

What is Imposter Syndrome?

It's normal to feel out of place or doubt yourself occasionally. But if you have these feelings most of the time, you may be experiencing *imposter syndrome*.

Imposter syndrome refers to long-lasting feelings of unworthiness that don't match up with the facts or others' perceptions. The key feature of imposter syndrome is a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.

 Traits	 Consequences
- having unrealistically high standards - dreading being "found out" as a fraud - hiding deficits rather than addressing them - consistently feeling out of place or unworthy - dwelling on negative feedback while ignoring praise & achievements	- missed opportunities - low self-esteem - loss of confidence - depression - reduced productivity - burnout - social isolation - anxiety

 Examples	
At work	In a relationship
Keith just started a new job. Everyone was impressed by his application, but Keith agonizes over whether he can meet their expectations. He berates himself for any mistake, real or perceived, discounting anything he does well. He's terrified he'll be exposed as an incompetent fraud.	After several unsatisfying relationships, Roberta found someone who feels like a perfect fit. But she's plagued by feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness. Roberta goes out of her way to hide her imperfections. She's convinced her partner will one day discover her flaws and leave her.

 Risk factors	
✓ toxic or hostile environment ✓ first in family to take on a specific role ✓ achievement-oriented childhood ✓ perfectionist tendencies	✓ experiencing discrimination or bias ✓ low self-esteem or self-defeating thoughts ✓ defining success based on job role ✓ high need for external validation

 Key facts		
Imposter syndrome is common in high-achieving individuals.	Women & underrepresented groups are more likely to experience imposter syndrome.	Around 70% of people have suffered from imposter syndrome at some point.