

THE WHYS AND HOWS OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME

and the Illusion of Transparency

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Slides: <http://bit.ly/art-impostor>



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Psychology and Neuroscience
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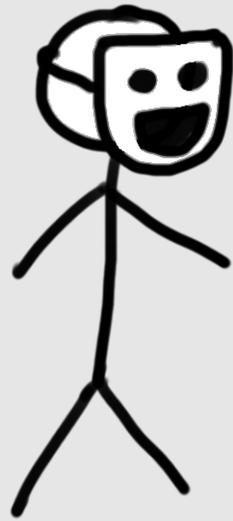
WHAT IS IMPOSTOR SYNDROME?

AKA IMPOSTER PHENOMENON

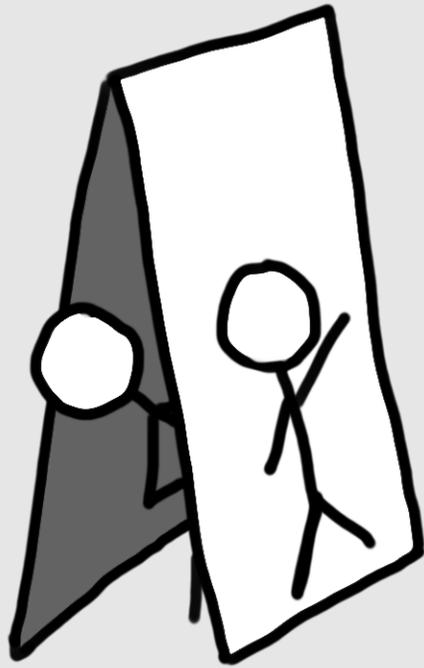
Hey. Citations
down here. ↘

(Yes, there's
citations)

Clance and Imes, 1978



Do you
feel like
a fraud?



Like you're just
waiting for
everyone else
to figure out
you're faking it?



Do you feel
like you

DON'T

DESERVE

any successes you've had?



Do you feel
like you're
Constantly
ACTING
PHONY?

THESE ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF IMPOSTOR
PHENOMENON.

IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON IS *NOT* A MENTAL DISORDER

IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON IS *NOT* A SPECIFIC PERSONALITY TRAIT

IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON *IS* AN
AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE THAT CAN
AFFECT ANYONE GIVEN THE RIGHT
CIRCUMSTANCES



Uh... what's an
affective
experience?

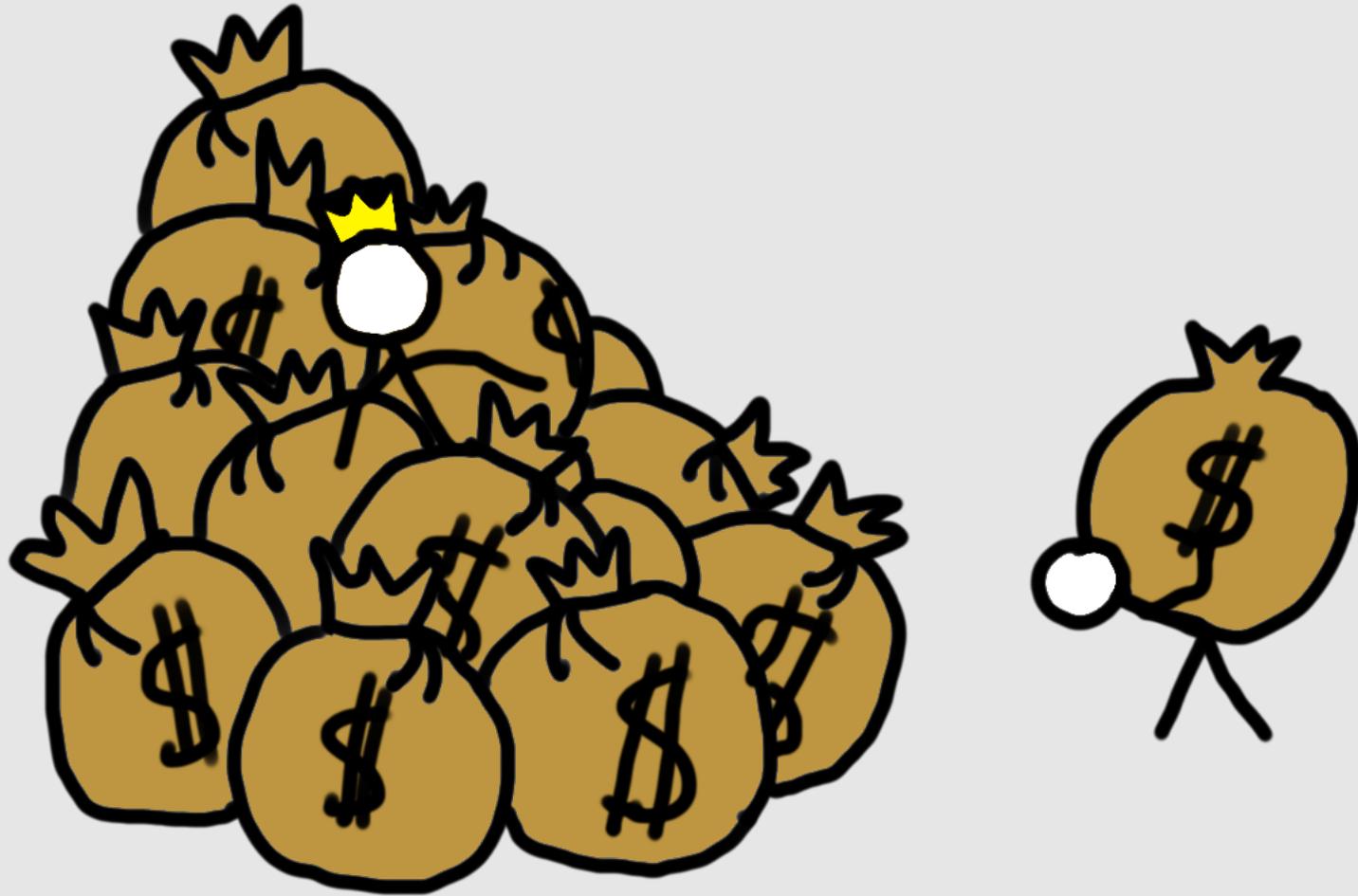
AFFECT³ (N)

Emotion or desire,
especially as influencing
behavior or action.

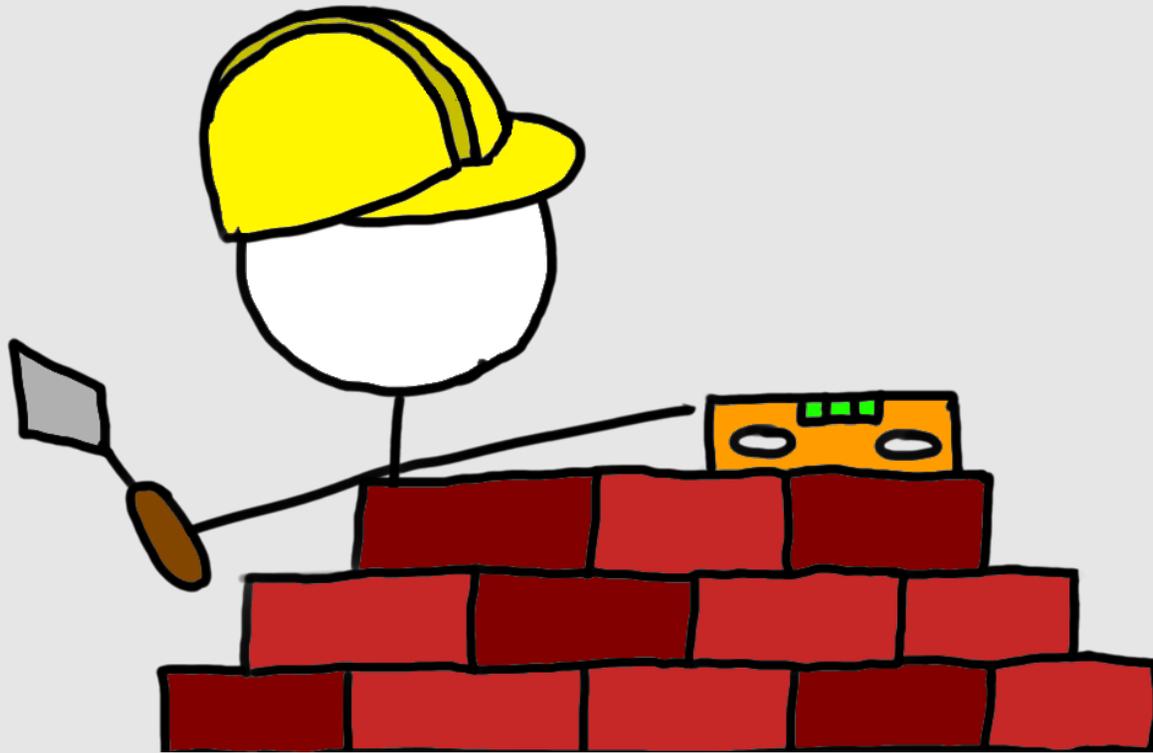
AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE

An event where you
experience a feeling or
emotion.

WHO'S AFFECTED BY IMPOSTOR
PHENOMENON?



Clance and Imes, 1978



Clance and Imes, 1978



Clance and Imes, 1978

EVERYONE!

(THOUGH POTENTIALLY IN DIFFERENT
WAYS BASED ON GENDER)



Wait...

ME?

HOW DOES IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON WORK?

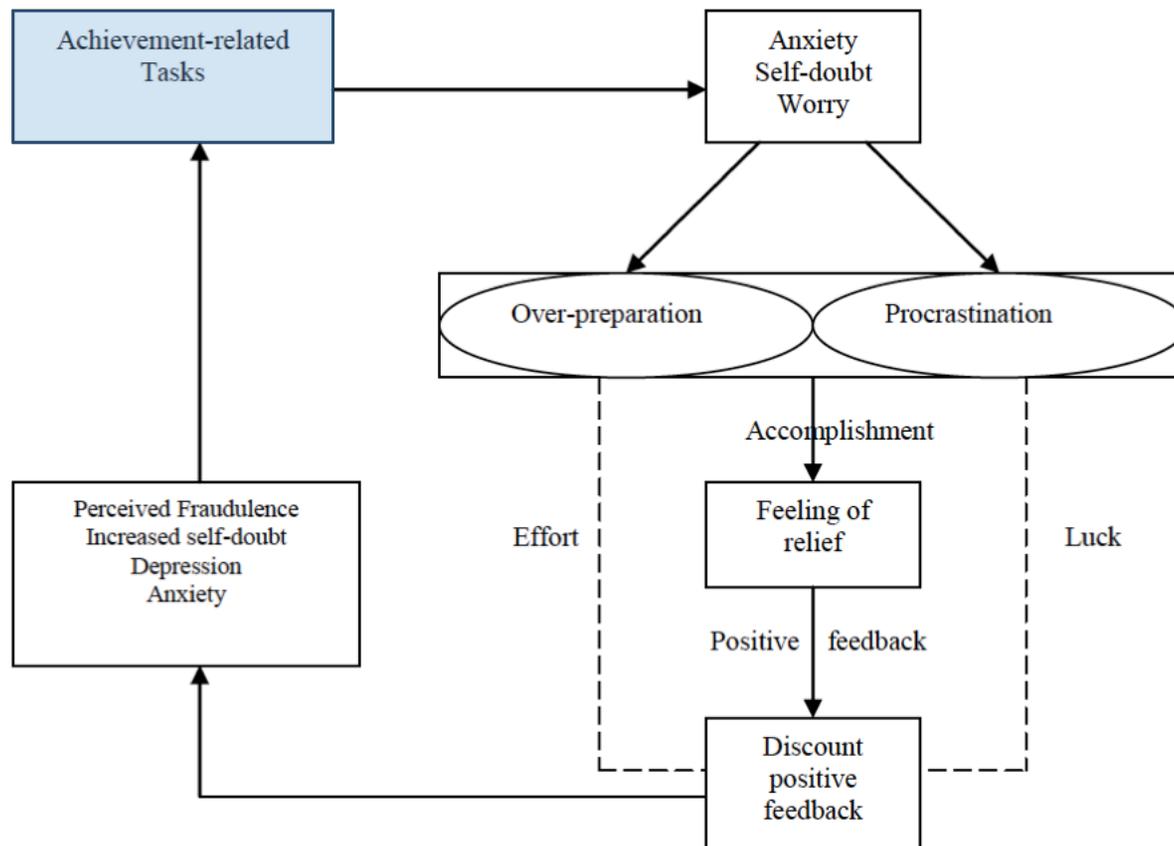


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.



