

The Intersection of Impostor Phenomenon and Burnout – Addressing Special Clinician Populations



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First, a couple of acknowledgments...



Thank You to our Indigenous Peoples!

Objectives

- Define Impostor Phenomenon (IP) and burnout.
- Discuss the relationship between IP and burnout.
- Identify workplace contributors that lead to burnout.
- Discuss the relationship between URiM (underrepresented in medicine) status and occupational stress.
- Compare and contrast burnout rates among URiM and majority populations.

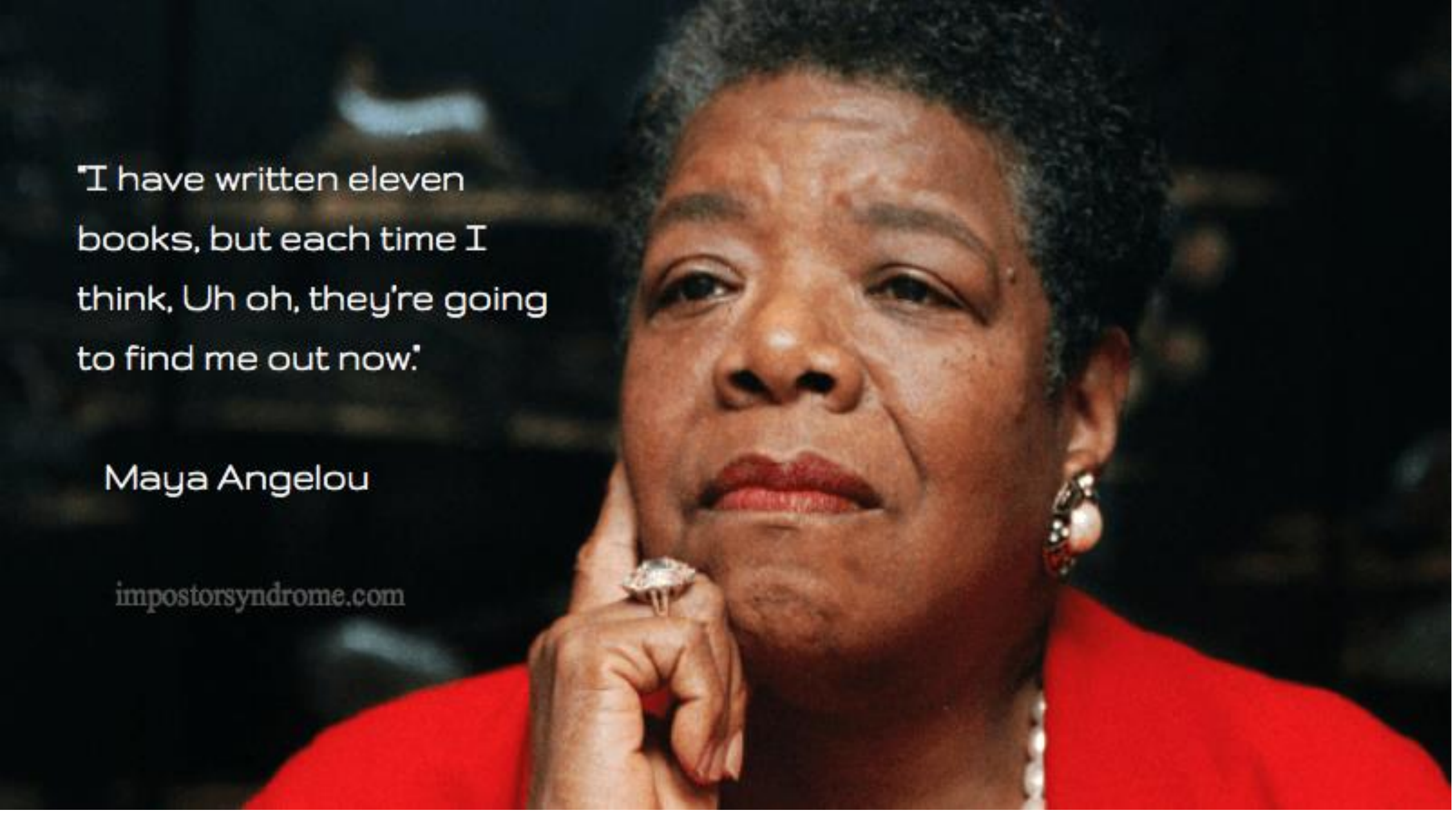
Disclosures

