'Imposter syndrome' and how to deal with it

90-minute virtual workshop

From time to time we will all have doubts about our ability and whether we 'belong'. This is never truer than at work. Imposter syndrome is the feeling that we don't deserve the position of responsibility that we have, and therefore find it difficult to take pride in our achievements and can feel like a 'fraud'.

In particular, there is a perception that this 'confidence gap' is holding women back in the workplace, with women's imposter syndrome being a cause for not going for promotions or negotiating better deals at work.

This practical workshop, aimed at all colleagues, looks at the evidence surrounding imposter syndrome and explores practical ways that organisations and colleagues can create inclusive environments to support others to develop and excel.

This short, interactive session focuses on understanding the data and experiences that surround imposter syndrome, strategies to boost confidence and reduce negative self-talk, and how to support one another and request the support of colleagues to create a shift in the organisation.

Learning objectives

- Understand imposter syndrome and where it comes from
- Explore the impact it may have on us in the workplace
- Understand how to recognise imposter syndrome in others
- Develop strategies to tackle and overcome imposter syndrome
- Understand how to support people with imposter syndrome

Webinar overview

9.00   Welcome, agenda, reflection of our own experiences
Welcome. Group discussion of our experiences of imposter syndrome at work, where it has held us back and the impact it has had on us. Agenda and personal objectives (using chat function).

9.20   What is imposter syndrome?
What do we mean by 'imposter syndrome'? Exploration of data and real-life stories that highlight experiences of imposter syndrome, particularly for women at work. Understanding the 'confidence gap' through analysing research from a Cornell University study.

9.50   Confidence boosting and self-talk
An internal report at Hewlett-Packard found that men apply for a job or promotion when they think they meet approximately 60% of the criteria, compared to women who only apply for jobs where they think they meet 100% of the criteria. Using the Thoughts-Feelings-Behaviours model, participants begin to map their experiences, self-talk and how these can hold them back. Exploration of strategies for increasing self-confidence, including Amy Cuddy's 'Power Poses'.

10.10   Allyship in the workplace
The right policies alone cannot shift workplace culture, and things won't become more inclusive by only focusing on women's experiences of imposter syndrome. Group discussion to share examples of where colleagues have supported them, and specifically what they did to help and reflection on what can be learnt from these examples. Interactive discussion to explore concepts including challenging the 'Likeability Penalty', and an introduction to techniques including Obama's 'Amplification Strategy' for ensuring voices are heard.

10.20   Action plans and next steps
Participants reflect on their next steps and how they will implement their learning in the workplace. Each person makes a commitment for what they will do differently.

10.30   Close