Phil Wilcox
Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast, where we take a deep dive into the human condition. And today is our final episode in our three part series focusing on the impostor phenomenon. And we've spent two episodes so far looking at what the imposter phenomenon is and looking at it very much from that one to one manager relationship. And our recurring guest, Hanne Vincent, is back with us today. But we've also got someone else new on the podcast, so we're going to have a different voice in this episode, too. So let's get our two guests on the air. So, first of all, Hanne Vincent, Hi Hanne.

Hanne Vincent
Hi. Hi Phil, how are you doing?

Phil Wilcox
I'm good, thank you. How are you? Welcome back.

Hanne Vincent
Thank you. Glad to be back.

Phil Wilcox
Glad to have you as well. And then from the Emotion at Work team, we've got Gabby Williams. Hi, Gabby.

Gabby Williams
Hi.

Phil Wilcox
How are you?

Gabby Williams
I'm really good, thank you, very excited.

Phil Wilcox
Good, me too. Today is going to be, I think, a really interesting one. So before we get into the podcast proper, though, because we've got a new guest on, I think it's only appropriate that we get to know our guests again through the use of our innocuous questions. So our unexpected yet innocuous question today is, what skill would you like to learn? So what skill would you like to learn is our innocuous question for today? Now, for me it's magic. I love magic, card tricks in particular, and I would love to learn how to do card tricks and magic, I think it would just be so much fun to do. Whether I'd have time to learn it, is something else entirely, but that would definitely be a skill that I would love to learn. I would love to be able to do kind of sleight of hand, none of the audience can

see my hand movement. I'd love to do sleight of hand card trick magic. So that would be me, that would be the skill I would love to learn.

Hanne Vincent
Is that a childhood dream then? Lots of little boys dream of that?

Phil Wilcox
No, actually, I think it came from my journey into the world of deception really. So when I think I was like, I don't know, late 20s, early 30s, when I'd started my quest into emotions, and then often that quest takes you into the world of deception, because often what we try and hide our feelings. And then it was a discussion and a debate I had with someone about whether magic is deception or not? Because if you were to look at it, like the dictionary definition of deception is an intent to mislead without prior notification, so without letting somebody know in advance that they're being deceived. So, for example, I went to see a production at the theatre last night, and I know that the lead actor on stage or the person playing the lead isn't that actual person, so they're not, as I went to see Elf the Musical last night, that person isn't Buddy the Elf. But for all intents and purposes, in that example, they are. So they're not deceiving me because I've already been told that it's not and with magic you know you're going to be tricked. So, yeah, it just got me really interested in it. And I love watching. If I'm going to get lost on YouTube, I can get lost in Penn & Teller: Fool Us videos and places like that.

Hanne Vincent
Really?

Phil Wilcox
Yeah, I love it. And I took my eldest daughter to see Derren Brown earlier on this year, and that was amazing as well. So, yeah, sorry, anyway, yeah, magic for me.

Hanne Vincent
Wow, well, for me I think it would be something a bit more practical and it's improving the skill rather than learning a new skill. I like to sew and I have so many projects that I start, but I'm actually not very good at it, so they just end up in a cupboard waiting for me to finish it. But I'd love to be good at sewing and be wearing the clothes that I have in my mind and that I envision, they just never come out the way I want them to. So, yes, if I had time I would definitely want to improve on that one. That would be a big one, yeah.

Phil Wilcox
Ah, that would be an incredible skill. I think when I was in cubs I had to sew a button onto something to get my sewing badge, and I think that's the extent of my sewing. I probably could sew on a button and that would probably be it.

Hanne Vincent
Congratulations, very useful.

Phil Wilcox

That's as far as I could go. So, no, the idea of actually making clothes, that'd be amazing, that'd be brilliant. Gabby, for you?

Gabby Williams
I think mine's a bit of a boring one, but I'd love to be able to cook much better than I can now. I want more recipes and more fun things to make because I'm very bad at cooking at the moment, yeah. More exciting foods for me to eat.

Phil Wilcox
What's something that you would love to cook that you just think you just feel would be so far beyond your skills at the moment? Is there a dish that you're like, oh, yeah, I'd love to cook that?

Gabby Williams
Oh, I don't know. I think it's also it's baking, it's like all of the different cakes and stuff that I could never be able to cook or it's all just very technical.

