

# Finding Freedom From Imposter Syndrome

with Melody Wilding, LMSW

Thank you

**ADWEEK®**







**Can you relate to Arjun  
or Maria's story?**

# Today You Will...

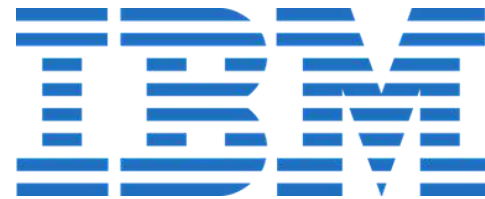
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- ① **Gain a clear understanding of what Imposter Syndrome is**
- ② **Apply the 3 core confidence skills essential to freeing yourself from Imposter Syndrome**
- ③ **Identify what you can do to counteract Imposter Syndrome on your team and in the workplace**

# Hi, I'm Melody.

- I'm an Executive Coach and licensed social worker
- I help top performers like you get out of their own way
- Author of the upcoming book *Trust Yourself: Stop Overthinking, Master Your Emotions, and Channel Ambition into Success*







**They are what I call...**  
**Sensitive Strivers**

# What is a Sensitive Striver?

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**They are highly attuned to emotions**



**They are deeply caring and give 100 percent to their work**



**They're more susceptible to stress, emotional overwhelm, and overthinking.**

**Are you a Sensitive Striver?**

# Imposter Syndrome

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**Crippling self-belief that  
you don't deserve or  
couldn't replicate your  
success**

And an inability to internalize achievements

# Imposter Syndrome

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**It manifests in feeling like you're a fake who will be exposed as incapable or ill-equipped**

... Despite plenty of evidence to prove you're skilled and competent.



# Do You Have Imposter Syndrome?

Credit: Dr. Valerie Young



- Do you secretly worry that others will find out that you're not as bright and capable as they think you are?
- Do you sometimes shy away from challenges because of nagging self-doubt?
- Do you tend to chalk your accomplishments up to being a “fluke,” “no big deal” or the fact that people just “like” you?
- Do you hate making a mistake, being less than fully prepared or not doing things perfectly?
- Do you tend to feel crushed by even constructive criticism, seeing it as evidence of your “ineptness?”
- When you do succeed, do you think, “Phew, I fooled 'em this time but I may not be so lucky next time.”
- Do you believe that other people (students, colleagues, competitors) are smarter and more capable than you are?
- Do you live in fear of being found out, discovered, unmasked?

# Signs of Imposter Syndrome

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**Downplaying accomplishments**



