

## Discussion Guide: Imposter Syndrome

Please use the questions below to guide your discussion after listening to the corresponding episode of Looking Up. The goal of the discussion guides is to build community and support learning about an important topic in women's leadership development. We've included a few suggestions to read further if you want to learn more.

### Begin:

Establish norms. Take a moment to affirm the importance of a safe space, explain what that looks like in a group discussion like this, and name other conditions necessary for a comfortable discussion where everyone can contribute with authenticity and vulnerability.

### Discuss:

1. What role has belonging played in your life? Think broadly, beyond work. Why does feeling like you belong matter? What does belonging enable you to do at work and in your life?
2. How much can an individual realistically do to lessen imposter syndrome if they confront discrimination, or consistently experience themselves as **"the only"** in the room?
3. Consider the statement that women are somewhat more likely to blame their ability when they fail, and that men are more likely to attribute their mistakes to external factors beyond themselves. How might this tendency affect feeling like an imposter?
4. Do you agree with Kelly that women who may start out outspoken or confident, but who are penalized or urged to **"tone it down,"** are more likely to experience imposter syndrome?
5. How has imposter syndrome affected your career? Looking back, are there things you might have said or done differently had you not felt this way?
6. What is it like to imagine the imposter voice as part of you, but not all of you? How does that change the way you think about it? What would you name your imposter voice?
7. It has been observed that women are more likely to believe they need to learn or do more of something before they feel ready to take a risk, like take on a new role. It's called **"overvaluing expertise."** Do you relate to this? Is there something you want to do but think you need to do or know more before you are ready?
8. What strategies have you used to manage feeling like an imposter? What has been most effective?

**Close: What will you take from this conversation going forward?**

### Go Further:

[Ruchika Tulshyan and Jodi-Ann Burey, Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome](#)

(Harvard Business Review, February 11, 2021)

[Tara Mohr, Playing Big: Practical Wisdom for Women Who Want to Speak Up, Create and Lead](#)