Phil Wilcox
So cooking I love, baking I hate. Baking is just far too precise, you've got to be very exact in your quantities, you can't mix and match your ingredients. So, cooking.

Hanne Vincent
If you put lots of sugar in there and it'll be fine, that's my approach [laughs].

Phil Wilcox
Yeah, exactly. All of the sugar. Okay, all right, so for this final episode in the series then, we want to, I guess take a…probably maybe we're summing up what we've looked at so far, but all the conversations, Hanne, that you and I had, I think we focused on how impostor phenomenon can show up for individuals, what managers can do to help and support when somebody is already in a job or in a role, whether already in an organisation? And then I think for today, I think we're looking a bit earlier in that process, aren't we, in terms of thinking about how might we attract or recruit or maybe welcome those with impostor phenomenon into a company or into an organisation? But I guess to do that the creation of a culture of interpersonal trust and psychological safety is going to be important. And, Hanne, is that something that you'd like to just tell us a bit more of your thoughts on?

Hanne Vincent
Yeah, so, like you said, I think in the previous episodes, we really focused on how managers can work with members in their team that suffer from imposter feelings and how they can get the most out of these people? But I think what's important also to look at is look at it maybe from a broader perspective, and look at the role that is set aside for maybe HR or senior leaders in how to create a safe place at work in general. So I would say it's all about fixing the workplace rather than the person, so creating a culture of where people can feel safe is so, so important. And it might sound a bit fluffy and a bit woolly.

Phil Wilcox

No, not at all.

Hanne Vincent
But environments where employees feel easily judged, where there's a very high focus on individual performance, where people need to shine individually, that's an ideal breeding ground for impostor feelings. And the price of such a culture can be very high. It can stimulate anxiety, high stress levels, burnouts, et cetera, because people are afraid to show weakness or vulnerability, and they're afraid of making mistakes, of being unmasked when we talk about the masked employee image. So, a place that offers psychological safety, where people feel safe, to take risk and try out ideas, is really important to get people to function at their maximum potential. And there's actually been some research in that, I think it was Google that did some research to look at the link between psychological safety and high performing teams. So they observed, over a couple of years, they observed a number of high performing teams and they did some questionnaires and statistical analysis on them and tried to figure out what were the predictors of their performance. And one of the most obvious predictors that came out is that the teams that work very well together and show high performance, the main predictor is actually psychological safety. So when people feel safe within their team and they feel like they're not easily judged and they can make mistakes and they can try out new things, they feel safe to do that. That's a one on one relationship with the performance of the team. So it's not just a fluffy thing, it's a really, really effective team to make a team performing well. So, yeah, that's a really good thing. Now, how do you do that as an HR team or as a leadership team? That's not easy, but there's a couple of things an organisation can do, and that's show that it's okay to make mistakes or to be vulnerable. It could be, for example, I don't know, senior leaders talking openly about mental health, for example, or about how they're sometimes afraid to get it wrong. That's really, really impactful, showing that everybody struggles. I don't know, there could be workshops around blameless learning, around also exposing biases within teams. All these kind of things can have a huge impact and are things that I think set out really for the leadership and for HR to work on in the organisation.

Phil Wilcox
I mean, I agree with you completely, Hanne. I think that's a big part of why emotions aren't discussed in the workplace, where that feeling of psychological safety is absent.

Hanne Vincent
Exactly.

Phil Wilcox
Either then having the confidence that you can say, I feel really nervous about taking on this project, I don't know if I'm capable of doing it or I'm really angry about that decision that we've taken to move from x to y, because I think it undermines what it is we're trying to achieve and what we're trying to do. And so for somebody to feel comfortable and safe enough to be able to express those feelings requires exactly what you're describing there, that culture of psychological safety. One of the things that we, as in Emotion at Work have been working on over the last probably 18 months or so, is a blueprint for high performing teams in terms of what are some of those components? What are some of those aspects that we need to have in place in teams that allow those teams to be psychologically safe and then goes on to allow them to be high performing? Because what we found,