**Attributing success to luck**



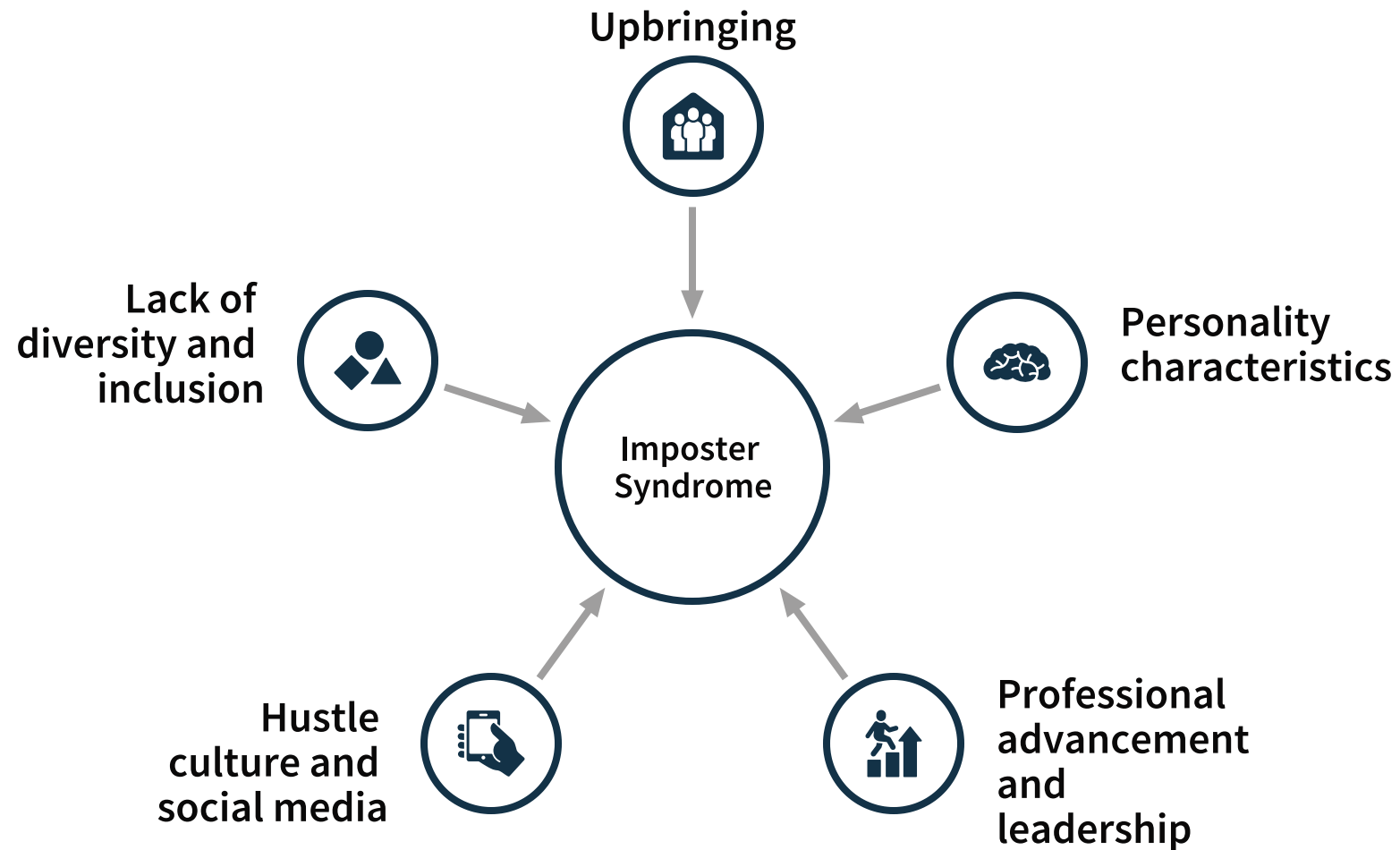
**Constantly second-guessing yourself**



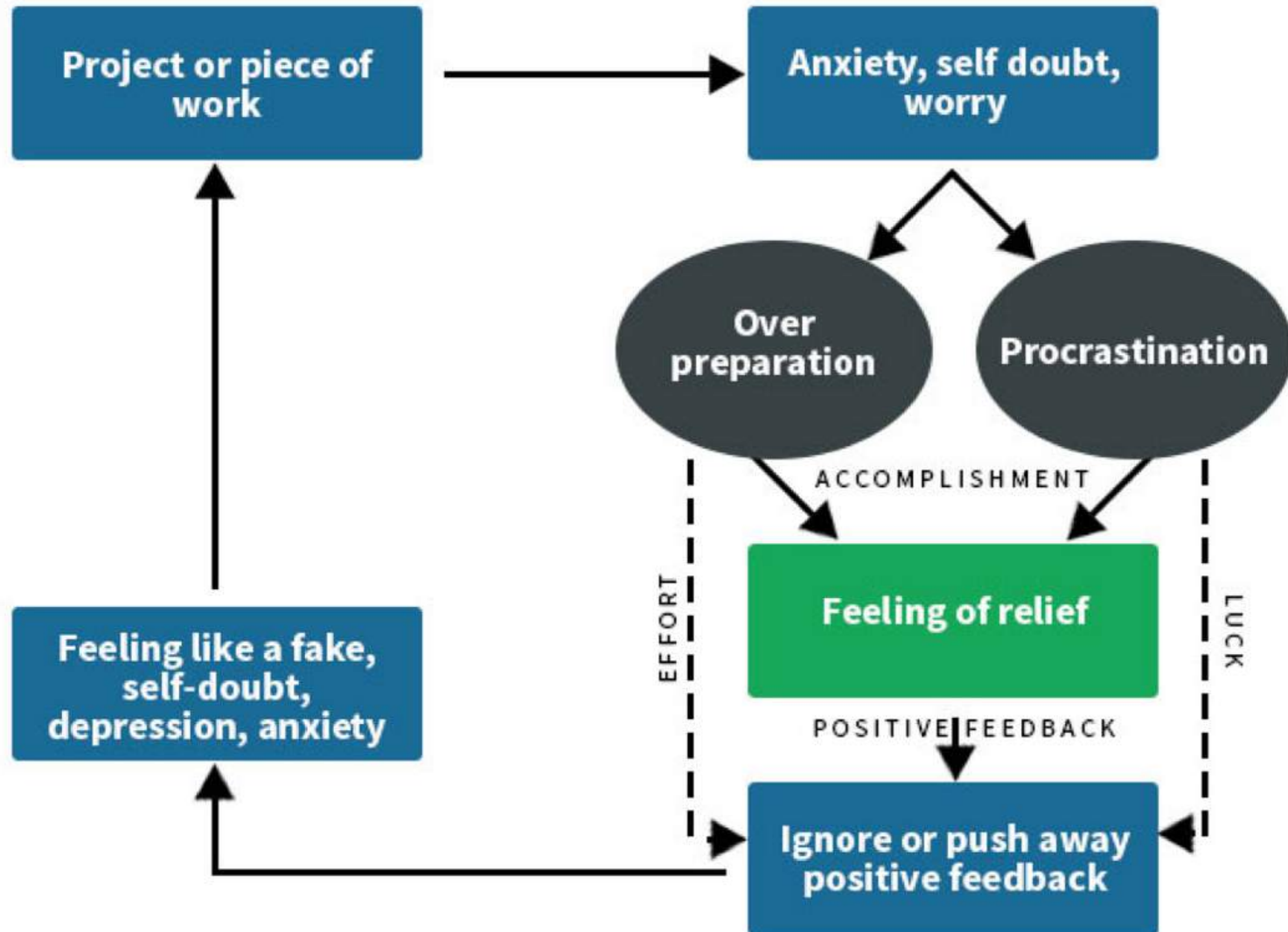
**Fear being exposed and fear of failure**

# Where Does it Come From?

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# The Imposter Cycle



# The Consequences

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Keeping quiet and not putting forth your ideas	Turning down new opportunities
Failing to complete important projects	Avoiding feedback
Reluctance to ask for help	Low confidence and burnout



**What is your experience  
with Imposter Syndrome?**



**Talking about Imposter Syndrome is only the first step**



# Three Core Confidence Skills

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Reframing  
negative self talk

Internalizing  
achievements

Accepting, not  
deflecting, praise

# **Core Confidence Skill #1: Reframing negative self-talk**







# Unhelpful Thoughts

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- Also called “cognitive distortions”, these automatic, self-critical thoughts drive Imposter Syndrome

# Time to play... Imposter Syndrome Bingo!



# Types of Cognitive Distortions

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<b>Catastrophizing</b>	You expect the worst.	I'm going to get fired and end up broke and homeless.
<b>All or nothing thinking</b>	You see situations and yourself in black or white absolutes	I have to be perfect, or I'm a failure.
<b>Overgeneralization</b>	You take one unfavorable example and make it an ongoing pattern.	I'm always screwing up.
<b>Mental filter</b>	You ignore positive aspects and focus on the negative aspects only.	I obsess about the one "meets expectations" rating on my performance review.
<b>Emotional reasoning</b>	You believe what you feel must automatically be true.	I feel stupid, therefore I am stupid.
<b>Jumping to conclusions</b>	You make unwarranted judgements and think you know what others are feeling and thinking without them saying.	She didn't respond to my email. I know she hates me.
<b>Personalization</b>	You hold yourself accountable for things beyond your control.	The project failed. I didn't spend enough time on it.
<b>Should statements</b>	You attach yourself to a certain outcomes or expectations.	"I should be better at this by now"



