



You Belong Here! **Managing Imposter** **Syndrome**

Melody Wright

**Manager of
Learning &
Development**

**Human Resources &
Strategic Talent
Management**



Melody Wright

Melody is the Manager of Learning & Development for UMBC:

- helping every contributor to find a career path through learning and development for their current job and beyond to the next.
- B.S. in Business Administration with concentrations in Strategic Management and HR Management
- M.A. in Instructional Design, UMBC

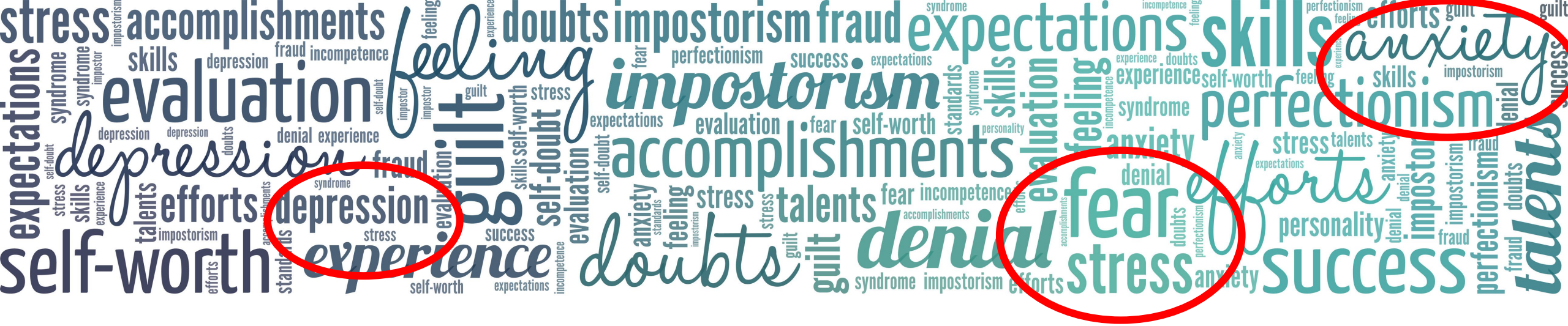
Agenda

- What is Imposter Syndrome?
- Background on Imposter Syndrome
- Imposter Syndrome & Graduate Students
- Ways to Combat Imposter Syndrome

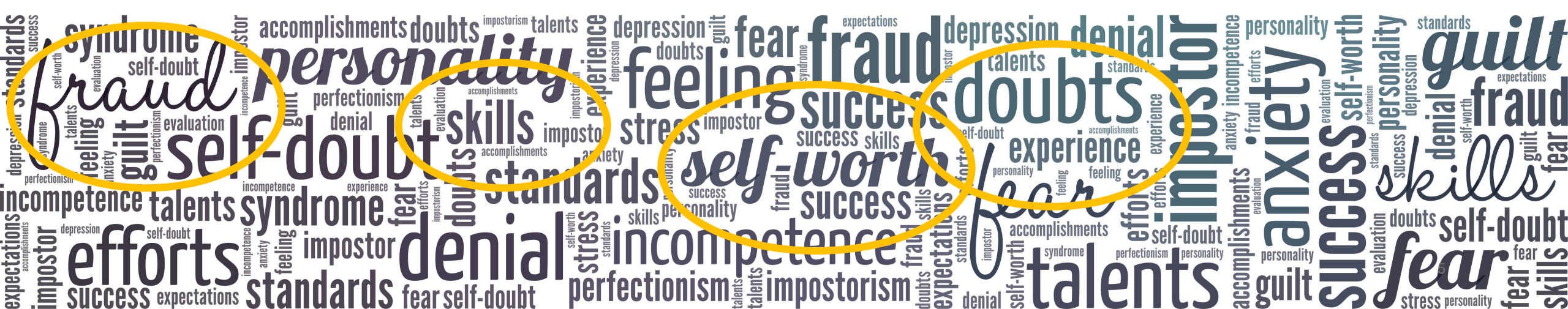




What is Imposter Syndrome and its background?



IMPOSTOR SYNDROME



What is imposter syndrome?

“Imposter syndrome is as an individual’s belief of inadequacy that persists in the face of information indicating the opposite is true. The phenomenon is experienced as chronic self-doubt and feelings of intellectual fraud.” -*nycbar.org*



Psychology Today:

People who struggle with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are, in fact, generally held. They feel that they aren't as competent or intelligent as others might think—and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them. Those with imposter syndrome—which is not an official diagnosis—are often well accomplished; they may hold high office or have numerous academic degrees.

Imposter Phenomena of the 1970s became Imposter Syndrome as more people experienced it more intensely.

We all like numbers to validate our feelings!

70%

Academic studies suggest that 70% of us will experience imposter syndrome.