we did a similar literature review to what you described. So, we went to look at the Google research, we also went to the peer reviewed research as well to say, right, what are these components or these elements that make up for high performing teams? And then we've been road testing it with two different clients over the last 18 months to see what kind of impact does it have where these things are in place? And then we're comparing that to what the team was like prior to our intervention to see how impactful that can be. And what we're finding is that, yes, absolutely, the senior leaders have a role to play. The HR team or the people function similarly have a role to play. And I think what's been more impactful though is the way that the team engage with each other in it. So it's very much that social proof aspect. So what you mentioned before about a leader saying, I just don't know, I don't know if we can hit this goal. So we've set ourselves this target, we've set ourselves this goal that we want to hit, and the way we're acting at the moment, I just don't know if we're going to get there. And I'm really nervous because if we don't get there, I feel like my credibility is going to be at risk and I feel like my reputation is at stake if we don't get there. And I realise that what that's been doing to my behaviour recently is making me really grumpy and making me really short tempered, and intolerant of mistakes. So when we've not got things right, I've got really angry with you as a team about it, and I want to say I'm sorry because that doesn't help us actually, that doesn't help us get where we need to go. And that was a meeting I facilitated with one of the leaders in the team, not the most senior leader, but one of the leaders in the team and the rest of the team around it. Because if we can't have that vulnerability, which you discussed earlier on, and we can't have that openness and we can't have those opportunities to express how we're feeling, then the chances of the team being high performing are just really slim.

Hanne Vincent
Exactly. That's interesting, yeah. And I think there's still so much hesitance or shame in doing exactly that, whereas it creates this high performing team spirit. And I think, especially in a lot of multinationals, there's still this really high focus on individual performance, but also at universities. I think, I don't know, maybe in journalism, these kind of professions, there's such high competition levels, and this focus on individual performance destroys a lot of this trust and this atmosphere that needs to be there for people to thrive. So it's a contradiction there of focus on performance, and this focus on performance is actually going to reduce your performances within your team, and that's sometimes really difficult to grasp I think for a lot of people in these organisations, and especially the leaders, that they don't always realise that, that they're harming the performance of the team by being this superpower or the image of it.

Phil Wilcox
Yeah, absolutely. And I want to come to Gabby in a second to ask what your experiences might be in terms of teams or occasions where you felt safe and how that's impacted how you feel. Just before I do that though I wanted to add that I think sometimes it can feel really big, we might be talking about a multinational company as a whole and trying to affect change across a massive company like that can be quite tricky, because you've got all these micro cultures within it. And I think for the listener then it might be thinking about, yes, can we do it on a cultural level across a company? And it might be about, how can I do this in my team? So what is it that I can do in my team to create that psychological safety locally with my immediate people that I'm working with? Even if I can't do it across a whole company, if we can do it in a team, I think that's also a really important step.

Hanne Vincent
Absolutely.

Phil Wilcox
So, sorry, Gabby, I just wondered if there's something you're thinking or feeling or would like to add?

Gabby Williams
No, I mean, I think having the ability to make mistakes and ask questions without being judged and knowing that actually, yeah, you've got that safety of it doesn't matter, I think is really helpful. Yeah.

Phil Wilcox
Because we have it at Emotion at Work.

Gabby Williams
Yes, we have it at Emotion at Work.

Phil Wilcox
[Laughs] I'll tell you what if there's one place that you'd hope it'd be in place, then the Emotion at Work would be one, so that's true.

Gabby Williams
It definitely is.

Phil Wilcox
So we talked about creating that culture of interpersonal trust, psychological safety. Also, though, I think what we're aiming to do with this series as a whole, and also, I know, Hanne, what you're looking to do with the audiobook that may follow, is about just raising awareness of impostor phenomenon as a phenomenon in itself. And is that again, something you'd like to just speak a bit more about for me?

Hanne Vincent
Yeah, well, I think that's a really basic one in the whole conversation around impostor phenomenon is the need to raise awareness around it, to unbury it in a way, because remember, we talked about around 70% of people having experienced or regularly experiencing these feelings. So it's really quite widely common, but it's rarely a topic of conversation in companies. And so, yeah, it really all starts with raising awareness and making it a topic of conversation, could be through an informal lunch and learn session or an awareness week around imposter phenomenon, with posters on the wall or again senior leaders talking about it. And if there's one important aspect of making it known and raising awareness, I think it's especially important to do that within the line manager community so that they're aware of it, they're handed tools to work with people that experience these feelings. So really, I think it's crucial that everyone who manages anyone should be aware of this thing that is imposter feelings and what it means and how they can manage it? Why not include it in every new manager's introduction training programme? It really should be a part of it, and I think it rarely is at the moment.