# Now Reframe It

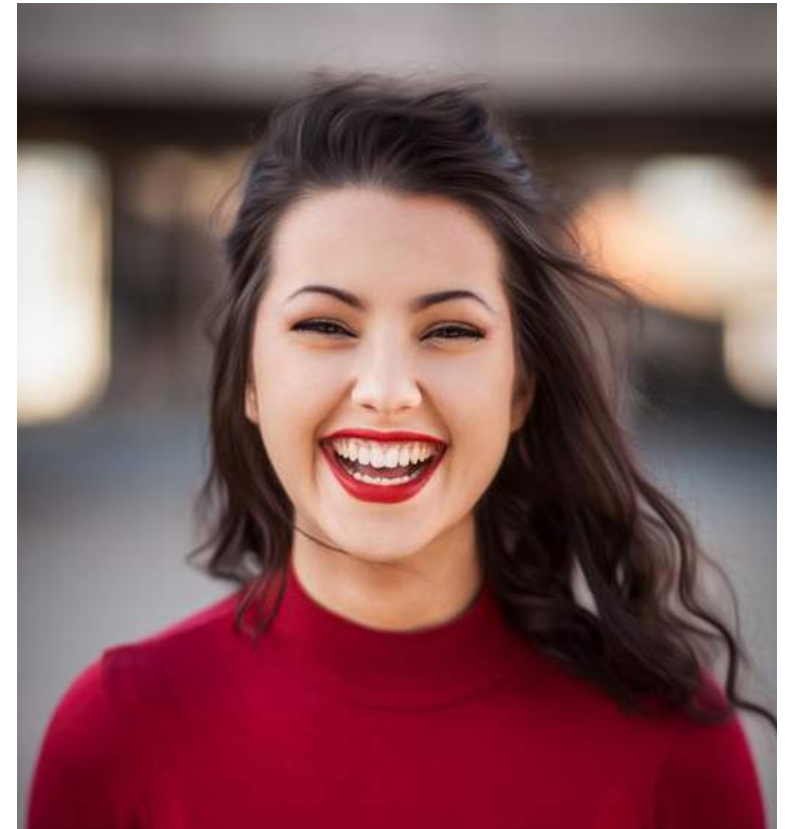
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**The way you view something can exacerbate your stress — or minimize it**



**Reframing is a way of finding more positive alternatives**



**Shown to boost a positive outlook and lower stress**

# Reframing Negative Self-Talk

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UNHELPFUL THOUGHT	EXAMPLE OF	REFRAME
I can't do anything right.	All or nothing thinking	This is a minor mistake. You're stressed, so slow down.
If I speak up, everyone will laugh at me.	Catastrophizing	It's better to ask the question than spend two weeks going in the wrong direction
My direct report didn't do a task right once. It's easier to do it myself.	Overgeneralization	It's time to flex your delegation muscle



# Activity: The Rule of 5

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5 minutes

- 1 Find a partner
- 2 Write down an example of an unhelpful thought you struggle with
- 3 Work with your partner to reframe the thought and brainstorm 5 other ways to view the situation
- 4 Share your reactions with one another  
Then we'll share with the group



# Questions to Help You

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- How would my best friend / hero / someone who is confident respond?
- If I knew everything would work out, how would my view change?
- What can I learn from this?
- When have I handled something like this before?
- What thought would get me closer to my goals?
- What other angles have I not considered yet?





**Quick tip:  
Give your inner critic a name**

# Core Confidence Skill #2: Internalizing achievements

# Internalizing Achievements

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**Imposter Syndrome  
makes it hard to  
recognize and own your  
accomplishments**

But it's essential for your advancement, and your  
mental well-being





# Activity: Success Pyramid

5 minutes

- 1 Find a partner
- 2 Share with them 3 accomplishments from the past 6 months and why you're proud of them
- 3 Name 2 professional skills you possess
- 4 Identify one personal quality you consider to be your superpower

Reflect as a group: How did it feel to talk about yourself?



**Quick tip:  
Create a brag file**

**Core Confidence Skill #3:  
Accepting, not deflecting, praise**

# Activity: Take a Compliment

3 minutes

- 1 Find a partner and sit facing one another.
- 2 One partner will offer the other a genuine compliment.  
Focus on strengths, qualities, & characteristics
- 3 The partner receiving the compliment will take a moment to let it wash over them.
- 4 Say “I receive and accept your compliment” then switch roles!