Hey, this is important.

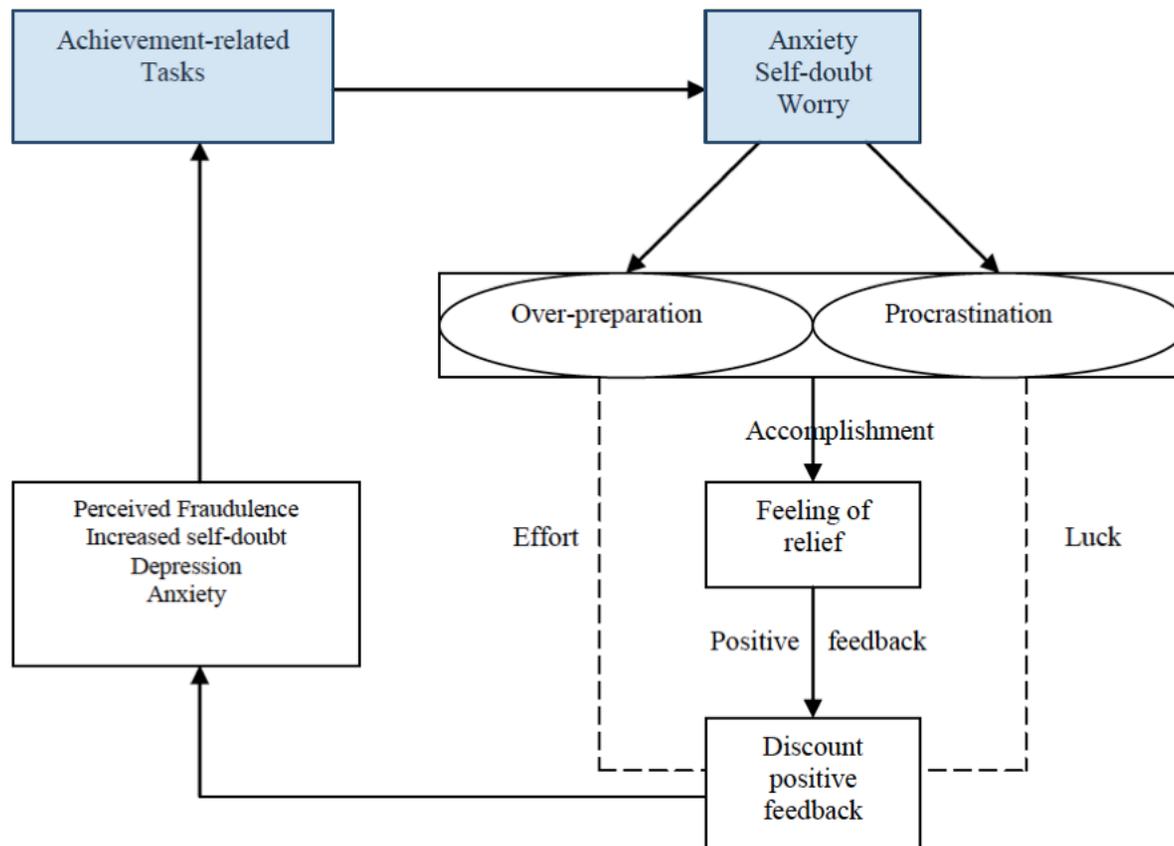


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.

Oh no. OH NO.
IT'S IMPORTANT!



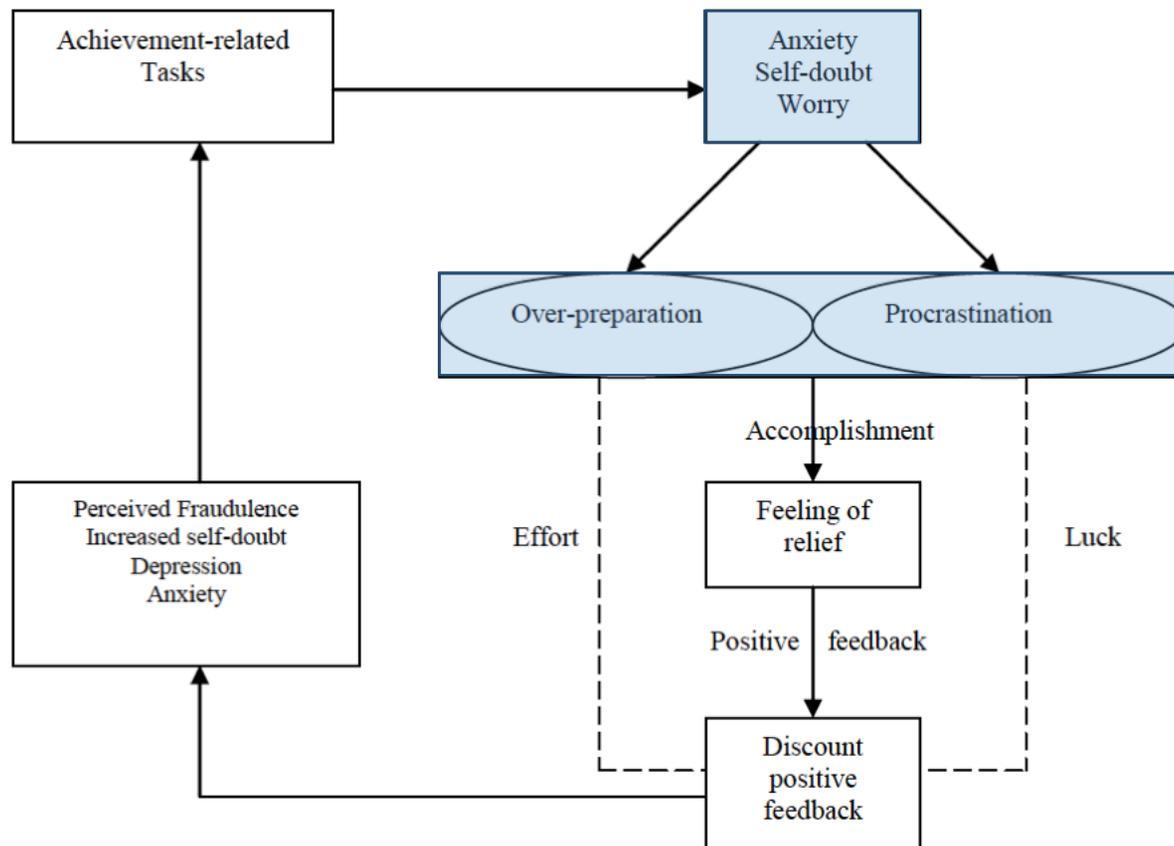


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OVERPREPARATION

Sakulku and Alexander, 2011

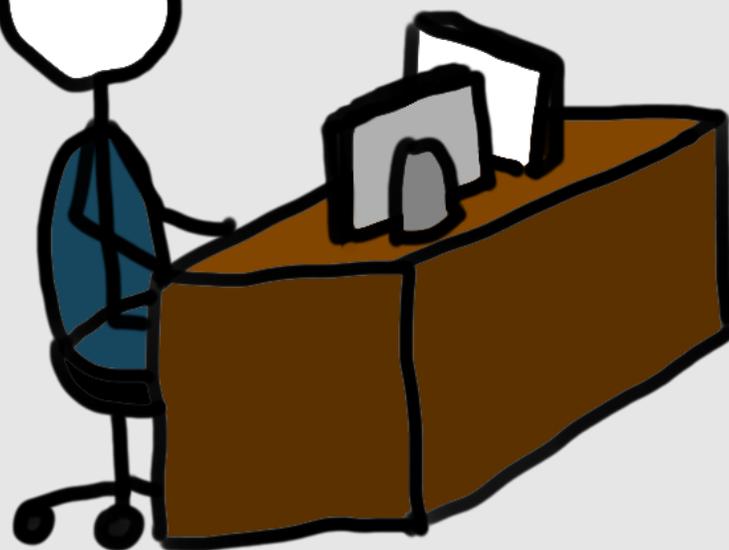
EVERYTHING
MUST BE
PERFECT!!!



SELF-HANDICAPPING (PROCRASTINATION)

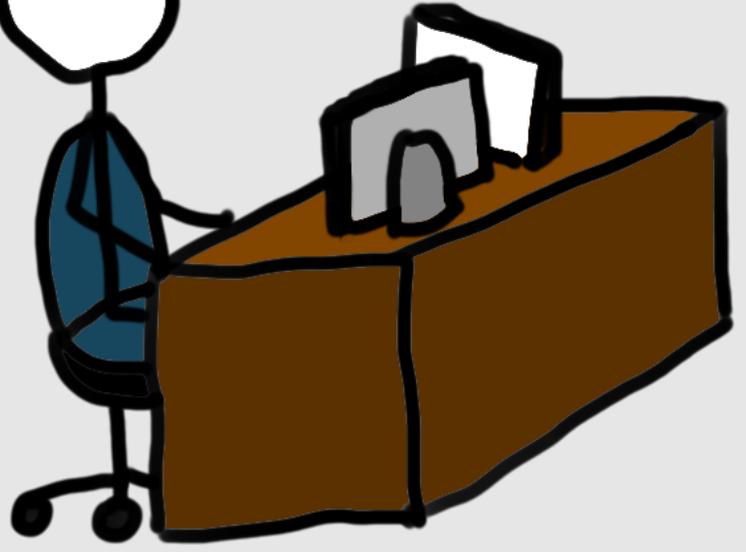
Cowman and Ferrari, 2002

If I actually
start on this,
I might fail!



If I actually
start on this,
I might fail!

Failure is
BAD!



TIME PASSES...

OH %*#@,
IT'S DUE
TOMORROW!



AFTER YOU SUCCEED...