Phil Wilcox

Well, hopefully, with this series and the extra work that you're doing, Hanne, we're taking some really good steps to doing something about that and addressing it. So, yeah, definitely.

Hanne Vincent

Lovely, yeah.

Phil Wilcox

So let's move then into, I guess, the more specific aspect that I mentioned earlier on in terms of the how might we attract, how might we recruit, select, and then welcome people in a company or in an organisation in a way that would support those that might have imposter feelings? And I think, Hanne, we'll come to you first for a bit of introduction maybe as to why you think that's important and some suggestions that you may have, and then Gabby will come to you afterwards and start to find out a bit more about the research that you've been doing, if that's okay? So, Hanne, let's come your way first?

Hanne Vincent

So, that's a really, really crucial aspect of making sure to include or to be mindful about people that have these imposter feelings. And especially in the process of looking for a job and applying, there's huge peaks of these feelings because you actually have to prove, I have to prove what I know and what I can do when I'm actually not convinced myself I can do it, and I know how to do it. So that's just a really, really big challenge for people with imposter feelings, and I can totally testify to that myself. It's just so awkward when you have to do interviews and apply for a job and come across really confident when you're just dying inside and you feel like you just don't have the right to be there. There's been a lot of research on how different profiles respond differently to certain job postings. And, for example, funny one, I thought quite funny, there's one study that showed that men usually apply when they meet around 60% of the qualifications in a job ad, whereas women will apply only when they meet 100% of them. So, it will be the same for people with imposter feelings, they will look at a job description and cross out everything, all the criteria that they don't meet and walk away. So imagine the people you are missing out on just because of how you write your job ad. And it might be very tempting for recruiters to make a whole list of wishes and qualifications you want people to meet, but you have to think of how you can scare away certain people in doing that. And so an important first step really is to I think trim down your job description to the core and cut out any nice to haves, or if there is any nice to have, make sure it's specified that they are nice to have, so that you make every qualified people feel welcome to apply to a job.

Phil Wilcox

Yeah, definitely.

Hanne Vincent

So I think Gabby's work here and going to Gabby, I think she did some interesting research on exactly what's the impact of all these qualifications in a job ad to young people applying?

Phil Wilcox

Yeah, definitely, and Gabby, I'll come your way in just a second, if that's okay? So, I think we recruited for a social and community manager back in February 2022, and this was something that I was really aware of when we're putting together the role profile and the job description and those things. So we made it clear in there that, for example, we said we're looking for someone who loves social and community management, but doesn't need to know everything. Someone who's knowledgeable enough to contribute to the development of a strategy and is experienced enough to implement it. Someone who is happy to use or willing to learn these particular tools. So we didn't say, like, you have to be proficient in MS Office, we just said, you need to be happy to use or willing to learn these things to make it as specific enough that somebody can make a decision to go, yes, I think I'm interested in that or, yes, I'm willing to do that. But not so stringent that somebody might go, oh, I don't have that so therefore I can't apply. And that in a way that made our lives a bit harder because we probably broadened the level of applications that we received. So we got lots of applications in, I think it was 200 and something that we got in. Was it 200 and something? I think it was. Anyway, it was a large amount and we made the commitment to give feedback to everybody. So we told them if they weren't shortlisted, we told them why they weren't shortlisted, and if they were shortlisted, we told them why they were shortlisted. And the responses that we got then from people to say a) thank you for having such a practical and a supportive approach to doing it and for letting us know, because most companies would just go, oh, yeah, if you don't hear from us within two weeks you haven't got the job, good luck. Whereas we were like, no, that doesn't help anybody actually, that just creates a degree of anxiety where it doesn't need to exist. And I know we're not necessarily talking about impostor phenomenon or I'm not talking about impostor phenomenon specifically here, but I think that I agree with you completely. Taking that approach I think is good for everyone, including those that may experience impostor feelings, rather than having an approach that might work well for those that don't have imposter feelings or might have a particular set of preferences in a particular way.

Hanne Vincent
So did you find somebody qualified with the right mindset then?

