



Imposters in the workplace

It's 5pm on Friday and phew... you've made it through another week and no one has discovered your secret... you have no idea what you are doing and you are winging it!

You may be surprised to discover, you're probably not alone in feeling this way.

Writing for the BBC, journalist Oliver Burkeman, has considered the issue of "imposter phenomenon". He has discovered the imposter phenomenon lurking in the minds of authors, artists, musicians, businesspeople and (quite terrifyingly if you have any up coming hospital appointments) even a brain surgeon.

"Part of you knows you're not as good as you're pretending to be," says Henry Marsh, a neurosurgeon and author of the memoir *No Harm*.

"But you have to come across as being relatively competent and confident."

Winner of the 2015 Costa Book of the Year Award, Frances Hardinge, says with every new project, there's a "part of my brain that tells me that this is the book... where I disappoint everybody, and people see me for the fraud I am."

It is possibly not surprising that women appear to suffer from imposter phenomenon more often than men. This is most likely due to pre-existing sexist stereotypes that call their competence into question and also that women are more likely to consider setbacks as resulting from lack of ability, whilst men are more likely to blame external factors.

Burkeman explains that this is a problem that doesn't go away with increased seniority: the more knowledge you acquire, the higher corporate levels you reach, the more likely you are to find yourself feeling out of your comfort zone and therefore like you are winging it!

However, the real reason for the phenomenon is that we only know what is going on inside our own heads and don't realise that other people suffer the same monologue of self-doubt.

Given so many successful people suffer from imposter phenomenon, we should perhaps be more wary of people who are uber-confident and never suffer self-doubt. These people may simply be too incompetent to realise how incompetent they are.