82%

American Psychological Association has hypothesized that 82% of people experience imposter syndrome at some point or another in their career, which can lead to burn out.

Who Experiences Imposter Syndrome?



- Anyone can experience it
- Often associated with high achievers and those from minority groups

Examples:

- Starting a new job role
- In social situations
- At college or university
- Winning an award
- Giving a presentation
- Who else?



“It is that feeling of ‘I am not as good as everybody else around me’”

Valerie Sheares Ashby



Maya Angelou

“I have written eleven books
but each time I think ‘Uh-oh,
they’re going to find out now’ .
. . I’ve run a game on
everybody, and they’re going
to find me out.”

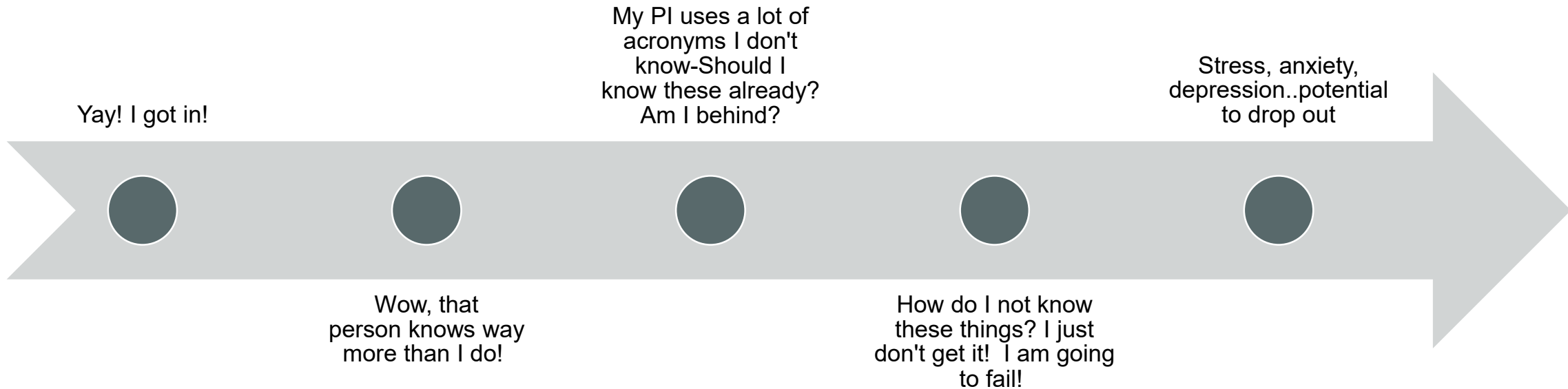


"I have spent my years since Princeton, while at law school and in my various professional jobs, not feeling completely a part of the worlds I inhabit. I am always looking over my shoulder wondering if I measure up." ~Sonia Sotomayor, First Hispanic Supreme Court Justice



Imposter Syndrome & Graduate School Students

Common Path of Imposter Syndrome in Graduate School



More from Psychology Today...

- Imposter syndrome is a stubborn and common issue that impedes progress, removes joy, isolates, and often leads to habits that are counter-productive to effective learning.
- **Academia and graduate school** are breeding grounds for imposter syndrome because there are so many myths, unwritten rules, and general opacity of academic culture.
- There is also a lack of transparency in research methods, publishing processes, deciding authorship of projects, building a reputation, and making connections that make academia appear mystical.
- These can all lead to unproductive habits like anxiety, perfectionism, fear, and self-doubt...Imposter Syndrome

Imposter Syndrome & Graduate School

- Where does it show up?
- Why does it show up?
- When does it show up?
- What does it look like to you (symptoms)?

Are You Suffering from Imposter Syndrome?



Do you:

- Often feel unworthy even when others say you are good at what you do?
- Always feel that you succeed only because of what others do to help you?
- Find yourself working far too hard and preparing too much to achieve success due to feeling unworthy?
- Hold back opportunities for fear of not being good enough?

“I am
the only one
that is feeling
this way.”