Phil Wilcox
Yeah, absolutely. So, a lady called Lizzie, she joined our team back in, oh, no, it's January this year, and, yeah, she's been fantastic for us all the way through. There was a couple of other things that we did as we worked our way through. So, for example, when we got to the final stage, so we had three stages, so we had the application to be shortlisted, then we had an interview and then we had a presentation followed by a meet the team, a wider interview. And so when we got to that presentation phase, we paid all of our candidates for the work they did, because we asked them to do a piece of work, to review what we do at the moment and to give their recommendations and suggestions as to what we should improve or what we should do better, which essentially is consultancy work. That's what you ask a consultant to do. You say to somebody, review what we do and give us your recommendations as to how to improve? So we paid all of our candidates to do that piece of work for us, whether they got the job or not, because again we felt that was the right thing to do, because otherwise we're getting all of this free consultancy, and what does the individual get for it? Well, they might get the job, but they also might not. And we just didn't think it was fair to ask them to put that work in without giving them some kind of payment for it. So we paid them all £200, so we paid them £20.00 for their work.

Hanne Vincent
Wow, interesting approach.

Phil Wilcox
Yeah, well, it definitely worked for us, we got a great person as a result. So, yeah, really happy.

Hanne Vincent
Excellent.

Phil Wilcox
Okay, all right. So, Gabby, I know that for you your research was around factors that might influence people applying for a role. So why don't you tell us a bit about what you were researching and what you were trying to find out?

Gabby Williams
Yes, so I was researching impostor phenomenon in people aged 16 to 18, because I thought that was prime time when people are getting their first jobs or their first couple of jobs, and what experiences they might have with that. And I thought impostor phenomenon is one of those things that might come out in that age bracket. So, yeah, I wanted to know about the factors that go into applying for jobs and then how they're affected by impostor feelings?

Phil Wilcox
Okay, so it's probably a good place to start, then with those factors if that's okay? So what were the factors that you were researching and looking into?

Gabby Williams
So I looked into pay and wages, ease of application, flexibility of hours, the contract length, the distance that someone has to travel from their home, the effort needed to learn any new skills required for that job, and then whether there was a specific industry or sector that people were interested in?

Phil Wilcox
Okay, wonderful. Thank you. And I know you're currently authoring a White Paper that we'll put out that will list all of the findings. So we might not be able to get into every single bit of detail within there today. What we'll also do for you, fair listener, is we'll put either a link to a dummy survey, we'll put a PDF of the questions that we asked in the survey in the show notes for this particular episode. So if you want to know exactly what we asked, and if you were furiously scribbling down those different factors that Gabby was looking into, then fear not, fair listener, because they'll be available for you in the show notes. Okay, so we were looking at those different factors then, so those eight factors in terms of things that might influence the extent to which somebody might apply for a job. And then were comparing that with or correlating that then with imposter feelings, so how did we establish the extent to which somebody might have imposter feelings?

Gabby Williams
So we included a link to the Clance impostor phenomenon questionnaire, which was done by Clance

& Imes in their research into imposter phenomenon. So at the start of our survey, everyone filled out that questionnaire and it gives them an imposter phenomenon score. So basically tells them how much they experience feelings of imposter phenomenon.

Phil Wilcox
And again, for your benefit, fair listener, we'll put a link to that Clance & Imes survey into the show notes as well. So if it's something that you're interested in doing, then we'll put a link in to do it. So before we get into your findings though, Gabby, so we're interested in 16 to 18 year olds. So technically especially within UK law, that means they're not an adult, so what did we do from a welfare point of view? So, within UK law in particular 16 to 18 year olds then are not an adult, so we have to think about their welfare. So what do we do to support the participants understandings of impostor phenomenon and their welfare within it, Gabby?

Gabby Williams
So I went into the school I conducted the survey in and I did a presentation for them, basically outlining what the research was and what impostor phenomenon actually is, and helping them to understand that it's not a medical condition, it's not a medical diagnosis, everyone has those feelings and it's actually just the extent to which someone feels those feelings. And we gave them some resources that if they wanted to look into it more or they felt like they would have needed some help with it, they had those resources to then go and look at afterwards or before if they wanted to.

Phil Wilcox
Okay, wonderful. So when you gathered the data, was it just from one school or one establishment?

Gabby Williams
Yeah, so it was the school that I was in locally, and we got about 200 respondents.

Phil Wilcox
Okay, so a decent sample size then, that's good. All right. So we're looking at 16 to 18 year olds, so before we get into the comparison with or the correlation, sorry, not comparison, the correlation with the factors which to apply for a job, what did we notice about impostor phenomenon and age?

