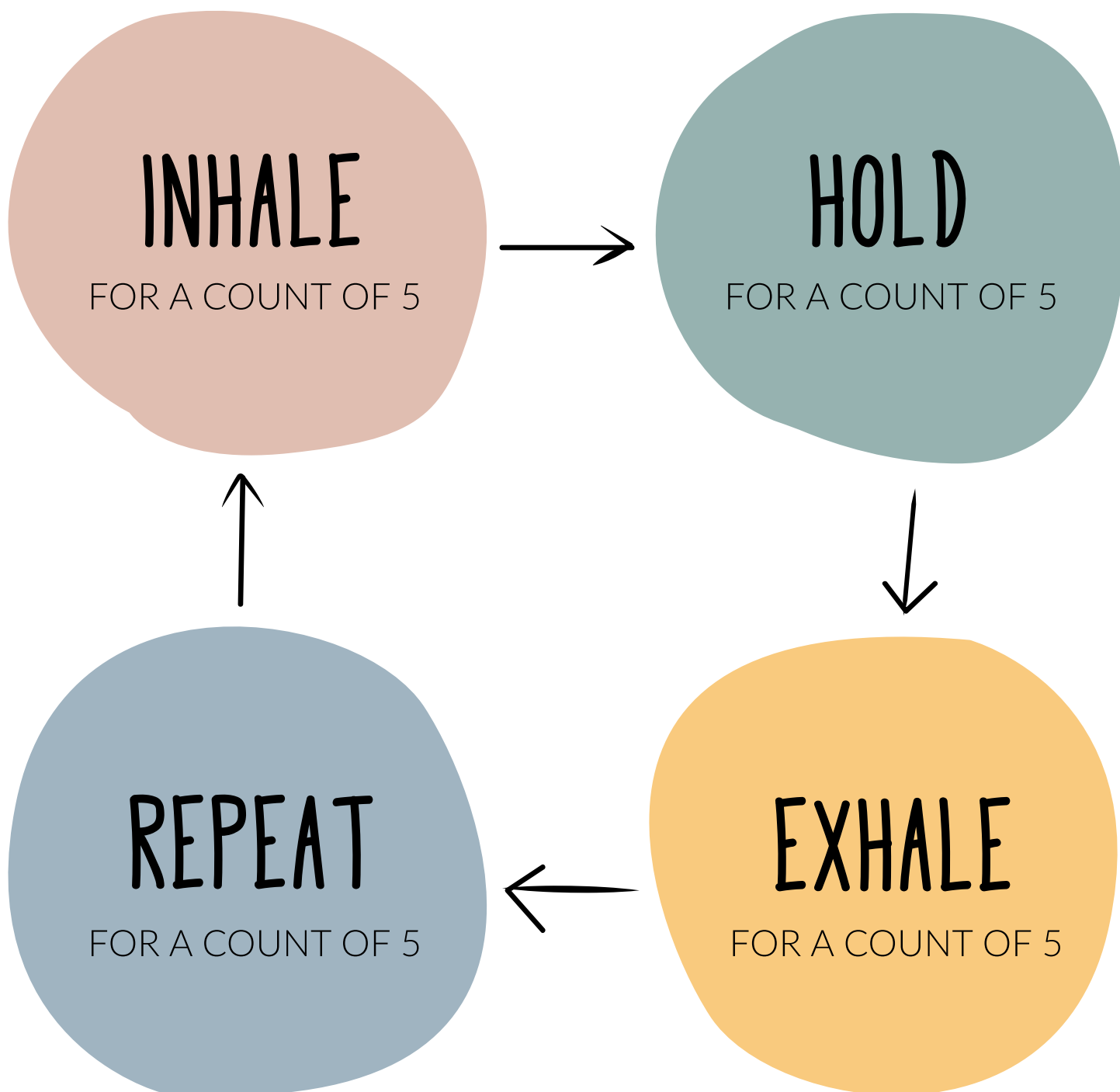
ADDRESS PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is one of the main issues people with imposter syndrome suffer from. In order to work towards letting go of being overly critical with yourself is to recognize that perfectionism hurts you and those around you. Practice things like choosing standards that are more reasonable, not comparing with others and be compassionate.

ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

Someone with a growth mindset views intelligence and abilities as learn able and capable of improvement through effort. Someone with a fixed mindset views those same traits as inherently stable and unchangeable. Those with a growth mindset are less likely to have perfectionist tendencies and approach learning with less stress.

MINDFUL BREATHING



- QUIZ -

THE CLANCE IP SCALE

The Clance IP (imposter phenomenon) scale can be used to measure the imposter phenomenon (source: "The Imposter Phenomenon: When Success Makes You Feel Like A Fake" by P.R Clance.)

For each question, please circle the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true
13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack
- 1 2 3 4 5
- Not at all true Rarely Sometimes Often Very true

14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement

 1

Not at all true

 2

Rarely

 3

Sometimes

 4

Often

 5

Very true

The Impostor Test was developed to help individuals determine whether or not they have IP characteristics and, if so, to what extent they are suffering.

After taking the Impostor Test, add together the numbers of the responses to each statement. If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences.

The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person's life.

OVERCOMING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

THOUGHT RECORD KEEPER

<p>Where were you?</p> <p>Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with?</p>				
<p>Emotion or feeling</p> <p>Emotions can be described in one word: sad, angry, scared, etc. Rate it from 0-100%</p>				
<p>Negative automatic thought</p> <p>What thoughts were going through your mind? Memories, insights?</p>				
<p>Evidence that supports that thought</p> <p>What facts support the truthfulness of this thought or image?</p>				
<p>Evidence that does not support that thought</p> <p>What facts/experiences indicates this thought may not be true?</p>				
<p>Alternative thought</p> <p>Write a new thought that takes into account evidence for/against the original thought.</p>				
<p>Emotion or feeling</p> <p>How do you feel about the situation now out in a scale from 0 to 100%?</p>				

LETTING GO WITH MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness can be a fantastic tool to help you learn how to be present in the moment, and thus lessen any negative thoughts and feelings that may arise. Use this worksheet to help you assess before and after practicing mindfulness.

Day of the week	Describe how you feel before mindfulness	Describe what happened during mindfulness	Describe how you feel after mindfulness
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

RE-FRAMING YOUR THOUGHTS

The way we think can determine our behavior, so it is important that we train our brain to think towards a positive mindset so we can focus on a positive behavior. Use this opportunity to reconstruct your negative thoughts and change them into realistic thoughts. Fill in the below chart taking the first lines as examples.

INSTEAD OF...

TRY...

My friend isn't speaking to me. She must be upset with me and is giving me short answers.



She might be having a bad day or is busy and doesn't want to speak much.

What if I make a mistake and everything turns out badly?



I won't know anyone at the party and everyone will stare at me.



30 DAY IMPOSTER SYNDROME

SELF-CARE CHALLENGE

DAY 1 finish a project you've been overly perfecting	DAY 2 go over a to-do list and see what tasks you can delegate	DAY 3 journal about your day	DAY 4 write down 3 self-approving thoughts	DAY 5 make a list of 3 things you are proud of
DAY 6 take some time to enjoy your favorite treat!	DAY 7 try a 10 minute meditation before bed	DAY 8 try doing something new that sounds fun to you	DAY 9 ask for help when you feel stuck with something	DAY 10 take a mental health day
DAY 11 have a phone-free night/day	DAY 12 budget 30 minutes of spa time	DAY 13 check-in on where are you setting too high of standards	DAY 14 talk to a friend about your goals	DAY 15 accept a recognition without qualifying or dismissing it
DAY 16 make a gratitude list	DAY 17 pause and analyze if you're taking on more than you can manage	DAY 18 go outside and get 20 minutes of sunshine	DAY 19 practice some deep breathing exercises	DAY 20 share an achievement with someone important to you
DAY 21 unfollow negative social media accounts	DAY 22 write a bucket list of things you want to do outside of work	DAY 23 spend some time with someone you love	DAY 24 start planning for your next vacation time	DAY 25 write down a list of your strengths and talents
DAY 26 take your time to learn a new skill without self judgment	DAY 27 plan a night out with friends	DAY 28 celebrate a small achievement	DAY 29 make a list of habits you want to stop doing	DAY 30 start a project you've been putting off