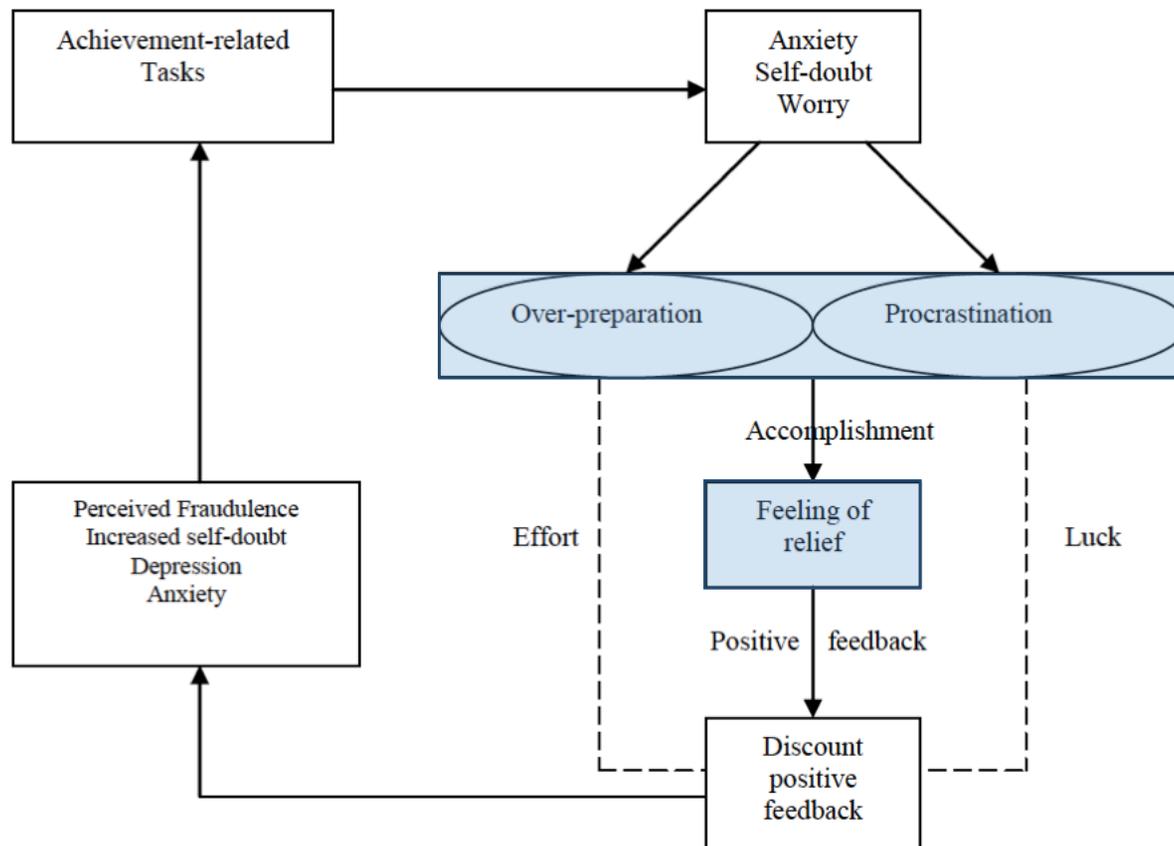


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.





Good job
on that
thing!

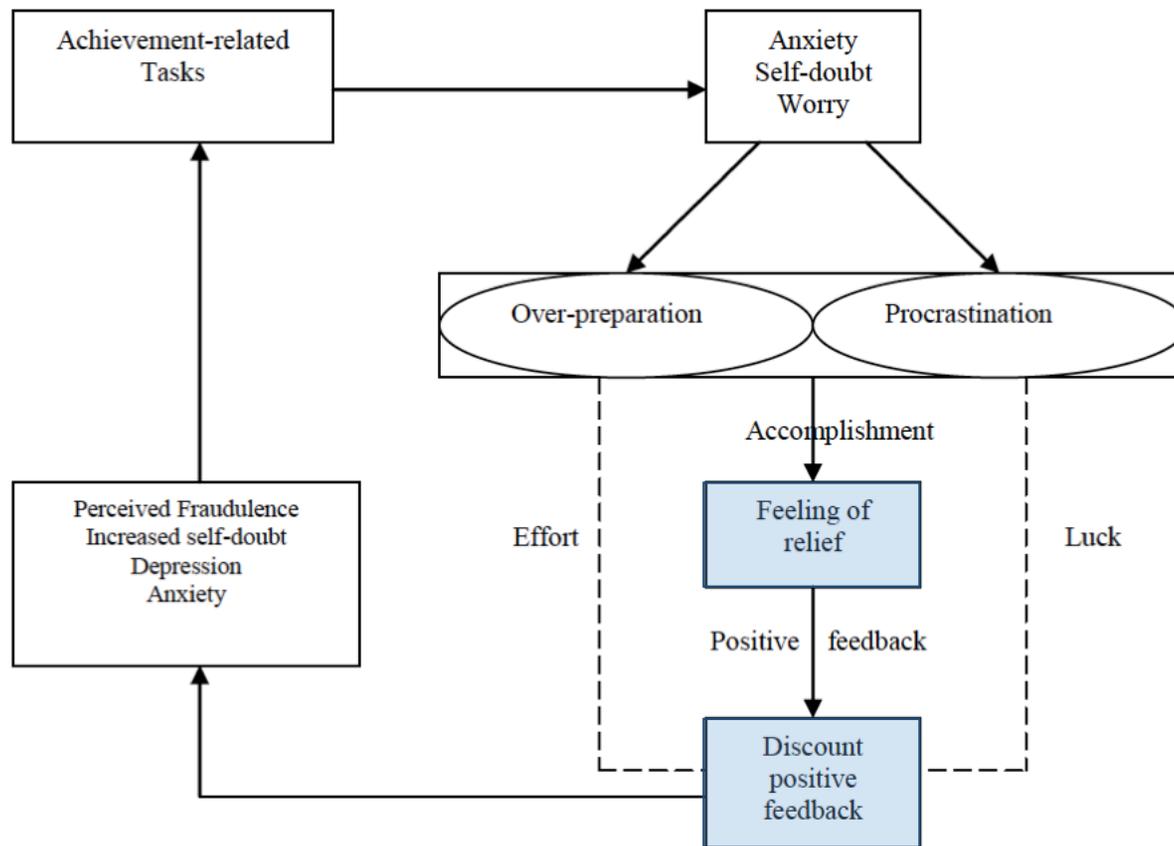


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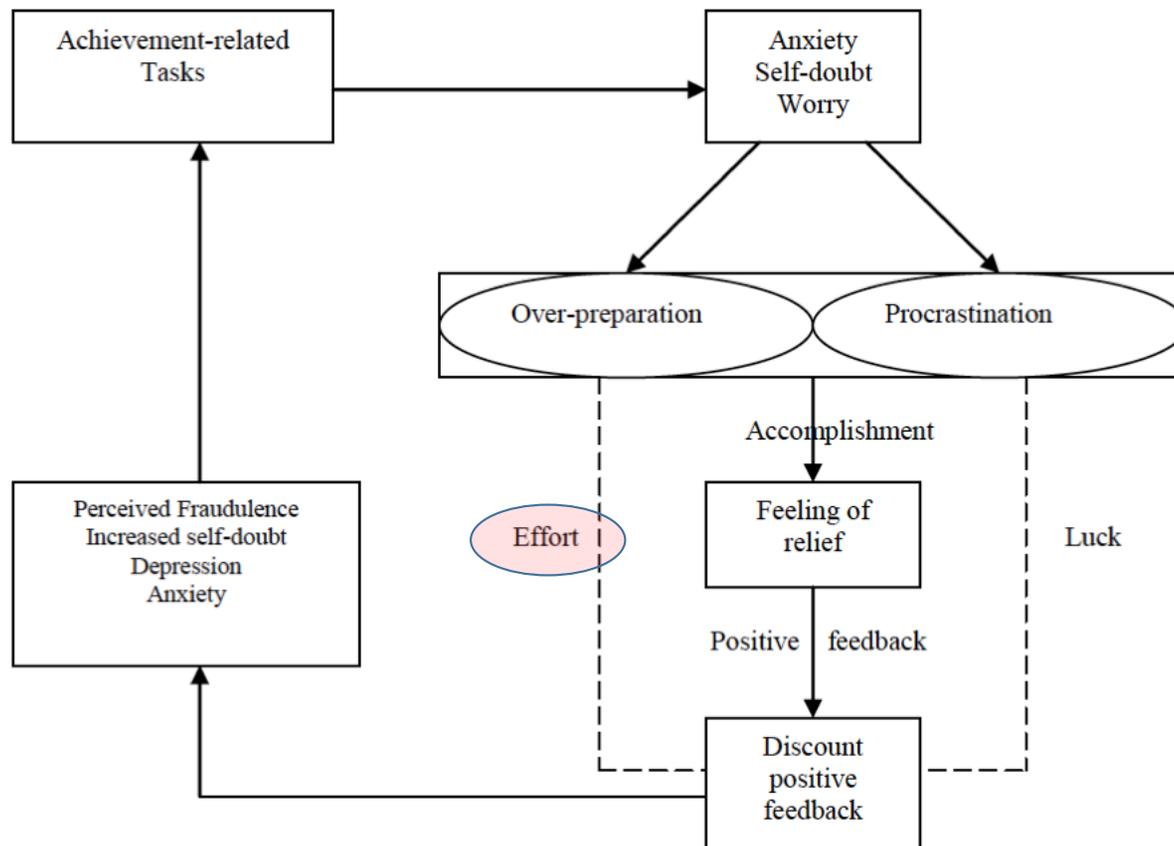


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.



I only succeeded
because I planned
for all possible events,
and put in all the
effort I could muster.

