

**WE**PAN

Women in  
Engineering  
ProActive  
Network

*Transforming culture  
in engineering education*



# ***Why Smart People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It***

**Dr. Valerie Young**

# WEPAN 2011-2012 Webinar Series



- **Host: Diane Matt**, Executive Director, WEPAN (Women in Engineering ProActive Network)



- **Moderator: Jenna Carpenter**, Ph.D., Associate Dean; College of Engineering & Science, Louisiana Tech University; Director of Professional Development, WEPAN BOD



- **Presenters: Dr. Valerie Young**, Speaker, Author of *The Secrets Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It* by Crown Publ./Random House

# Housekeeping Information

- **The webinar will use Voice Over Internet. If the sound quality is not good, a teleconference line is available:**
  - Phone #: 1-470-200-0302
  - Code: 462-608-945
  - Audio Pin: Included in your Registration Confirmation email
- **To be notified of future webinars:**
  - Sign up for the Knowledge Center newsletter at:  
<http://wepanknowledgecenter.org>
- **Survey following webinar—please respond!**

# How to Ask a Question

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- **Participant microphones are muted for webinar quality.**
- **Type your question in the “Question” space in the webinar control panel.**
- **A presenter will respond as time allows.**

# Who's on the Call Today

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- **We have over 450 registered participants.**
- **Thank you to ASEE WIED, ASEE CMC, ASEE ERM, NAPE Stem Equity Pipeline, PGEList, ADVANCE, and others for helping us spread the word!**

# What's WEPAN? [www.wepan.org](http://www.wepan.org)

**WEPAN** is the nation's leading organization for transforming culture in engineering education to promote the success of all women.

- mobilize diverse, inclusive and collaborative stakeholders
- foster diversity in engineering graduates
- inspire a network of advocates to empower and advance the education of women pursuing engineering and related disciplines
- translate research into practice and develop national models to attract and retain women in engineering



# WEPAN Knowledge Center

<http://wepanknowledgecenter.org>

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**Goal: Increase the number, scope and effectiveness of initiatives to advance women in engineering.**

- **Catalogued and fully cited resources**

Research, reports, data and statistics, agenda papers, bibliographies, best practices, key programs, and more—1,000+

- **Online Professional Community**

Network, collaborate, identify experts, share information

- **Special online events**

Feature WKC Professional Community and networking opportunities

- **Use** the research, information & data, **Submit** & suggest resources, **Share** the WKC with colleagues





# ***Why Smart People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It***

**Dr. Valerie Young**

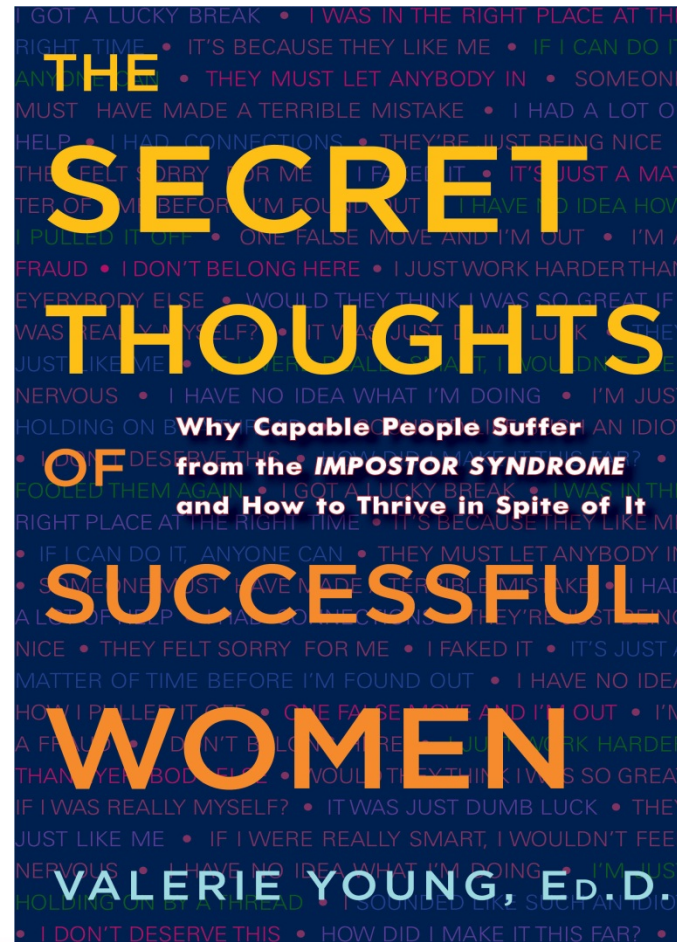


# Why Smart People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It

Dr. Valerie Young, author  
*Secret Thoughts of  
Successful Women*



# Where Does Gender Fit In?



# The Impostor Phenomenon

Dr. Pauline Clance & Dr. Suzanne Imes

Despite *evidence* to the contrary  
*many* bright, capable *people* do not  
experience an inner sense of  
competence or success

Instead achievements are chalked up  
to luck, timing, connections, charm,  
computer error, etc.

Not on the list: *Cheating*



# Success Brings Relief vs. Confidence or Joy

- More visibility
- More accountability
- Pressure to repeat past success

Impostors Biggest Fear...