Stories we tell
ourselves





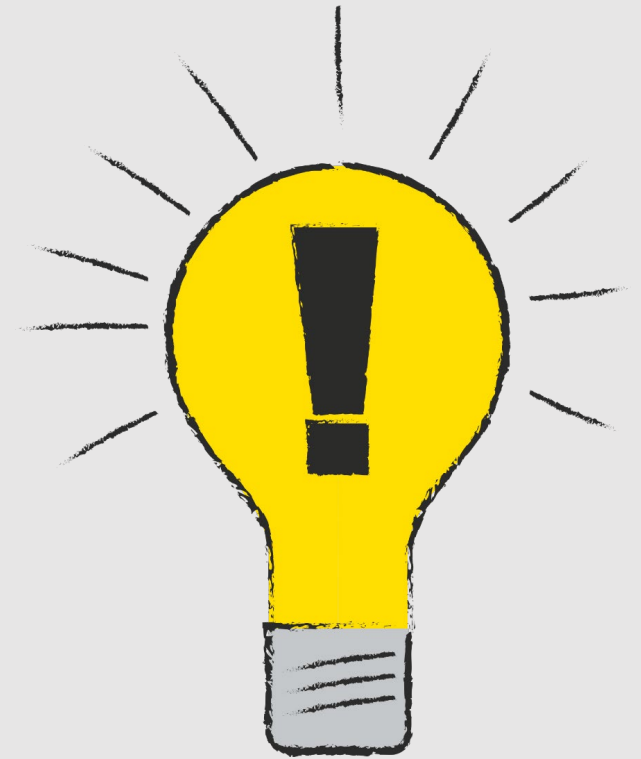
“I was raised to feel this way.”
Stressed out children become
stressed out adults!



Ways to Combat Imposter Syndrome

What You Can Do as an Individual Suffering

- **List the things you are good at and your achievements and self-assess. Begin to consider the facts.**
- **Talk to other people and share your feelings**
- **Use SMART goals to set realistic targets**
 - **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time bound**
- **Reconsider social media usage if it causes you to feel inferior**
- **Remember that others feel the same way**
- **Reach out if you need to and seek help**
- **Train yourself to reframe your thoughts**



How to fight graduate school imposter syndrome

Stop comparing your insides with other people's outside.

Know that you do belong, and you can succeed.





What people see:

SUCCESS

What really happens:

FAILURE

SETBACKS

NAYSAYERS

DOUBTS

HARD WORK

SACRIFICES

RISKS

COURAGE

ACTION

PASSION

PERSISTENCE

REJECTIONS

CRITICISM

DEDICATION

INNOVATION

VISION

DREAMS

LATE NIGHTS

Go with your Strengths!

You are not yet an expert,
you are still learning.

Grace & Space



Celebrate your successes!
Each and every one of them!





“10 steps you can use to overcome imposter syndrome” –became 3 non-negotiable strategies

- ✓ People who don't feel like imposters are no more intelligent or capable than the rest of us.
- ✓ To stop feeling like an imposter you need to stop thinking like an imposter. Reframe your thoughts like a non-imposter would.
- ✓ You don't have to feel confident to act confident. Over time you will begin to believe the new thoughts.

A few final quotes

"One reason graduate students suffer from imposter syndrome is because we are just starting out in our field. We are constantly surrounded by higher level professionals who have worked in the field for decades and therefore have way more experience and knowledge. It can be intimidating when you are working alongside a Nobel Laureate or Howard Hughes Investigator, but it is important to note that everyone has been in the exact same position at some point, even those now on top."

~Caitlyn Blake-Hedges, ASCB

"Am I good enough?" is the inherent question. Since I came from a family where no one had graduated from high school, I did not set my academic sights on being an MD or PhD. Those inspirations came to me later. By then, though, I had been out of school for almost nine years and had stayed home to raise my daughter. One graduate school interviewer said to me, "You used to be a good student..."

~Judith Salmon Kaur, MD, Medical Director, Native American Programs, Mayo Cancer Center

"The good news is that I can now quickly recognize the symptoms associated with the imposter syndrome. The bad news is that I didn't recognize these symptoms for many years...it's not uncommon for people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status, to feel that they don't belong because they're different.

The key word here is feel, because feelings are not reality. The impostor syndrome elicits strong feelings that, if left unchecked, can lead to negative thoughts, which in turn can lead to a negative feedback loop of self-defeating behaviors that almost guarantee failure.

The key point is to learn to transform a negative syndrome into a positive signal — a signal that alerts you to focus on the tasks at hand and not on what you're feeling, what you look like, or what others think of you. Remove yourself from under the microscope, sit up and "lean in" as Facebook COO, Sheryl Sandberg says. If you can do this, you'll have your seat at the table and your space at the lab bench."

~Raymond Rodriguez, Ph.D., Professor of Molecular & Cellular Biology, UC Davis

QUESTIONS?





Melody Wright

melody@umbc.edu

410-455-8001

Hr.umbc.edu

Resources:

[Thinking your way out of imposter syndrome | Valerie Young – YouTube](#)

[Supporting Graduate Students with Imposter Syndrome | Psychology Today](#)

[How to Deal with Imposter Syndrome in Graduate and Professional School - Berkeley Graduate Division](#)

[We're all frauds: managing imposter syndrome in grad school - ASCB | ASCB](#)

[To tackle my imposter syndrome, I connected with other scientists of color | Science | AAAS](#)

[Facing the Imposter Syndrome Within | by SACNAS | STEM and Culture Chronicle | Medium](#)

[UMBC Counseling Center](#)

Mental health help, Mind Spa, Support Groups