Non-Declaration Statement: I have no relevant relationships with ineligible companies to disclose within the past 24 months. (Note: Ineligible companies are defined as those whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.)

Foundational Terms

- **Burnout** – more to come
- **Impostor Phenomenon** – more to come
- **Underrepresented minority** – “. . . identified as Hispanic, a single non-White race, or a non-White race in combination with White race”

(PAEA, 2020a, p. 5).

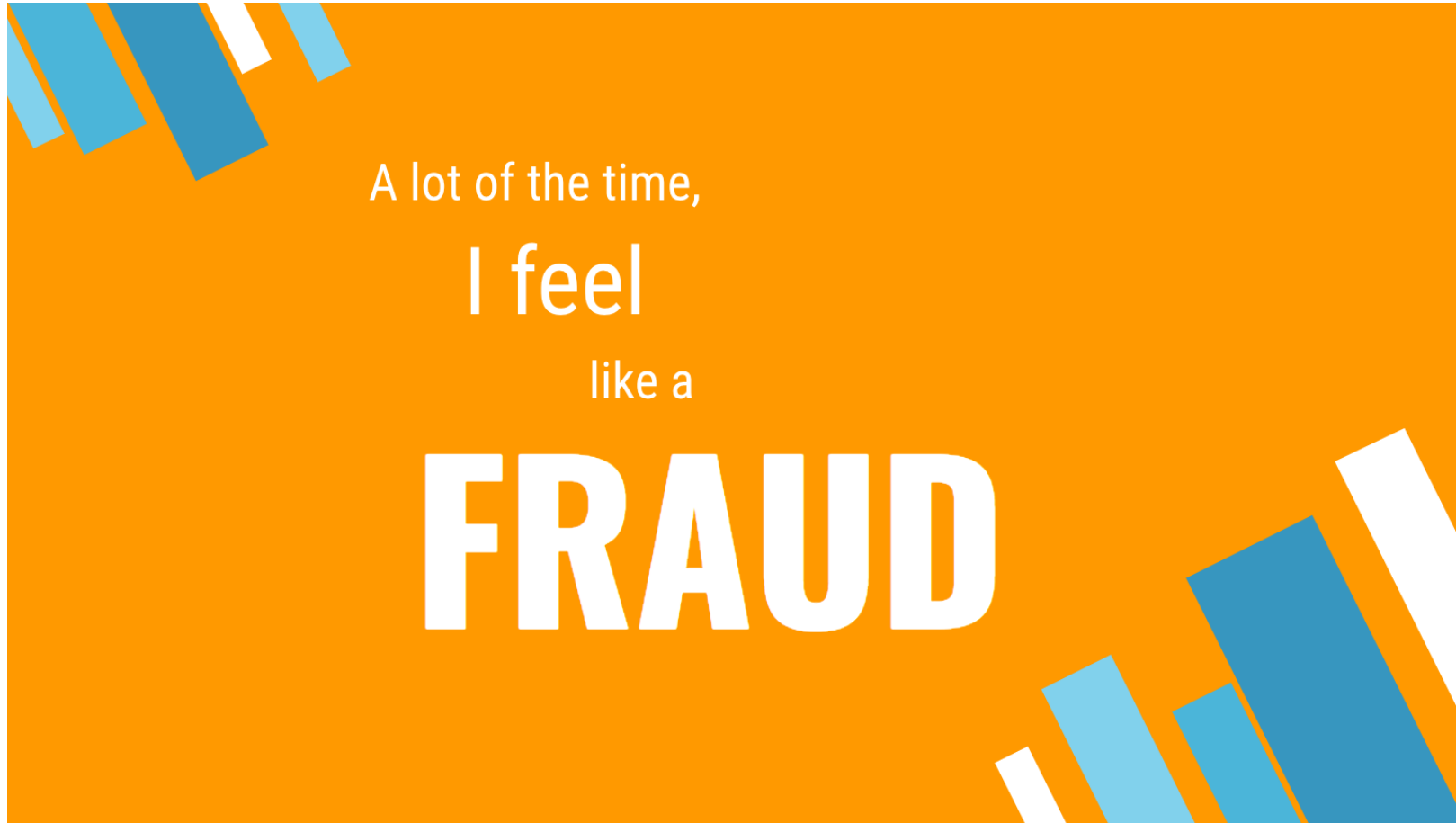
A close-up portrait of Maya Angelou. She is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. Her hand is resting against her chin, and she is wearing a large diamond ring on her finger. She is wearing a red top and a pearl necklace. The background is dark and out of focus.