Gabby Williams
So we found that age and the imposter phenomenon score were linked and we found that 16 year olds had the lowest levels of impostor phenomenon, which potentially could be they haven't gone into the experiences like work and had those feelings come on. So it might be that they've not experienced it yet, but, yeah, 16 year olds showed the lowest and as it went up through the age range it increased. So 18 year olds showed the highest levels.

Hanne Vincent
If I may ask, did you also find a correlation with gender?

Gabby Williams
Yes, we did. So we also found that overall women imposter phenomenon. So we had 20% of the

females that were asked were in the 80 plus score of imposter phenomenon, whereas only 2% of males scored in that category.

Hanne Vincent
Wow, a big difference.

Phil Wilcox
That is a big difference. So it might be useful then, Gabby, just to let us know what those categories are. So you mentioned the 80 plus category, what were the other categories?

Gabby Williams
Yes, there was less than 40, 41 to 60, 61 to 80, and then 80 plus.

Phil Wilcox
Okay. And the range then is about the frequency and the intensity of the feelings, is that right? So less than 40 is I don't tend to feel this very often, or I don't feel it very intensely. And then up to 80 would be the other way where either I feel it intensely and/or I feel it regularly?

Gabby Williams
Yes, so people in 80 plus have it frequently and, yeah, lots of intensity.

Phil Wilcox
I guess I find it interesting about the increase through age, 16 to 17, to 18. And I think the point that you make about it could be that at 16, I can't say everybody starts work because that would be inaccurate, because some people might begin working earlier than 16, but I guess as the older you get, the more experience you have in the workplace. I guess impostor phenomenon isn't necessarily just about the workplace, it could happen in sports, it could happen in education, it could happen in different settings. So, Hanne, might you have any working ideas as to in this data set we're finding that 16,17 to 18 it progresses in terms of the frequency that people report experiencing imposter phenomenon as to what might be behind that, do you think?

Hanne Vincent
Intuitively, I think that the older you get in that age bracket, the closer the reality of having to actually find a job and performing and keeping a job, it just I think, becomes a little bit more real at 18 rather than at 16. I think when I was 16 I wasn't thinking about those things, whereas once you're 18, you're an adult, and now play time's over and it becomes a bit more real. So that's intuitively what I would think and how I would explain it.

Phil Wilcox
Okay, maybe, Gabby, that's one for your next research project?

Gabby Williams
Yeah.

Phil Wilcox

Okay. So we've talked about imposter phenomenon schools by age and by gender, in terms of the factors then, so the factors that might impact people's application for a job, Hanne mentioned and then I elaborated on the process that somebody might go through to join a company or to take on a role. So what did you notice about the application process?

Gabby Williams
So, I found that people tended to in the less than 40 group, so the people that experienced not much imposter feelings, I found that they tended to rate less, quite low, whereas in the 80 plus group, they rated it really high, so they really valued having an easy application process.

Hanne Vincent
Okay, and what do you mean with an easy application process?

Gabby Williams
So they valued having something simple and something easy to follow, rather than potentially falling at hurdles throughout the process.

Hanne Vincent
Okay.

Phil Wilcox
So it might be about the number of hurdles that are in the way and/or, I guess, the accessibility of the role or how accessible the role may feel within that then?

Gabby Williams
Yeah.

Phil Wilcox
If I was to visualise a bell curve then, so what we're saying is if they report strong impostor feelings, they rated the importance of the ease of application higher. So if we took the imposter phenomenon comparator away, how did that data look just generally? So in terms of what might that distribution curve look like if we took the imposter phenomenon bit out?

Gabby Williams
So without the impostor phenomenon it was a normal distribution. So low at either end and then a spike in the middle. So, a very normal distribution but then when you add in the impostor feelings, it spikes up of people with the high impostor feelings rate it high, and they want an easy application.

Phil Wilcox
Okay. So it skews that data very much to the right, so instead of it being that standard bell curve, it's skewed to the right hand side?

Gabby Williams
Yeah.

Phil Wilcox

Okay, that's really interesting. And I guess that could be because if we think about the classic Clance & Imes definition that I know, Hanne, you talked about in, I think it was episode one around feeling like a fraud, fearing that people will find out that you're not as competent as they might think you are, and then feeling like you're not a success despite evidence to the contrary. It could be that I suppose that in particular that bit about fear being not as competent, could tie in with that ease of application process, especially if it links back to what Hanne was saying earlier on, of having a long list of essential criteria and those kinds of things, there could be some correlation there do you think?