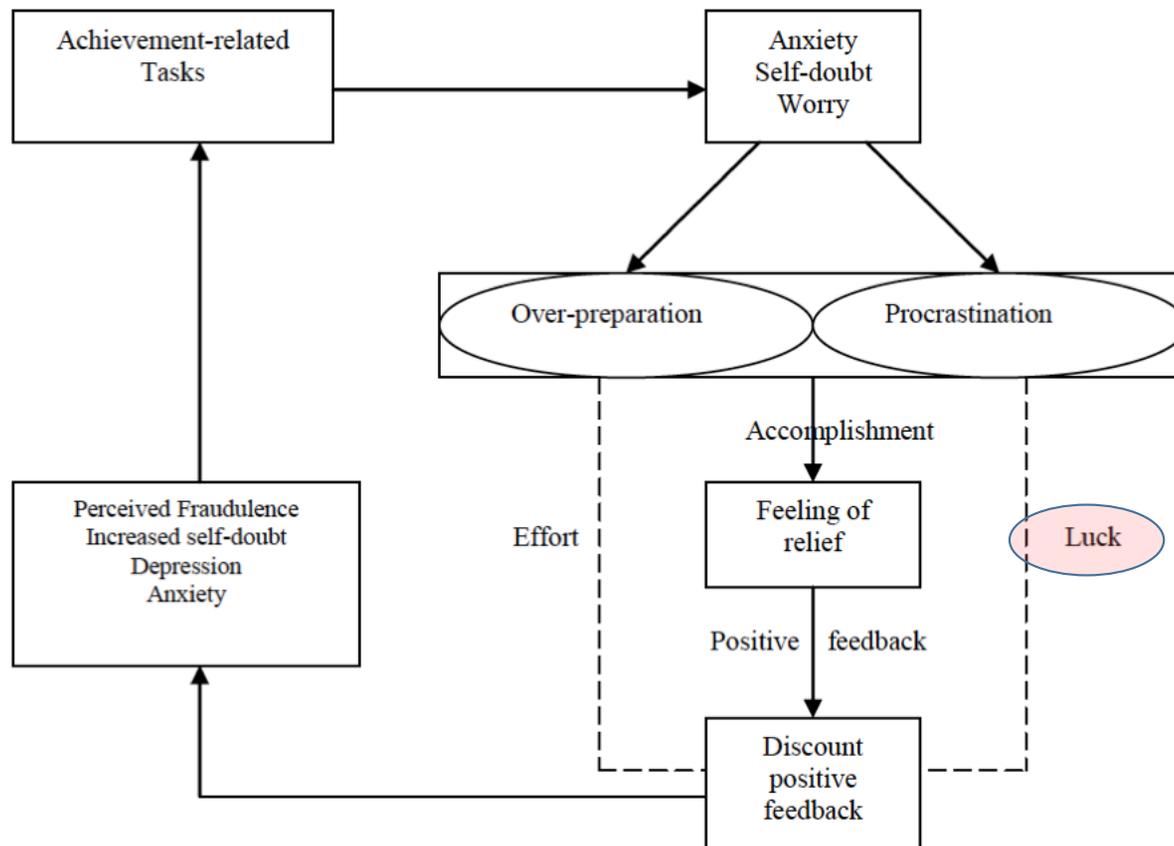
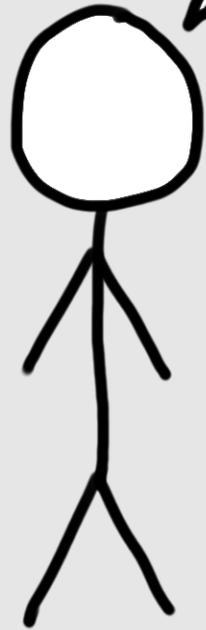


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The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.



I totally just got
lucky.

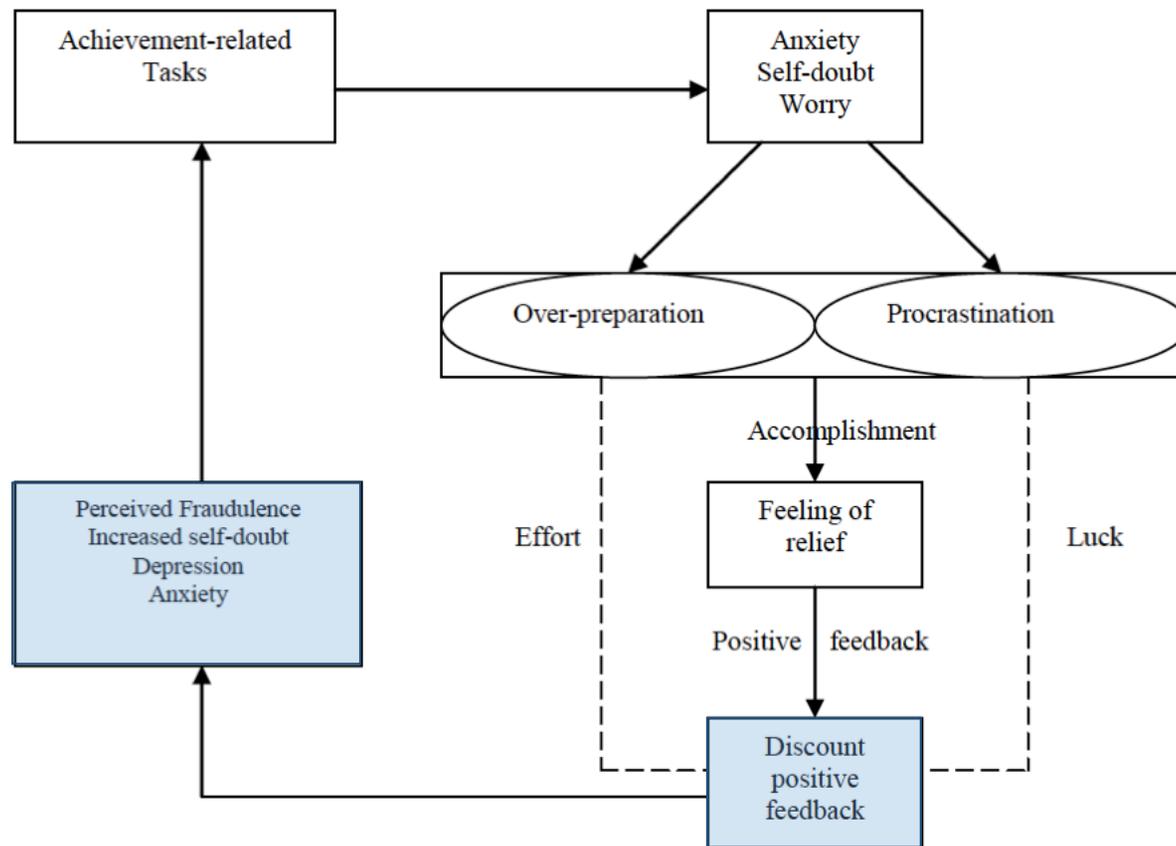


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the Impostor Cycle based on Clance (1985).
The cycle begins with the assignment of achievement related tasks.



Oh no. Everyone thinks
I succeeded! But it
was just because of
circumstances! I'll
never succeed
next time!
I'm such a fraud!



Have you seen
Karen at all
this week?

Come to
think of
it, no...

WHY DOES THE IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON
HAPPEN?

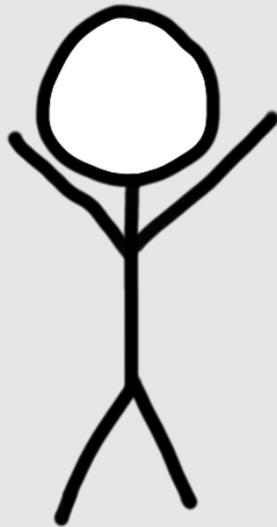
Oh boy! Cooking
is EASY, and
I'm GREAT
at it!



DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT

Kruger and Dunning, 1999

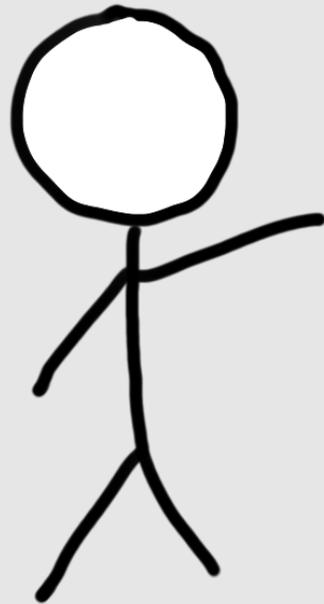
OMG.



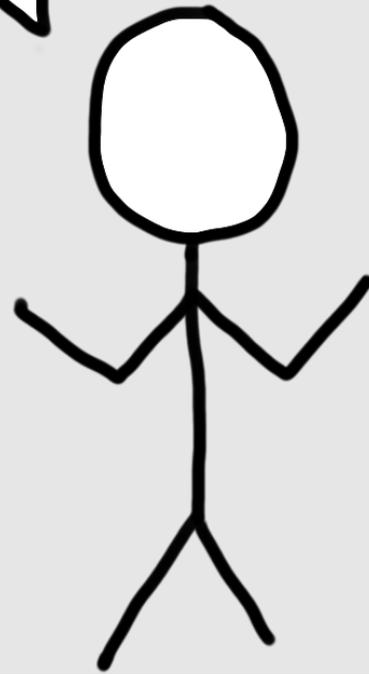
It's just a
trifle.
Literally.



You're so smart!



...not really.



PRAISE + DUNNING-KRUGER → IMPOSTOR FEELINGS

The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women, Valerie Young

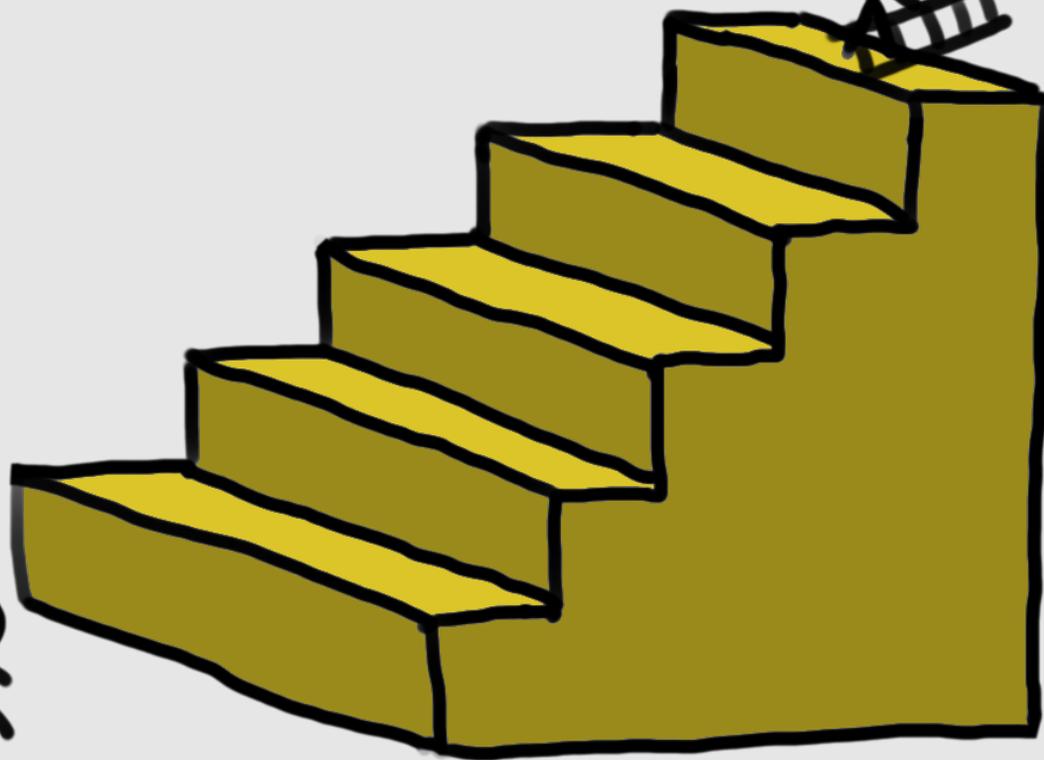
CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE

Froyd and Layne, 2008



Come on! It's easy!

Uh...



REACTION TO OTHERS' BEHAVIOR



But... I'm an
above-average
driver!