"I have written eleven books, but each time I think, Uh oh, they're going to find me out now."

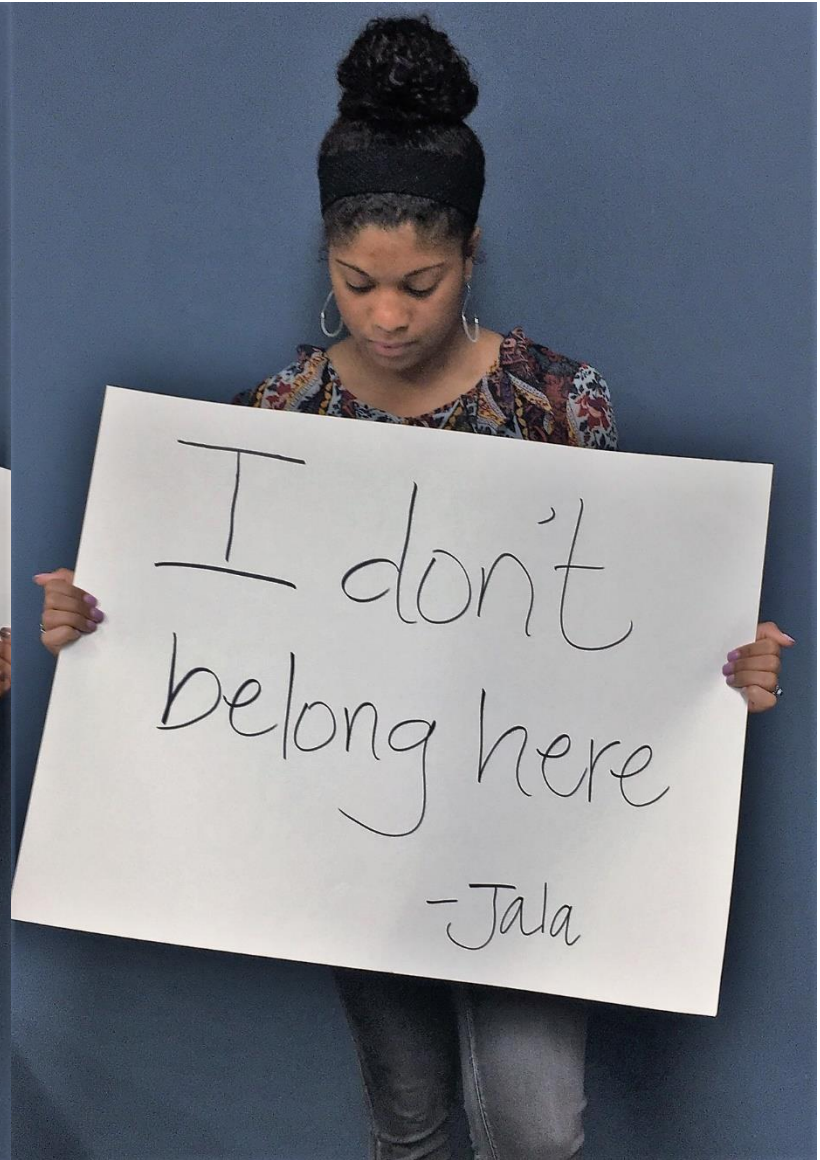
