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You're Your Own Worst Critic

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Every year, many people talk about, or post, their New Year's Resolutions.

Lose weight.

Stop smoking.

Work out.

Many resolutions are made. Rarely are they successful.

Much like eating black eyed peas, greens, and cornbread on New Year's for "good luck", resolutions seem to just be another "tradition" that people seem to do out of habit but think little about.

The holidays bring with them joy, laughter, and cheer, but also stress, anxiety, and depression.

Social media tends to magnify all of that. One can't help but scroll through a social media feed to see people posting things from big holiday bonus at work, to expensive jewelry and extravagant gifts. It seems people like to be the center of attention. People want to be admired. People want to be envied.

I've always wanted to be a better person, but I've never been one to feel that I am above anyone else. We're all human. we're all flawed. No one is perfect. It's the human condition, and we all suffer from it. Some more than others...

Do I try to be a better person? Absolutely. Do I feel like I'm a better person? Not at all, but I keep trying.

And trying...

And trying...

I'm bullied daily. The bully is relentless. Never tiring of putting me down. The abuse is not physically, it's all on an emotional level.

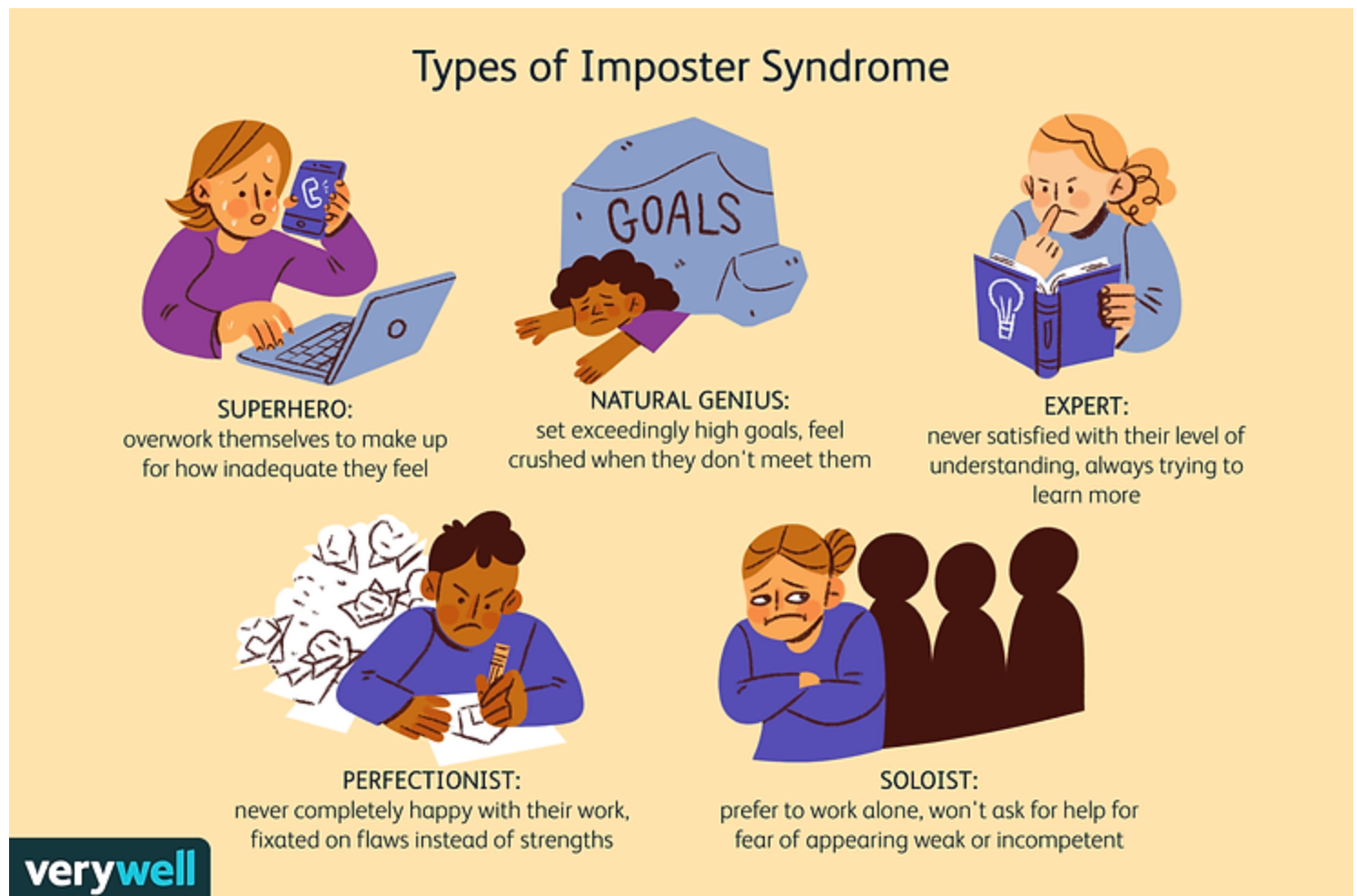
It's me. I'm the bully.