Gabby Williams

Yeah, no, I definitely do, yeah.

Phil Wilcox

Was there something in your data that surprised you? I do like it when data surprises us, was there something that surprised you?

Gabby Williams

Yeah, so when I was looking at the link between the effort needed to learn a new skill and the impostor score, I thought going into it that people with a high score would indicate that the effort needed to learn a new skill would have a high influence, but that really wasn't the case when we actually looked at the data. So we found that people in the 61 to 80 category, only 21% of people rated effort to learn a new skill as a high to a four or five influence. And then people in the 80 plus category, only 15% of them rated it in the four to five high influence. So, yeah, I really thought that would have had more of an influence, but actually it turns out that even people with lots of impostor feelings actually don't really mind learning new skills.

Phil Wilcox

Okay, wonderful, fab, thank you. All right. And was there something else then? Something else or something more from your findings that you think that you'd like the audience to hear? As I said earlier on, the in depth or the full report will follow, and when we publish that, we'll put a link to it in the show notes. Yeah. Something else or something more, Gabby, that you wanted to share today?

Gabby Williams

I mean, my main biggest finding I found was actually that there was a correlation between the impostor phenomenon scores and some indicators of imposter phenomenon. So the indicators come from the Clance & Imes definition of imposter phenomenon. So that's things like feeling like a fraud in what you're doing, feeling like people will find out that you're not as competent as they think you are, and then also feeling like you're not a success, despite actually evidence otherwise. So we basically found that people that were in the low impostor phenomenon feelings, so the 40 or below, they didn't really feel like a fraud, they attributed their success to themselves, whereas people in the high impostor feelings, so the 80 plus category actually did score highly on all of these indicators.

Phil Wilcox
Wonderful. So that gives us some good confidence in both the validity and the reliability of the data that we're reporting then?

Gabby Williams
Yes, definitely.

Phil Wilcox
Yeah. Wonderful, fantastic, thank you. Coming your way then, Hanne, I guess there's an element of a so what from that then. I suppose, where I want to move next into is what might be our recommendations for our listeners who might be managers in organisations or they might work in that people HR profession, so when we're thinking about those individuals that may experience these imposter feelings and thinking about that attraction, recruitment, selection and welcoming, what might be some of our recommendations for them?

Hanne Vincent
So I think there's a couple of things. In general, it's just be mindful of the reflexes of people with impostor feelings and just be mindful of these feelings as not to exclude them proactively. So there's a couple of things. So we've talked about how you write your job description or your requirements, make everybody feel welcome and don't make a huge list of requirements that might scare people away. I was thinking of that when Gabby was talking about people leaving school, I had a discussion with a friend a while ago, and he explained to me he was working at a large multinational and they were looking for new graduates to apply. So they were targeting universities and they did a first wave of application, I think, around March or something, so before students had actually graduated and gotten their diploma. And what they found is that in that wave of selection of recruitment, they really attracted a pool of very confident, mostly male students. Whereas in the wave where they recruited, I think, end of June or beginning of July, when people had actually graduated, the group of applicants was a lot more diverse. And so that's also an example of things you need to take into account, is that people with impostor feelings that are maybe less confident might not apply in March, when they're not yet certain that they will actually graduate and they don't feel confident enough to apply. So it's a silly thing, but it's these kind of reflexes that companies need to have when they're in their recruitment process. And then there's a last thing that I would like to point out, and that's something that I feel very related to, is be mindful also of the impostor phenomenon when reading through a CV. There's this huge fear of over promising that people with imposter phenomenon have. And so I remember visibly when I was writing my CV at one point, and I'd included mostly like dry descriptions of this is what I've done, and this is the size of the business that I've managed, and function title, just very dry things. And my partner he read it through, he said, no, you have to include your accomplishments, market share, growth and successful projects, and targets you delivered. And the mere idea just made my stomach turn, I could not write down my accomplishments because I didn't believe they were my accomplishments. So that's very important to keep in mind when you read through a CV and compare different CVs, it's not because somebody doesn't put all of their accomplishments on there that they're not very valuable people.