Being FOUND OUT!



starpulse.com™  
YOUR ENTERTAINMENT DESTINATION

# Coping and Protecting Strategies

- Watch for indicators of common coping & protecting strategies
- Make students/employees aware of their behaviors – and the costs

# Sources of Impostor Feelings

- Parental messages/expectations
- First-generation professional
- Studying/working in another country or are an immigrant
- Being in a creative field
- Students
- First or the few in a major/field, job, or level
- Organizational culture which fuels self-doubt



# Unsustainable Self-Expectations Relative to Competence

- The Perfectionist
- The Expert
- The Rugged Individualist
- The Natural Genius
- The Superwoman/man/student



# Failure & Mistake Making

- Evoke shame
- Internalized
- Personalized
- Remembered longer than achievements

# Social Context of Female Self-Doubt

- Lower/higher expectations
- Same behavior different perceptions

# Help Students/Employees

- Break the silence
- There can be no change without changes
- Role model normalizing impostor feelings
- Shift language to separate feelings from fact

# Help Students or Employees Recognize

- Legitimate role luck, timing, connections, and charm play
- Why faking it 'til you make it is harder for women – and why they must



# #1 SOLUTION

**Help Students/Employees  
Embrace the  
“Competence Rulebook  
for Mere Mortals”**

# Healthy Competence Scripts

- Perfectionism is a refusal to let yourself move ahead. *Jennifer White*
- I use not only all the brains I have but all that I can borrow. *Woodrow Wilson*
- Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects. *Will Rogers*
- Sometimes you win and sometimes you learn. *Robert Kiyosaki*

# Shoring Up Confidence May Not Be Enough

- Role of female other-directedness and real or perceived relationship consequences of success *on* or *with* others
- Women's more layered definition of success vs. "fear" of success
- Help sort out: "Am I afraid because I don't think I *can* do it or..."



“I’ m burdened by a great potential”



“Your fear of being inadequate  
pales in comparison to your  
fear of being *extraordinary*”



# Playing Big

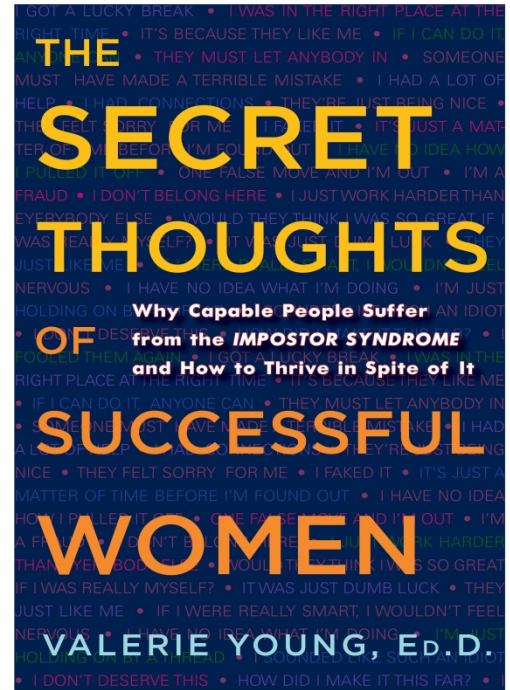
“The flip side of giftedness.”

*Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries*

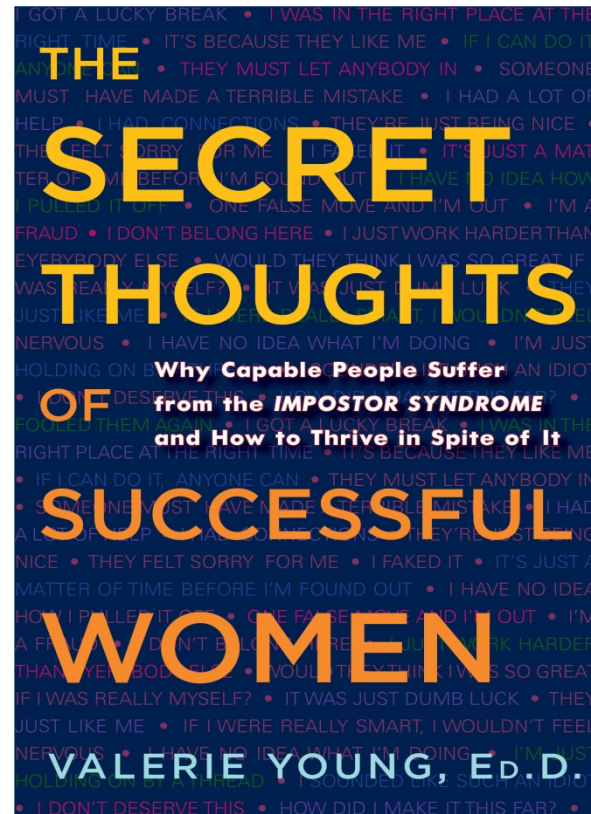
*Everyone* loses when  
you play small

# Additional Support/Resources at ImpostorSyndrome.com

- Free weekly “Wise Words”
- *Coming soon*: Guidelines for book club/discussion groups
- Live presentation/workshops
- *New* institutional webinar



# *Coming Soon:* Book Club Guidelines



# Questions?

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# Thank You!



- We will E-mail a link to the PowerPoint to you.
- We will E-mail the link to the recorded webinar to you—share with your colleagues!
- Sign up for more webinar notifications at:  
[www.wepanknowledgecenter.org](http://www.wepanknowledgecenter.org)