Reflect: What was it like to sit with the compliment instead of responding right away? How is this different from how you normally respond?



Thank You  
Very Much





**Quick tip:  
Replace “sorry” with “thank you”**

# Counteract Imposter Syndrome By...

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**Creating psychological safety**



# Counteract Imposter Syndrome By...

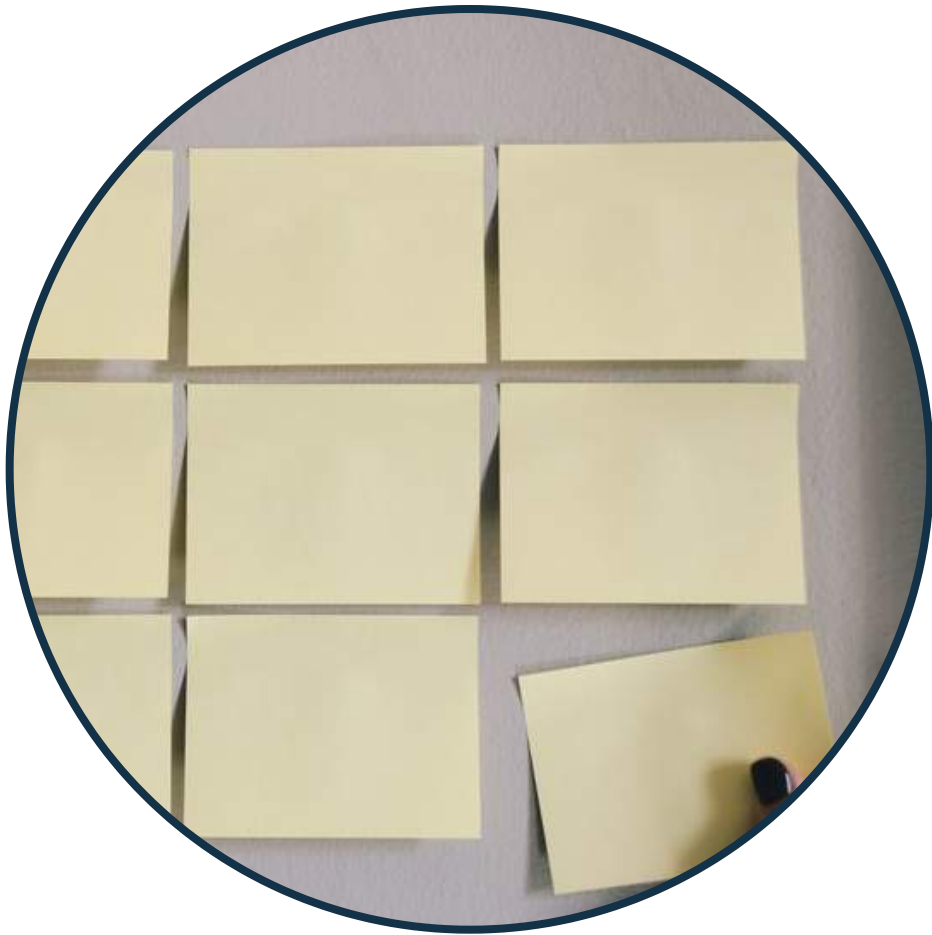
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**Making recognition a  
priority**

# Counteract Imposter Syndrome By...

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**Being mindful of expectations you set and language you use**

# Counteract Imposter Syndrome By...

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**Mentoring others**

# What you learned

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- ① **The signs of Imposter Syndrome**
- ② **Ways Imposter Syndrome holds you back**
- ③ **3 core confidence skills**
  - Reframing negative self-talk
  - Internalizing achievements
  - Accepting, don't deflect, praise
- ④ **How to counteract Imposter Syndrome as a leader**

**What is your biggest takeaway?**



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# Last thing

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## Presentation Feedback

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

1. The most valuable idea and how I'll apply it

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2. One suggestion to make Melody's presentation better

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- I'm interested in coaching with Melody
- I'd like to refer Melody to another organization/group she could speak at
- Add me to your email list to get your newsletter with information, resources, tips, & recommendations.

**Please fill out the  
feedback form!**

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# THE HAVEN

a home for sensitive high achievers

*Melody*  
WILDING