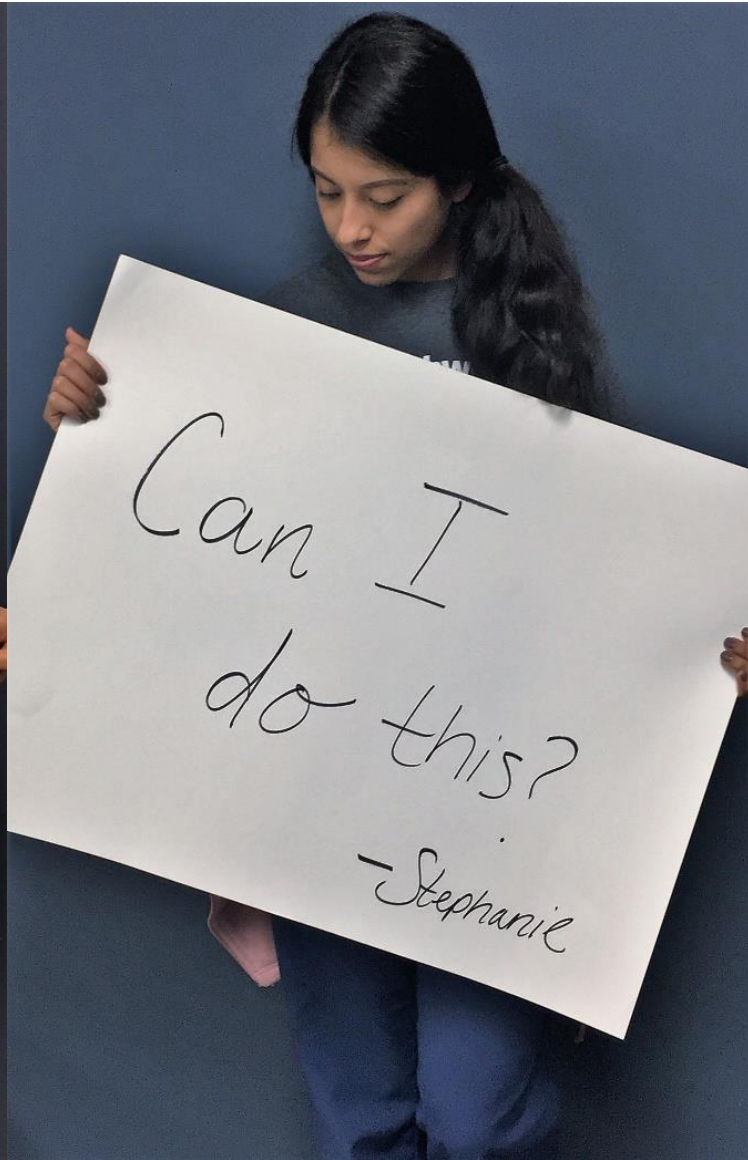
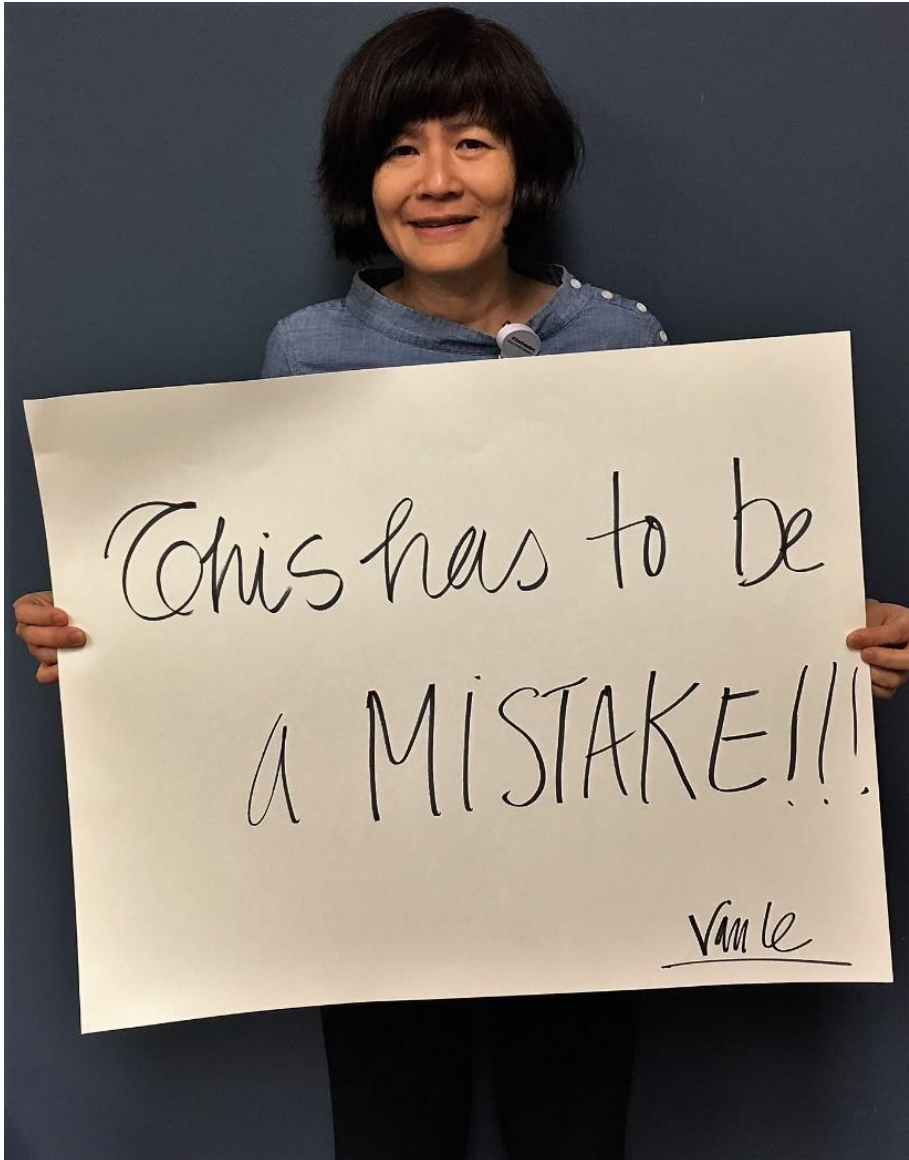
Maya Angelou