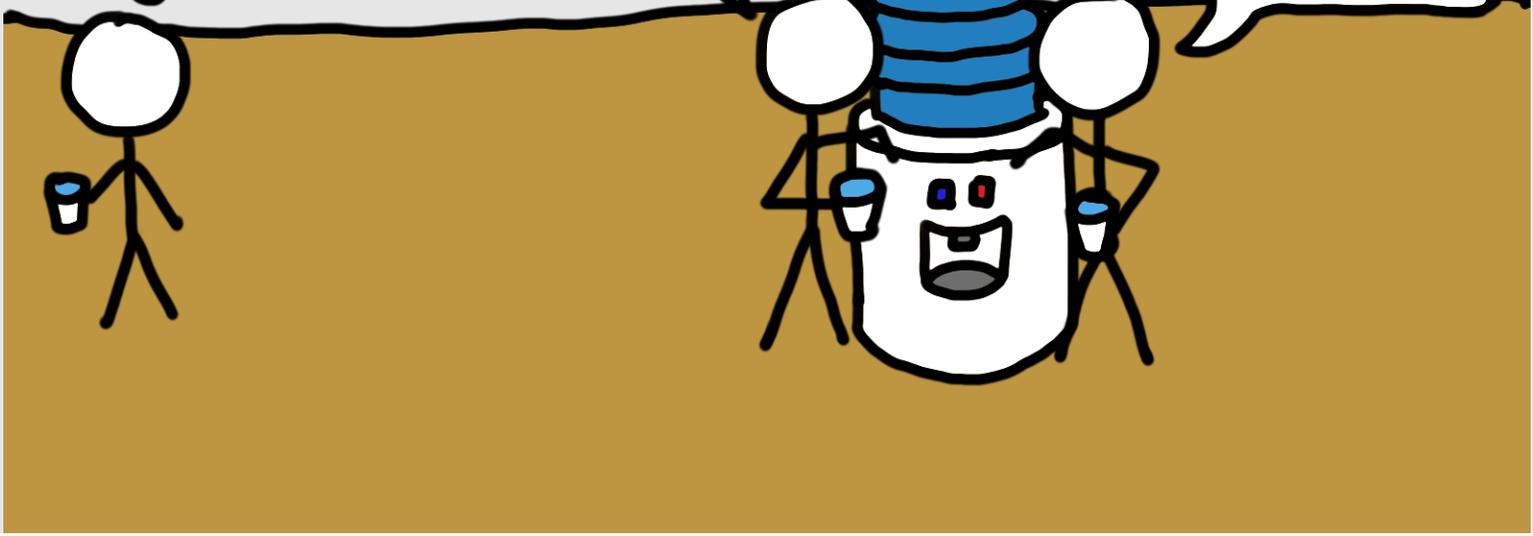
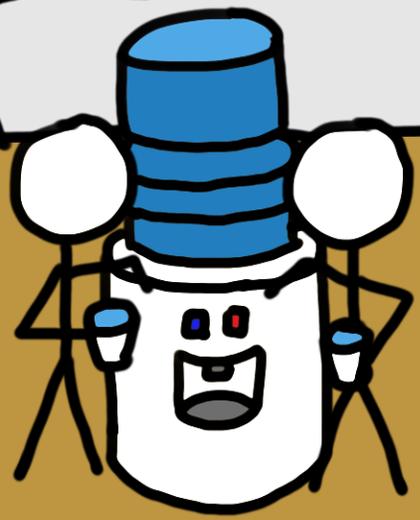
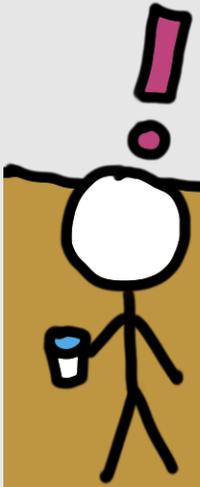
Yeah,
yeah...

ILLUSORY SUPERIORITY

Van Yperen and Buunk, 1991

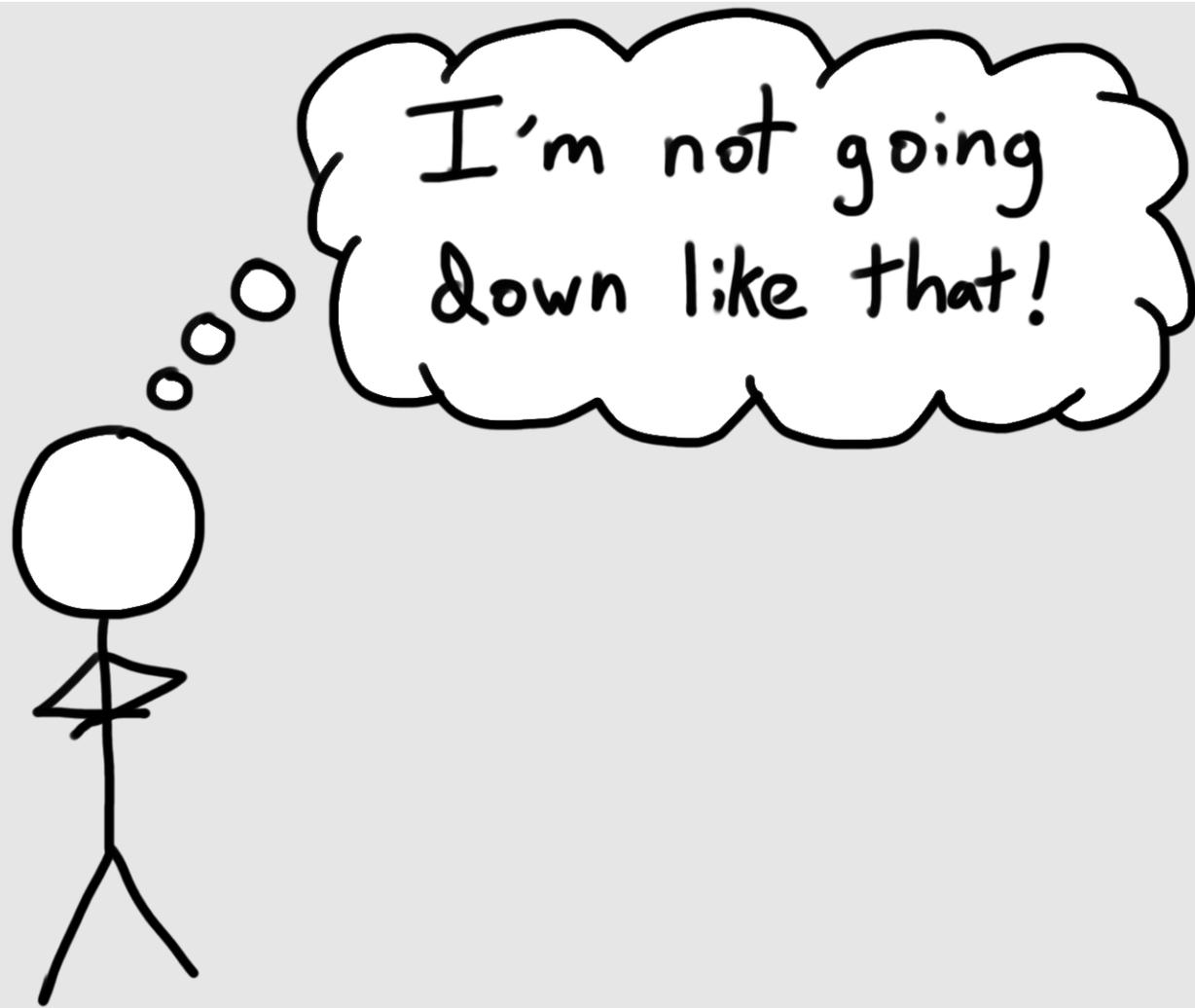
Yeah, they approved Kevin's plan over mine, so I made sure they knew about his "expense indiscretions"...

Niiice.



