

Imposter Phenomenon and Intersectionality

Welcome to the Thriving Autistic Discovery Programme, and welcome to this short introduction to our theme: imposter phenomenon and intersectionality.

In this video, we are going to gently explore what imposter phenomenon may feel like for Autistic people, particularly those of us who are late-identified. We will also explore how our intersecting identities and life experiences can shape both our access to identification and how safe it feels to claim our Autistic identity.

Our hope is that this gives you some language and reassurance, helps you to reflect on your own journey, and supports you to feel a deeper sense of belonging in this space, to support your own self-advocacy.

In this session, we're inviting you to share your journey of realising that you were Autistic and what may have led you to this realisation.

We know that this may be the very first time for some people to be in an Autistic-led space with other adults. And we know from our own lived experience that many people experience imposter phenomenon feelings, especially when late-identified Autistic.

You may be here wondering if you're really Autistic, or perhaps feeling not Autistic enough, worrying that you've somehow misunderstood yourself and have persistent self-doubt about your place, your role, and your achievements in the world.

You may feel guilty for taking up space, feeling like a fraud. Imposter feelings often come from stereotyped ideas of what being Autistic might look like, based on our own upbringing and the deficit models of Autism that have shaped our understanding through our childhood and in later life.

You may be coming to terms with having realised that you've endured years of masking, adapting, or being misunderstood. You may have been told, directly or

indirectly, that your experiences don't count and to just get on with things all the time.

Even though each of us here are Autistic, we're still all unique. And as the saying goes, once you've met one Autistic person, you've met one Autistic person, and that's because each of our lived experiences will impact who we are and how we're able to live.

Many of us face systemic barriers to diagnosis and recognition, including gender bias, especially for those of us who are female, non-binary, and trans people; racial and cultural bias; class, poverty, and access to healthcare; disability, mental health, and trauma histories we may have.

These barriers can often mean that people are now being identified later in adulthood, particularly when they've reached a crisis point with their own mental health, or when their own children are identified because they may be struggling in inaccessible systems.

We also want to recognise and acknowledge here that not everyone has access to a formal identification. There are long waiting lists, and others may have chosen not to pursue formal diagnosis for personal, financial, or safety reasons.

We recognise self-identification is perfectly valid, and everyone is welcome here.

Our hope is that through this session, you'll discover a deeper understanding of yourself and gain clarification about your own ways of being, your strengths, your challenges, and how feelings of being an imposter or how intersectionality have impacted your own sense of identity.

Our aim here is that by creating a space for you to share your experiences and stories with others, you'll feel more empowered and better able to advocate for your needs, most importantly to gain a sense of belonging, knowing that you're not alone.

Welcome.