

Imposter syndrome competence types

Dr Valerie Young an expert on IS discovered that Imposters experience failure related shame in different ways because they don't all define shame in the same way. She uncovered these 5 'competence types', internal rules that people with IS generally follow:

Perfectionists: believe they should deliver a perfect performance 100% of the time which creates a cycle where their best efforts are never good enough.

They have a specific vision of what they want and a precise plan to get there.

Rather than celebrate success they focus on things they could have done better.

Find it difficult if not in control.

Natural Genius: for this group true competence means having inherent intelligence and ability. There is no room for development.

They care 'how' and 'when' so if they can't get something right on the first try, they struggle to master a new skill, or something takes too long it evokes feelings of shame.

Can be overly optimistic about how much they can get done in the available time and when progress is slower, they are disappointed.

Setbacks completely throw you and you avoid taking risks in case you fail.

Soloists: Care mainly about the 'who' completes the task. If they need help, they see it as a sign of failure.

If struggling or stuck they can procrastinate to avoid admitting defeat.

Asking for help is a sign of weakness and might reveal incompetence.

Expert: The expert is the knowledge version of the Perfectionist. They believe true competence means knowing absolutely everything. The primary concern is 'what' and 'how much' you know or can do.

They believe if they were really clever, they would already know everything they need to know to master a challenge before they even start.

Deeply fear being exposed as inexperienced or lacking knowledge and endlessly seek out more information which is often a disguise for procrastination. The hunt for new information can get in the way of completing tasks or projects.

Superwoman: Push themselves to work harder than everyone else. Set unrealistically high standards in every area and are like the Perfectionists – on turbo charge.

Young differentiates the two by how they interpret their competence – the Super defines it based on ability to perform perfectly in multiple roles vs perfectionist who cares predominantly about their work career or studies.

Unable to say no even if you are struggling to keep up with everything, switched on all the time and unable to enjoy down time or non-achievement based activities.

QUESTIONS:

Which imposter fits with your style of competence?

What impact does this have on how you do things?

What negative effects is imposter syndrome having on your life?