impostorsyndrome.com

Unspoken words from current PAs. . .



Imagine if these impostor feelings remain unchecked.



Impostor Phenomenon

A Brief History

- Seminal paper published in Fall 1978 by psychologists, Clance and Imes, in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*.
- First recognized among high-achieving women
- Those with IP firmly believe they are unintelligent and that they are an intellectual fraud.
- Operate in daily fear of being discovered as an impostor
- Clinical symptoms include: generalized anxiety, decreased self-confidence, depression, and increased frustration secondary to inability to achieve self-imposed high standards.

Impostor Phenomenon

Fighting The Inner-Saboteur

- Can affect all people. However, recent research supports higher IP occurrences among minority groups.
- Pressure to excel and demonstrate success
- Difficulty internalizing positive performance
- Attribute achievement to external factors, such as luck or chance



Impostor Phenomenon

Fighting The Inner-Saboteur

- Lower overall self-esteem
- Cumulative effect leading to psychological burden
- Self-doubt, anxiety, and apprehensiveness concerning performance in non-inclusive spaces
- Compounded negative experiences with micro/macroaggressions and institutional policies further exacerbate IP

Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)

A validated, reliable screening tool

Clance IP Scale

For each question, please circle the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement.

1 (not at all true) 2 (rarely) 3 (sometimes) 4 (often) 5 (very true)

Scoring the Impostor Test

The Impostor Test was developed to help individuals determine whether or not they have IP characteristics and, if so, to what extent they are suffering.

After taking the Impostor Test, add together the numbers of the responses to each statement. If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interferes in a person's life.

Defining Burnout

- Burnout is a syndrome exacerbated by chronic occupational stress, and should be described within the context of one's occupation (Schaufeli et al., 2001; WHO, 2020)
- “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind. A key aspect [is] increased feelings of emotional exhaustion. As their emotional resources are depleted, workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 99).
- Three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment

Burnout

- **Contributors to Job Burnout:** workplace non-conducive to employee wellbeing; role conflict/ambiguity; mistreatment; lack of equity (Dandar et al., 2019; Grandey et al., 2012; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).
- **Burnout in Clinical Providers:** Health providers (e.g. PAs) are consistently exposed to long-term stress, increasing the likelihood of experiencing burnout (Essary et al., 2018; Tetzlaff et al., 2020). A 2016 - 2017 national study measuring burnout and job satisfaction among clinically practicing PAs indicated that 40% reported burnout symptoms (Dyrbye et al., 2020).
- **Burnout in Medical Education:** URM medical students experience components of burnout more prevalent in the low sense of personal accomplishment and decreased quality of life scores (Dyrbye et al., 2006). A single cohort study of PA students found that Black Americans reported the highest levels of emotional exhaustion, and Latina/o/x students related increased levels of cynicism (Johnson et al., 2020).

Example: Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

For use by Daytheon Sturges only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on May 15, 2020

Review Copy: MBI for Educators Survey

How often:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

How often 0-6	Statements:
1. _____	I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____	I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____	I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. _____	I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6. _____	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. _____	I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. _____	I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____	I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____	I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____	I feel very energetic.
13. _____	I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____	I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____	I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. _____	Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____	I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. _____	I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. _____	I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____	I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____	In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____	I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

EE Total score: _____ DP Total score: _____ PA Total score: _____
 EE Average score: _____ DP Average score: _____ PA Average score: _____

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine and Burnout

Underrepresented in Medicine

- According to the AAMC, URiM refers to racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population.
- AAMC survey results published in 2019 by Dandar et al. relate that 35% of URM women and 21% of URM men reported burnout symptoms.
- Regarding stress, 43% of URM women and 44% of URM men reported being “under stress.”
- There is limited focus on burnout in the URiM population despite increased attention on burnout awareness, prevention, and intervention.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

- Race/ethnicity is connected to burnout secondary to certain exacerbating conditions.
 - Stress
 - Pressure to succeed
 - Experiences with interpersonal discrimination
- Contributors include (but are not limited to) lack of cultural representation, racial discrimination, negative organizational racial climate, and stereotyping.
- Can lead to increased distress and depression scores.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

- Consider intersectionality
 - LGBTQ+ status
 - Class
 - Gender
- Double doubt: competence being questioned as result of being a woman and race e.g., Black women.
- Manifests as decreased morale, job dissatisfaction, decreased retention, increased turnover, absenteeism, diminished job performance, and organizational mistrust.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

- Contributors
 - Mismatches between job duties and skills
 - Loss of control regarding job demands
 - Reward disparity
 - Continuous occupational stress
 - Emotional labor
 - Lack of social support
 - Lack of community
- Burnout can also be exacerbated by mistreatment from superiors, colleagues, and patients.
- Consider the compounding effects of the above contributors with URiM status.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

Conflicting findings:

- Burnout among early career clinical faculty
 - URM = 30%
 - White = 18%
 - Asian = 3%
- Burnout among residents
 - No statistically significant differences in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization for white or Asian compared to Hispanic residents.
- Burnout among physicians
 - Latina/o/x MDs reported significantly less emotional exhaustion compared to white and non-Latina/o/x non-white MDs.
 - No statistically significant differences in compassion fatigue or burnout by race/ethnicity.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

Conflicting findings:

- Other findings regarding physicians
 - White = 44.7%
 - Asian = 41.7%
 - Black = 38.5%
- Consideration of these findings
 - Increased stigma associated with burnout among underrepresented groups; therefore, underreporting occurs.
- Burnout among PA students
 - African American students reported the highest levels of emotional exhaustion.
 - African American and Hispanic/Latino students reported the highest levels of cynicism.

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

- Positive buffers
 - Sense of community
 - Positive, supportive work environment
 - Equitable and fair practices
- Desired outcome = job engagement

Underrepresented Minorities in Medicine *and Burnout*

- There is a need for more research regarding URiM status and burnout.
- Need for health education interventions.
- There is a glaring gap in the research ready to be filled.

The Intersection of IP and Burnout

Impostor Phenomenon *and Burnout*

- There is an interaction between IP and burnout.
- Researchers have shown links between IP, burnout, and suicide.
- IP is an active contributor to burnout in health professionals.
- Impostor symptoms lead to emotional exhaustion, which is the leading tenet of burnout.
- Gottlieb et al. (2019) places importance on understanding IP within the context of burnout due to its profound impact on medicine.

Impostor Phenomenon *and Burnout*

Why is this topic of importance?

- Health professions self-select for those who are driven, competitive, and willing/able to endure intense academic rigor and conflated expectations.
- These attributes can lead to both burnout and IP, with IP being the strongest predictor for general psychological distress.
- A study among medical students showed a significant relationship between female gender (49.3%) compared to men counterparts (23.7%).
- The relationship between race and IP was trending toward significance comparing Asian & white groups (30%) and all other races (72.7%).

Impostor Phenomenon *and Burnout*

- In the same study, IP was significantly associated with the burnout contributors: physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and depersonalization.
- Adverse coping mechanisms:
 - Women tend to face their doubts and compete harder.
 - Men tend to avoid areas that exacerbated their vulnerability.
- Typical symptoms of burnout (fatigue, decreased concentration, trouble sleeping, irritability, depersonalization) mimic depression.
- Data support that 50% of individuals with burnout also meet criteria for a depression diagnosis.
- The intersection of IP and burnout results in a compounding effect leading to psychological distress, which could result in suicidal ideation.
 - Men physicians are twice as likely and women physicians three times as likely to commit suicide compared to the general public.

Impostor Phenomenon *and Burnout*

The final answer:

- The jury is still out.
- Research has not shown the direct impacts that IP and burnout have on each other.
- However, studies show that those who experience burnout are more likely to report IP symptoms.
- Burnout continues to rise in prevalence among clinicians, with a direct correlation to IP.

Impostor Phenomenon *and Burnout*

Intersectionality exists.

- A study among general surgeons and surgery residents demonstrated that burnout symptoms were significantly higher in individuals who also had IP clinical symptoms.
- Positive correlation between burnout symptoms and clinical IP in medical residents.
- Research in this realm is limited.
- The exploration into the relationship between IP and burnout continues.

How can we help each other?

- Normalize each others' experience.
- Reinforce that we are not alone nor isolated in these feelings.
- If you have experienced IP or burnout before (or currently), share your personal experience.
- Reinforce to your colleague that their presence is not by mistake and dispel all falsities they may harbor internally.
- Establish a safe- and brave-space for discussion and above all, LISTEN.
- Develop effective workplace health interventions.
- Practice inclusivity, bolster diversity, MEAN IT!



Do you have any questions for me?



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Thank
you



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