“TALL POPPY” SYNDROME

CRAB BUCKET MENTALITY

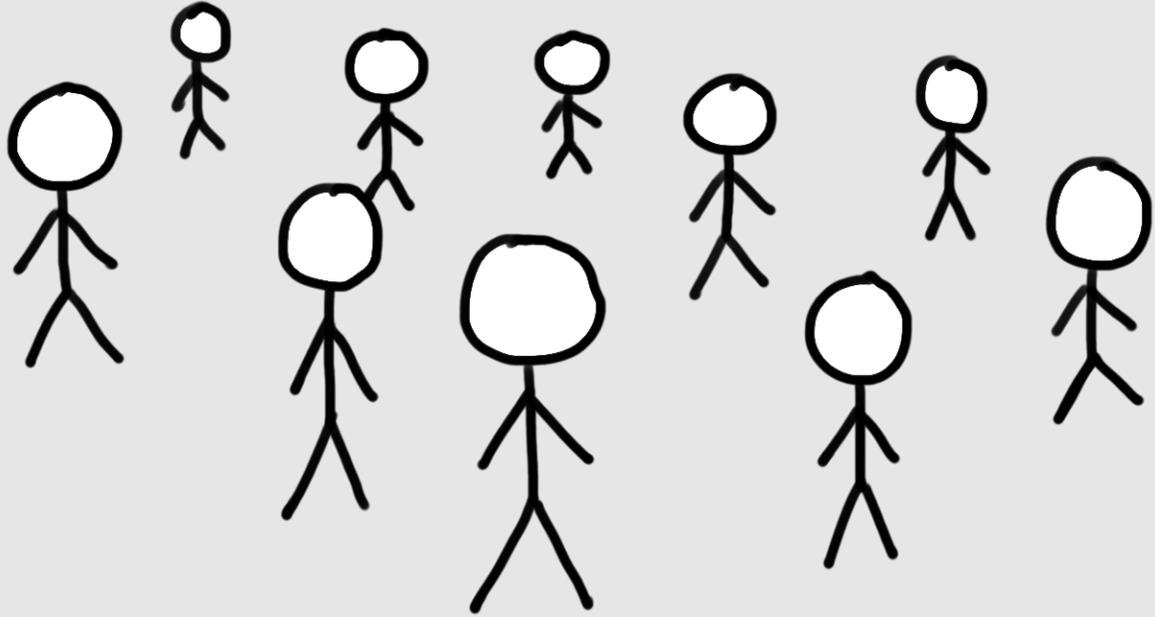


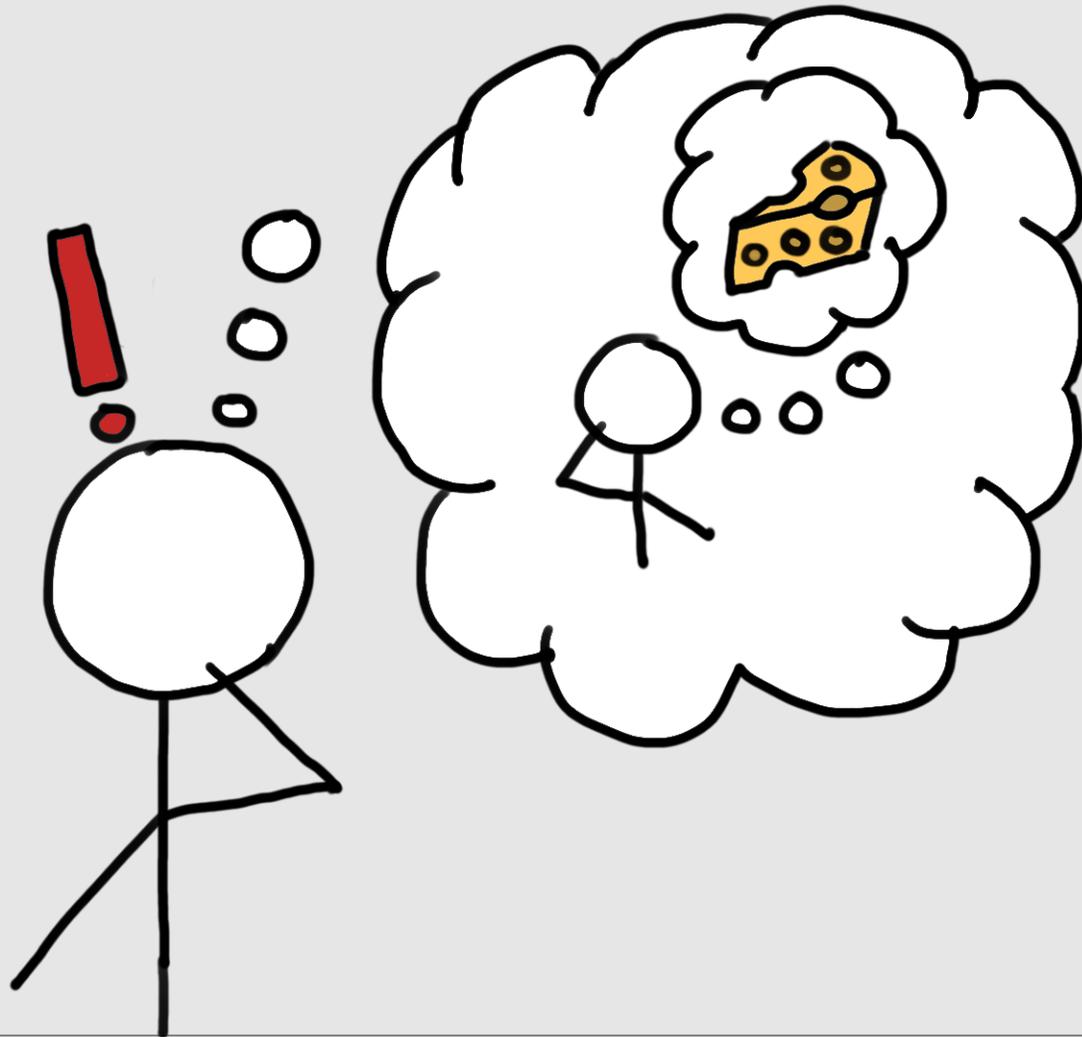
I'm not going
down like that!

HIGH-ACHIEVEMENT-FOCUSED ENVIRONMENTS
→ IMPOSTOR FEELINGS

OBSERVATION OF ILLUSORY SUPERIORITY →
IMPOSTOR FEELINGS

BUT THE BIG REASON...





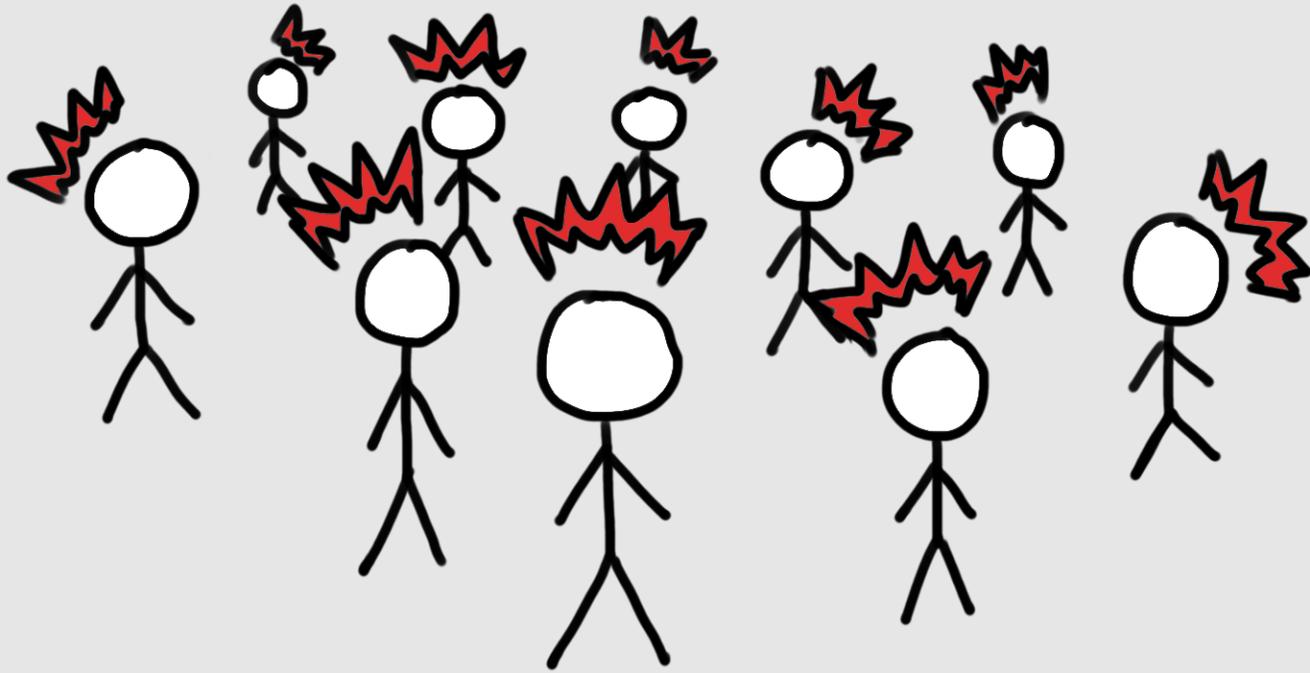
Newton, 1990 (Unpublished doctoral dissertation)

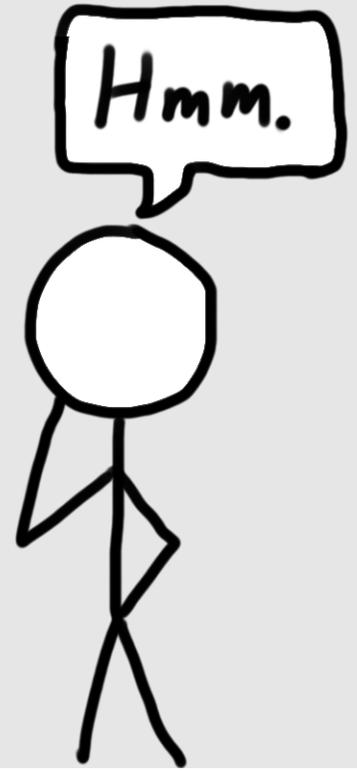
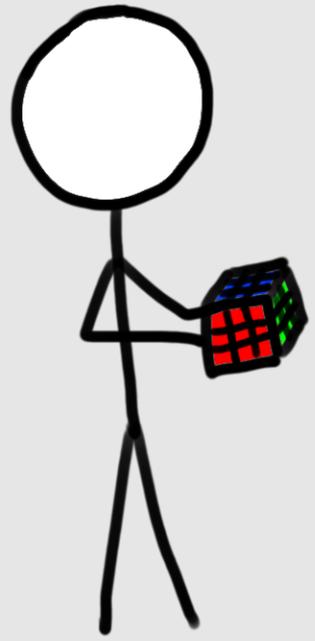


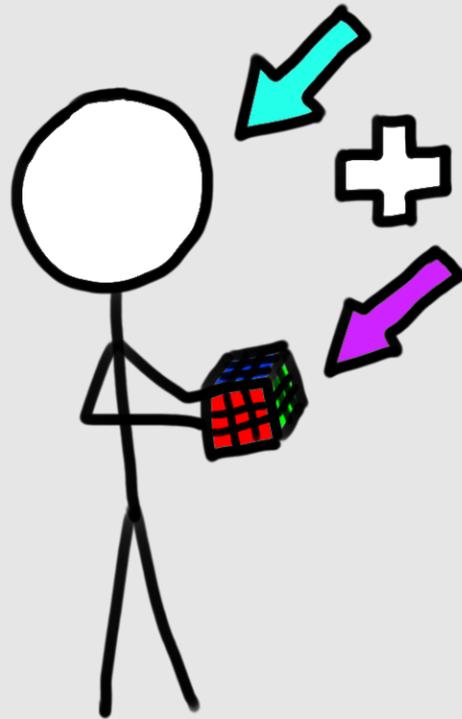
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ILLUSION OF TRANSPARENCY

Newton, 1990 (Unpublished doctoral dissertation)

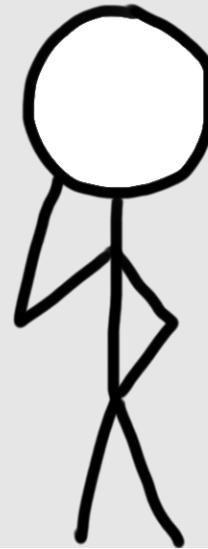


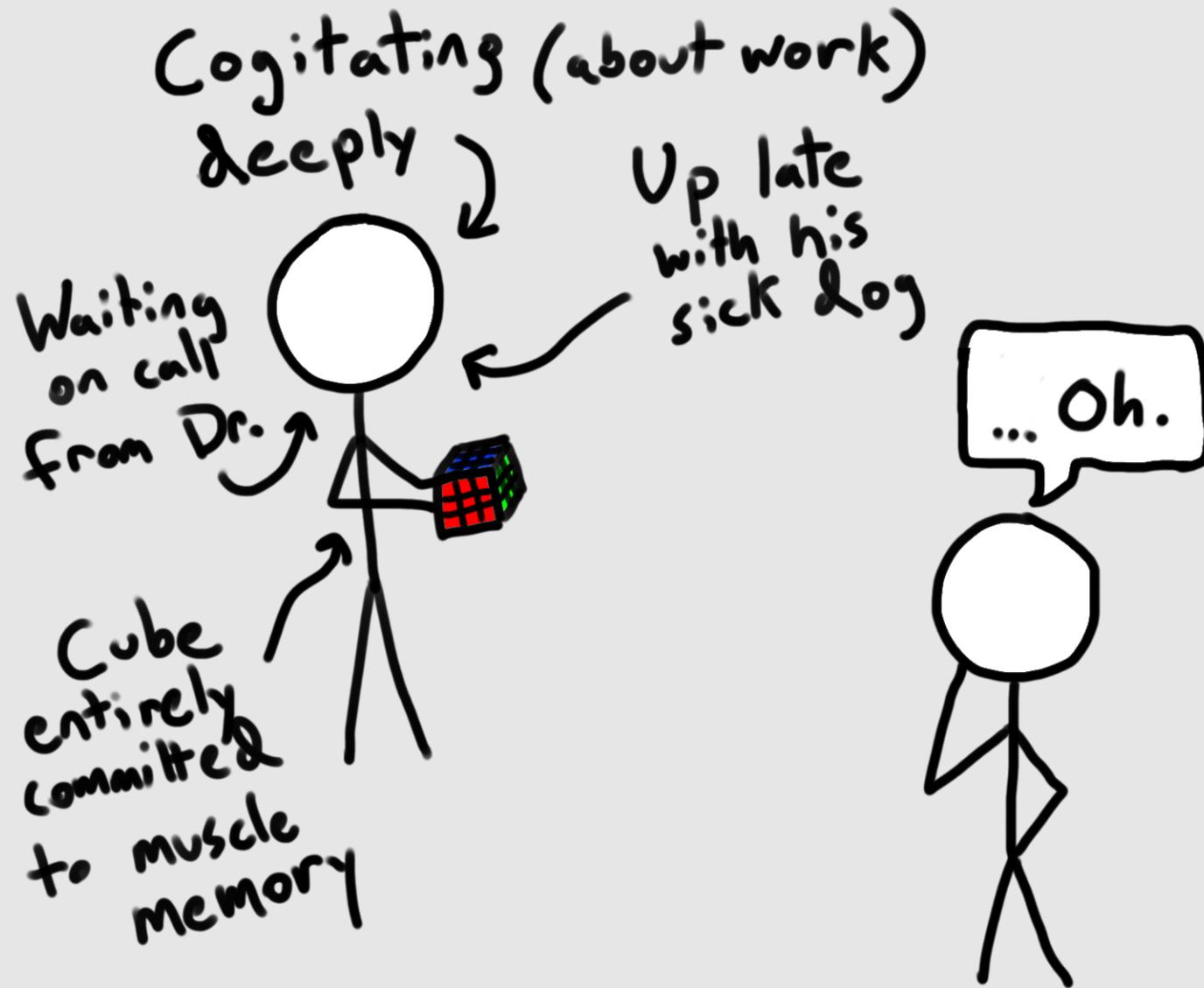




= BORED

Aha!





