

## The Imposter Syndrome is a deep-seated belief that we aren't good enough. It's a case of mistaken identity

*“People perform to the level of their mindset,  
not their capabilities”*  
Suzanne Mercier

In 1974, Psychologists Dr. Pauline Rose Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes identified the condition after a significant number of high achieving female academics studying for their Masters or PhD qualifications became stressed and convinced they would fail their exams or dissertations. They did very well in spite of their earlier concerns. Clance and Imes researched the mistaken belief further and found that it consistently showed up. They coined the term Imposter Phenomenon and identified the key characteristics as:

- \* Feeling like an intellectual fake or fraud in the context of their current success
- \* Believing that they do not deserve their success and that others have been deceived into thinking otherwise
- \* They over-emphasised their weaknesses or deficiencies and downplayed their strengths
- \* Convinced that they are less intelligent and competent than appearances would suggest
- \* Believing that their success is due to luck, fate, charm or anything other than their own talent

They essentially saw themselves as less than they truly were.

Subsequent research has confirmed that the syndrome impacts around 70% of the working population and includes males in the same proportion as females.

It has also established that the Syndrome is alive and well in commercial environments, although there is far less research to support its commercial manifestation and cost. A recent study conducted at the University of Salzburg highlighted that feelings of imposterism impact career development, career aspirations and leadership aspirations. In other words, when they experience it, people hold themselves back.