Am I stressed, have anxiety, or depressed? Stressed, sure, who doesn't get stressed from time to time? Anxiety? Feels like several types. Depressed? Probably at times. I'm sure we all get depressed at times. I take anxiety and ADHD medicine every day.

My family tells me I don't participate enough. I get guilt tripped to be more social. At work, I often times feel like I'm just sitting there waiting to be fired. I'll get messages from people on instagram about collaborations. I turn them down for fear of screwing up.

I'm an imposter.

I can't remember what website I got this from. It's been saved on my phone for probably a year or two. Apparently, Imposter Syndrome is a thing, and while there are different "types". I seem to fit in with each and every one listed on this picture.



Overwork myself? Absolutely. Professional and personal life. Does it make me a better person as far as a good employee? A good husband? A good father? Actually, yes. I'm always going above-and-beyond at work and at home.

Set exceedingly high goals? That goes right along with me being a perfectionist. Long before I ever took up photography, I used to love making art. None of my art exists. I would complete something, go back and look at it, find a "flaw" and try to fix it. Then find another flaw, and another, etc. to the point where I would just destroy the picture.

I do things on my own, and decline offers for help, even if I could use the help. My wife says I'm a constantly changing puzzle. No one gets to see the real me. I have different personas depending on whose company I am in. After all these years I'm not even sure which is the real me. She gets to see the real(ish) me, or at least a less angsty, stressed me. She's there when I need her.

Does it also make me mentally exhausted, stressed, and have anxiety from head to toe? Of course. Second doubting myself? All the time.

One pet peeve my wife used to have with me is that I didn't like making decisions. I'd always say "whatever you want to do", or "I don't care", "Doesn't matter". It used to get on her nerves lol. I think now she understands why I was always like that.

I'm always in my own head. The terms "you are your own worst critic", and "you are on your own worst enemy" certainly do hold true to me. I always feel that someone could do it better, quicker, easier. Being a perfectionist is a brutal mentality to have.

Sorry for the long, drawn out details of a glimmer of what goes on in my head, but I figured this self portrait needed some context. Here I am sitting and typing on New Year's Eve of 2023. My wife had a couple of continuing education classes she had to finish tonight. The kids are in their rooms asleep (supposedly), and I got bored. It's like 11PM on the East coast here.

My wife says I am the absolute worst to shop for. I never tell her anything I want. It's the whole imposter syndrome thing. I don't feel I deserve anything, and don't want people spending money on me. I buy what I want anyways.

Anyway, she hounded me for something so she could wrap a couple things that the kids can give me. I picked out a couple cheap LED RGB lights on Amazon. I normally use flashes and studio flashes, but figured LED lights might be interesting for some shots. I needed to test them out to make sure they worked ok before the Amazon return window closed, so I took them out for a selfie shot.



I used one directly in front of where I would be sitting. I turned it to a blue hue as a sign of depression. Feeling blue? :) The other, located about overhead, I tuned to a warm incandescent glow (2700k).

Hardest thing about selfies is trying to take a photo, hoping you got yourself in focus, and running back to the camera to look. Fujifilm has an app where you are supposed to be able to see a live view, and control all of the camera settings from your phone, but it's atrocious and never works. I ended up using a wireless shutter on a 2 second time.

In any case. I was trying to come up with an image to personify what might be going through someone's head that suffers from something like Imposter Syndrome, or someone who's just going through a rough patch in their life and not feeling much in terms of self worth.

Here is the resulting shot.



On a side note, 2023 is almost here (20 minutes at the time of this writing). Don't give yourself goals because you feel obligated. Don't look at other people on social media and compare your life to theirs. Social media is about as real as a Hollywood movie.

If you want to have a resolution for 2023, be a better you. Be a better version of yourself than last year. Take baby steps. Don't rush. Baby steps aren't failing. You are not in competition with anyone but yourself. Don't base your progress on someone else's progress. People read books at different paces. Don't look at someone on chapter 17 while you are just starting chapter 2. You will get to where you need to be, and any obstacles will only make you that much more resilient. (Now if only I could take my own advice lol).