Cogitating (about work) deeply

Waiting on call from Dr.

Up late with his sick dog

Cube entirely committed to muscle memory

... Oh.

ATTRIBUTION ERROR

ATTRIBUTION ERRORS + ILLUSION OF
TRANSPARENCY → IMPOSTOR FEELINGS

WHAT IF I DON'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT
IT?

- Low self-confidence
 - Feelings of shame
 - Significant levels of stress
 - Paralyzing self-doubt
-
- Anxiety
 - Depression

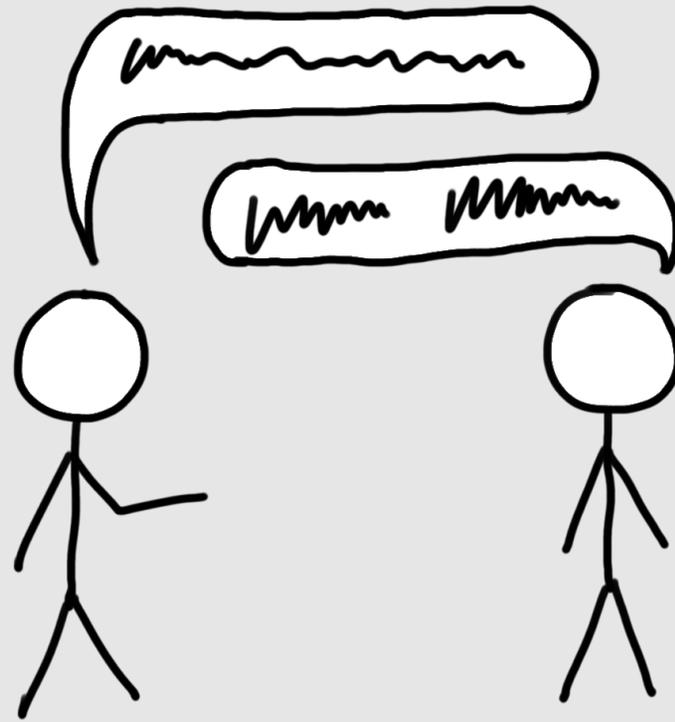
SO WHAT DO I DO ABOUT IMPOSTOR
PHENOMENON?

REMEMBER:

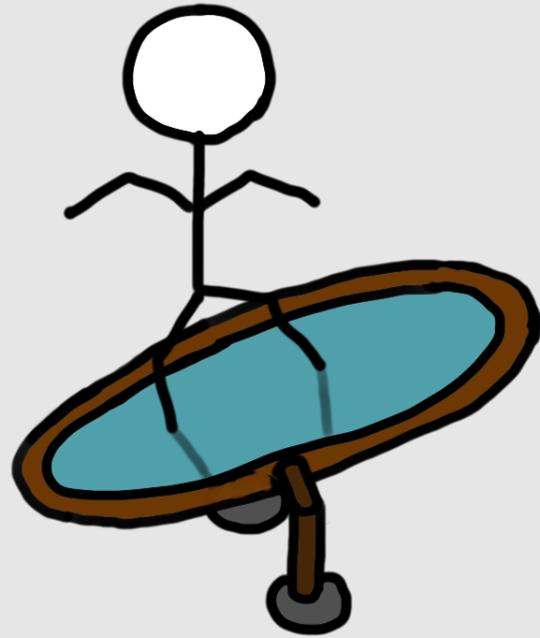
IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON IS AN
AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE

YOUR PERSONALITY CAN CHANGE HOW
IT PROGRESSES, BUT...

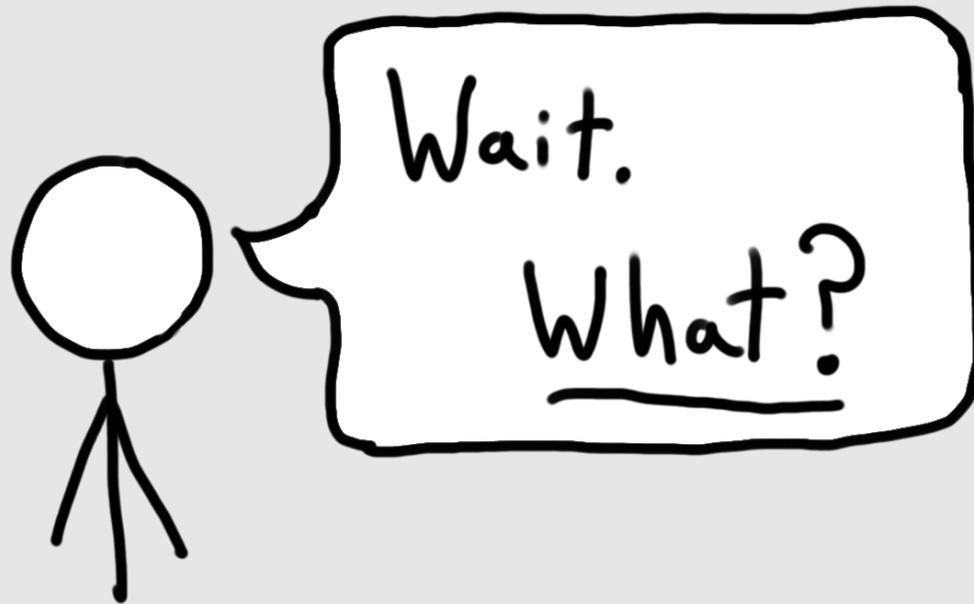
YOU CAN GET RID OF IT!



TALK ABOUT IT

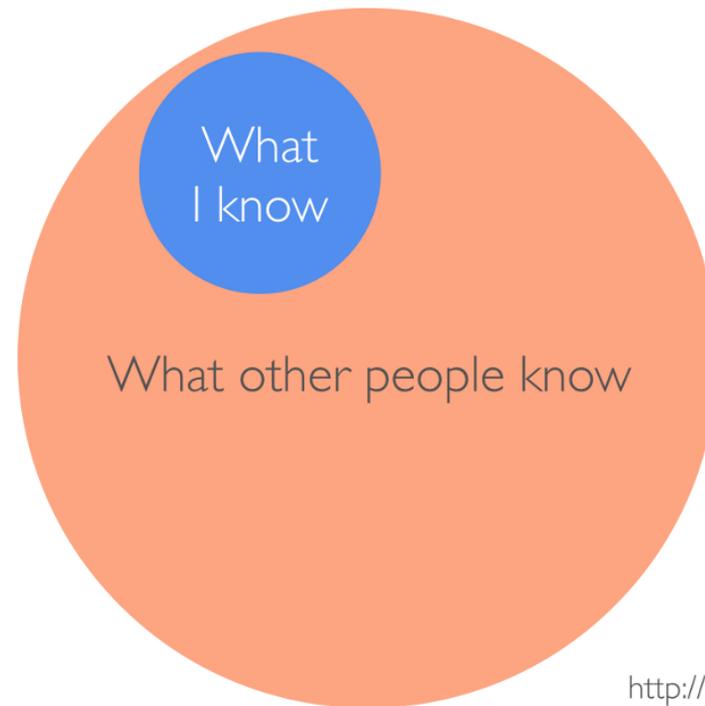


FIND SUPPORTIVE MIRRORS



REALIZE THAT LEARNING REQUIRES
DISCOMFORT

This is not Impostor Syndrome
This is Reality for every beginner



<http://alicialiu.me>



BE AWARE OF FEAR, AND ADOPT A
GROWTH MINDSET

Fixed Mindset

- Intelligence is a fixed trait

Therefore:

- Exertion signifies a personal limit
- Choosing harder goals risks failure, which implies less intelligence
- An “unsolvable” problem means you should give up

Growth Mindset

- Intelligence is trainable

Therefore:

- Exertion signifies improvement
- Choosing harder goals increases your mastery
- An “unsolvable” problem becomes a guidepost for learning

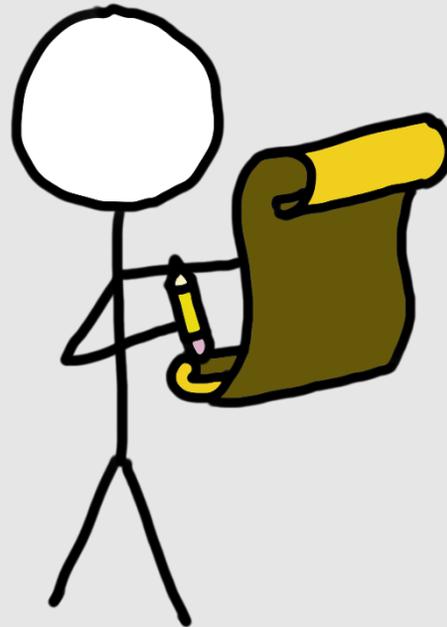


“So what should we say when children complete a task—say, math problems—quickly and perfectly? Should we deny them the praise they have earned? Yes. When this happens, I say, “Whoops. I guess that was too easy. I apologize for wasting your time. Let’s do something you can really learn from!”

— Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*



FOCUS YOUR INNER MONOLOGUE ON
GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

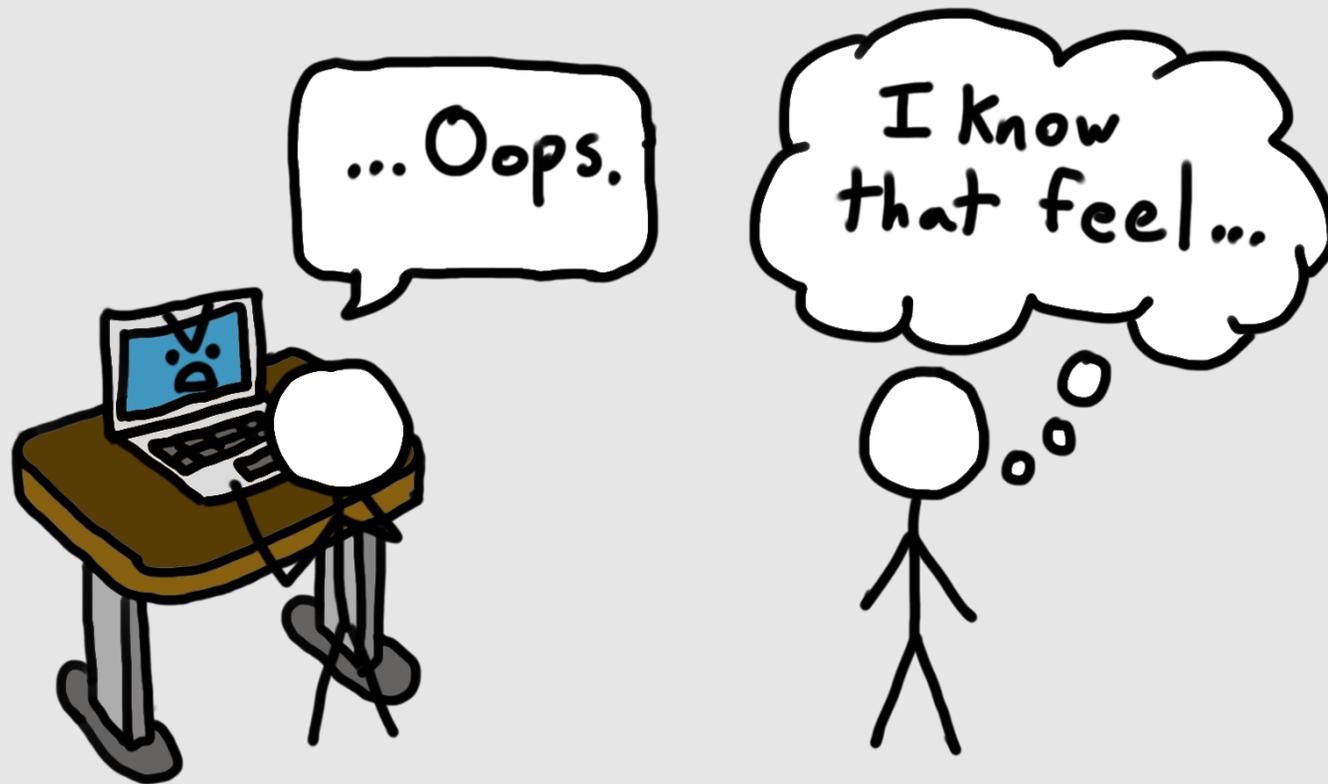


TRACK YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

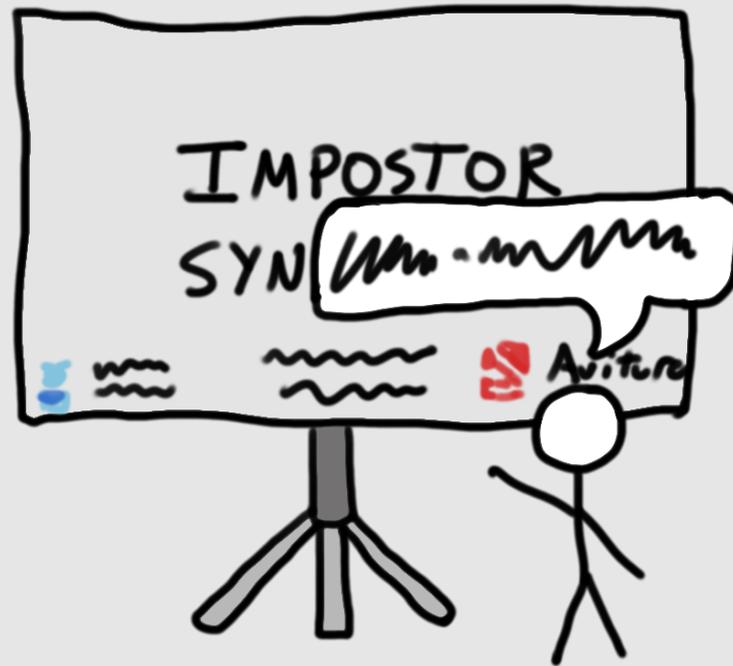
Clance and Imes, 1978

HOW DO I PREVENT IMPOSTOR
PHENOMENON AT MY WORKPLACE?

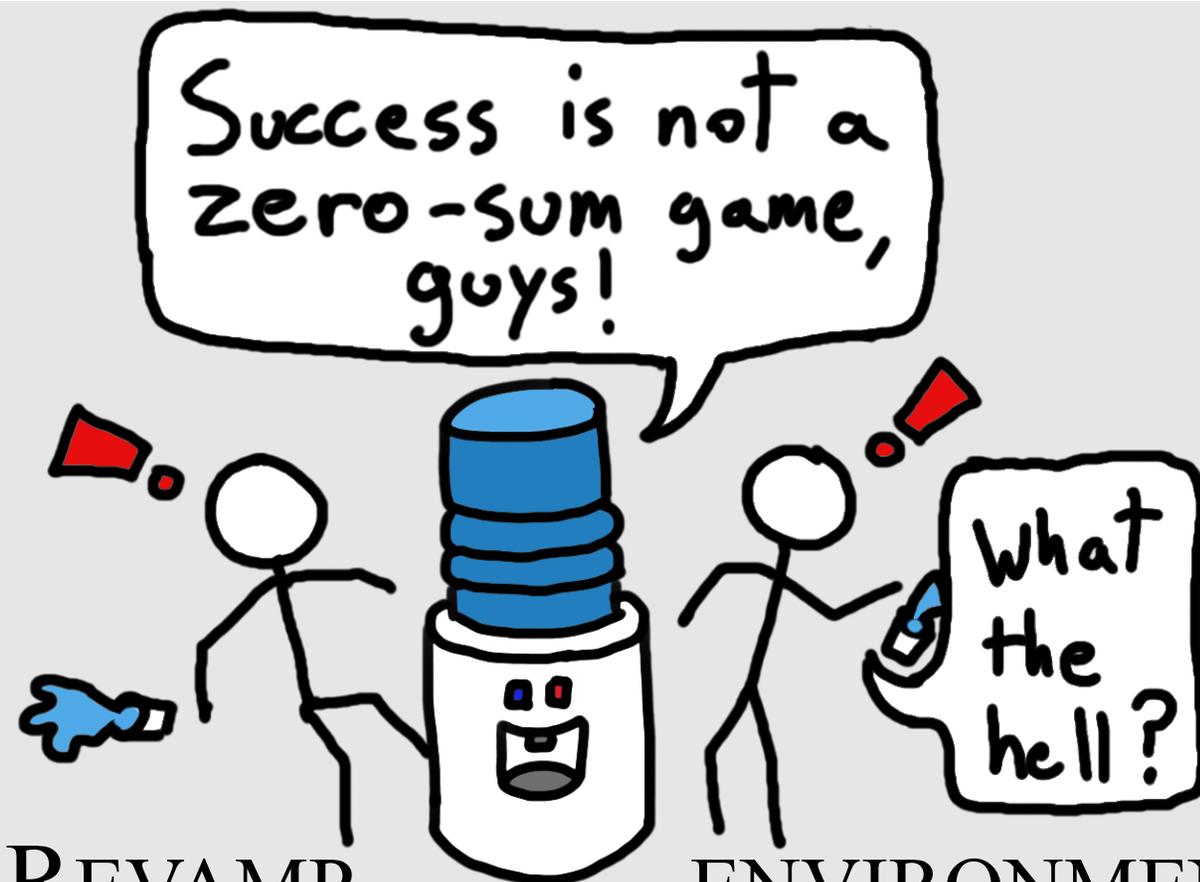
(OR ANYWHERE ELSE?)



HAVE EMPATHY TOWARDS NEW
EMPLOYEES



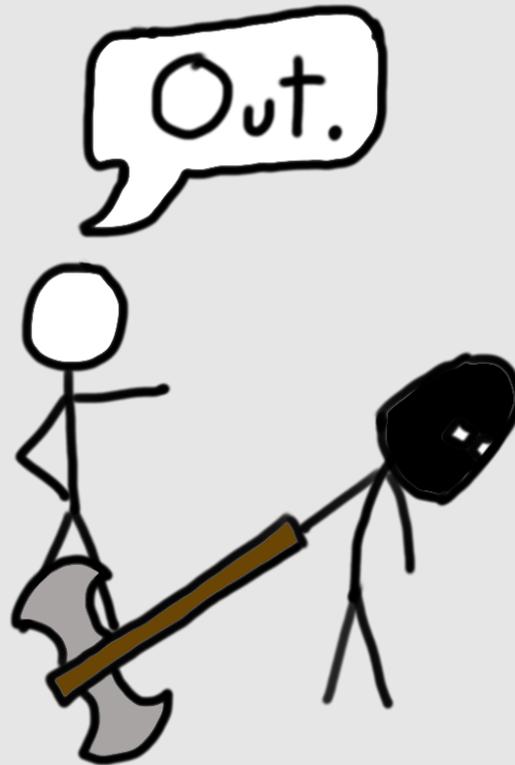
EDUCATE THEM ABOUT THE IMPOSTOR
PHENOMENON



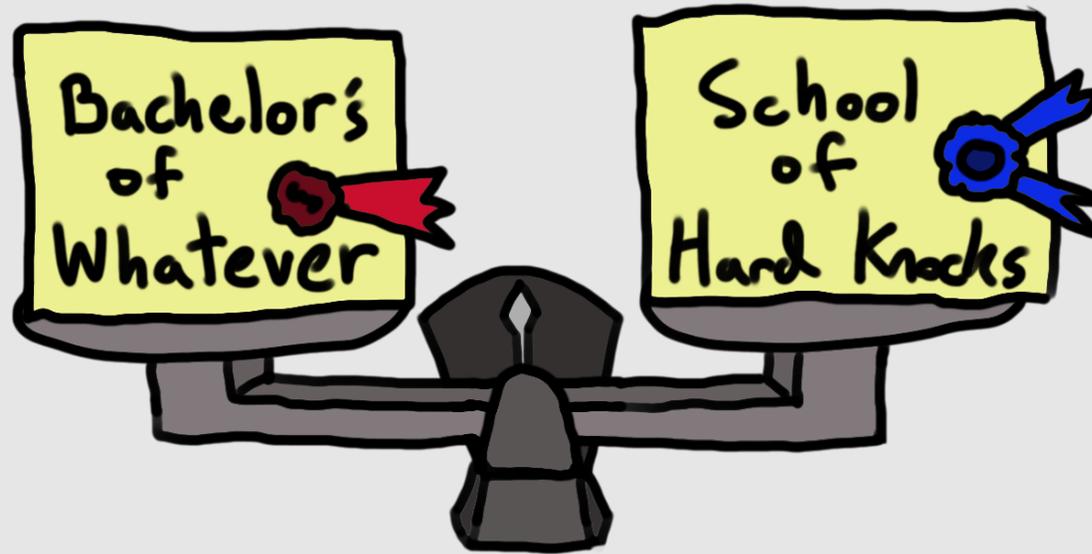
REVAMP

ENVIRONMENTS

THAT OVEREMPHASIZE ACHIEVEMENT

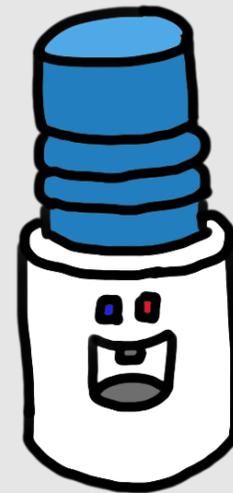


DESTROY ENVIRONMENTS THAT PUNISH FAILURE



EMPHASIZE THAT LEARNED EXPERIENCE
IS VALUED AS MUCH AS CREDENTIALS

THANK
YOU
for coming to
listen to Art!



Arthur Doler

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Slides: <http://bit.ly/art-impostor>