Phil Wilcox

Yeah, I agree. So one, I think I'll add which I think will support those that might report having high imposter feelings, and I also think would support everybody in the recruitment process, which is when it comes to an interview, letting people know in advance what they're going to be interviewed on and what they're going to be interviewed against, and ideally sharing the interview questions beforehand. Because it helps people prepare and it helps them get ready and it takes away some of that anxiety around over preparing. I remember, Hanne, in one of the previous episodes, you mentioned about how you used to over prepare, because you have to plan for all possible eventualities so you don't get found out. Whereas if you know exactly what you're going to be asked and you know what's going to be coming, then that can certainly make that process more relaxing and more engaging, which allows individuals to represent themselves in the best way possible.

Hanne Vincent

I think that's a very good point actually. Yes, it takes away a lot of anxiety and it reduces the chance of a panic reaction, which a lot of people with imposter feelings will be familiar with. So, yeah, absolutely a very good point.

Phil Wilcox

Okay. And then as we start to come to a close, then, Gabby, is there something that you would add in terms of the recommendations or the ideas for people to think about, either from your experience or from your findings?

Gabby Williams

No, I agree with both of you. I think that having an easy application process, potentially making it very clear what the stages are and what is expected of them at each stage I think is really important. And also making it clear that of those list of requirements that you put out, actually making it clear that you don't need all of them, you can learn a new skill, because like my research has found is actually people don't mind learning a new skill, but it has to be made clear that actually they don't need it going in, they're allowed to have that time to learn it. They don't need it straight away, right off the bat. So I think, yeah, having a really clear process.

Phil Wilcox

Wonderful. Thank you, Gabby. So what we'll do shortly then is we'll move into our closing aspects where I'll ask both Hanne and Gabby, what's something that surprised you over the course of either gathering your data, I know, Gabby, we've heard of one surprising finding from you so far. I'm not asking about a finding in particular, something that surprised you as you were working your way through your research? And then, Hanne, is there something that surprised you as we've recorded this series? I think it would be a nice way to bring it to a close. Before we get there though, for you, fair listener, as we mentioned earlier one of the focuses for Emotion at Work is about our blueprint for high performing teams. So if what you want are teams that are psychologically safe, that have a constructive culture where emotions can be expressed and teams that are high performing, then get in touch with us or get in touch with me at phil@emotionatwork.co.uk and we can share the blueprint with you and we can talk a bit more about how your teams can be high performing. Ok, so let's go, Gabby, can we come to you first, if that's okay? What surprised you?

Gabby Williams

I think just how imposter feelings translate across everyone. Obviously, there's been lots of research in older people, people that are already in jobs and have already had jobs for a long time, but actually it translates across everyone and in young people as well. And just, I think it's surprising and interesting how everyone feels it. And actually, I think it needs to be more talked about and more focused on.

Phil Wilcox

Wonderful, fabulous. And another plug for your paper that will be coming soon as well, because I think that would definitely help. So, yeah, that's fantastic. Thank you. And, Hanne, what surprised you?

Hanne Vincent

Well, I agree with Gabby, for me, when I first started looking into it, one of the first things I read about was about how widespread it is. I think a lot of people don't realise that, so that's definitely one. And then I wouldn't say surprise, but as I was working through the whole paper and thinking about it and coming across tips and tricks, it just surprised me how much is out there already and has been written about it. And there's so many useful things or tools and tricks for managers out there, but they're all over the place, I would say. And it's rarely ever gathered together and presented to new managers. And I think, yes, that for me is the eye opener, is that so many people have it, there's so much written about it, but I've never come across any training or discussion at my workplace, and that's something that I would love to see changed.

Phil Wilcox

Wonderful, fantastic. In which case then I will say, Gabby, thank you so much for sharing your findings, sharing your research, and coming on the podcast with us today. Hanne, thank you so much for coming on for the last three episodes, it's been wonderful to have you with us and it's been great to hear your experiences, hear your insight, and to have your voice on the Emotion at Work podcast. So thank you both very much.

Hanne Vincent

Well, thank you, Phil, for having me and showing the interest, it was a real honour to be on your podcast.

Gabby Williams

Yeah, thank you very much, it was very fun.

You've been listening to the Emotion at Work podcast and if you've got this far you must be interested in the role that emotions have in the workplace either within individuals, between people in teams or in organisations as a whole. So head over to the Emotion at Work hub which you can find at https://community.emotionatwork.co.uk/groups. Thanks for listening.