

# COSMOPOLITAN

Doodle Whisperer!

## HOW TO MASTER HIS MEMBER

*Leighton*

"I'm A Lot  
Like Blair"

### HAIR REFRESH

Front-Row  
Trends  
Step By Step  
p184

SPECIAL  
OFFER!

**FREE**  
ALPHA-H ULTRA  
PROTECTOR  
SPF 30+ (50ml)  
worth \$27.50

OFFER AVAILABLE TO AUSTRALIAN  
RESIDENTS ONLY (EXCLUDING NT)  
CONDITIONS APPLY; SEE PAGE 234

READERS  
STRIP & TELL:

"Why I'm  
Proud To  
Stand Here  
Naked..."

+ 5 Celebs On  
Body Pressure

COSMO TESTS:

**18** BETTER  
WAYS  
TO MEET  
MEN

# Style Candy

157 Sweet Buys  
That Play Up  
Your Best Bits

www.COSMOPOLITAN.com.au

acp  
magazines  
**I  
Love**  
magazines



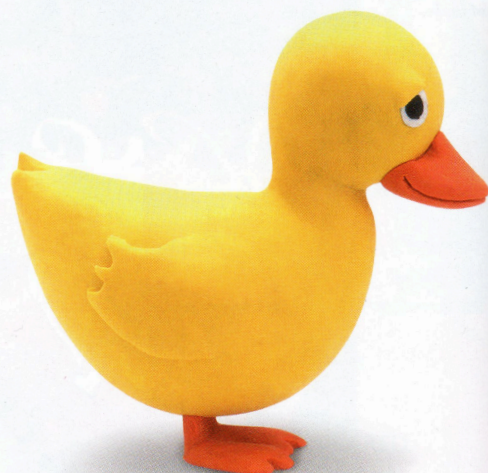
MAY 2011

AUSTRALIA \$7.60 (inc. GST)  
NEW ZEALAND \$8.60 (inc. GST)

BAD DAY? GET A MOOD LIFT p9



# YOU'VE GOT THE JOB, SO WHY DO YOU FEEL LIKE A



# fake

Ever expect to be  
“found out” at work?  
Then you could be  
experiencing an  
all-too-common  
career syndrome

**W**ith an Oscar nomination for her work on the film *An Education*, and countless movies under her belt, few people would question Carey Mulligan's bona fides as part of the new generation of Serious Young Actresses. Few people, that is, except for Carey Mulligan. “I always think, ‘Oh f\*\*\*, they’re going to find me out,’” the 25-year-old actress says. “I still have days when I genuinely cannot act. There’s a

scene in every film which I look back on and think, ‘That was the day I couldn’t act.’”

In her latest film, *Never Let Me Go*, it was the scene where she was sitting on the beach with co-star Keira Knightley. Mulligan is facing away from the camera. “I’d love to say it was a creative choice, but it wasn’t,” she says. “[It was] I’m going to look away and hide, so the audience won’t see that I’m bad at acting...”

To anyone who’s seen Mulligan in action, this probably sounds ridiculous. Then again, it might also sound familiar. Whether it’s our work, our looks, or being terrified we’re going to fail an exam, who among us hasn’t grappled with the feeling that we’re not as talented as other people think we are? And, worse still, that they’re going to figure it out sooner or later? As one *Cosmo* reader quipped when we asked you about this on Facebook: “Isn’t that just called being a professional woman?”

## A BRAVE FRONT

The experts call this feeling Imposter Syndrome, and 70 per cent of people will experience it at one point or another – usually following a big achievement or

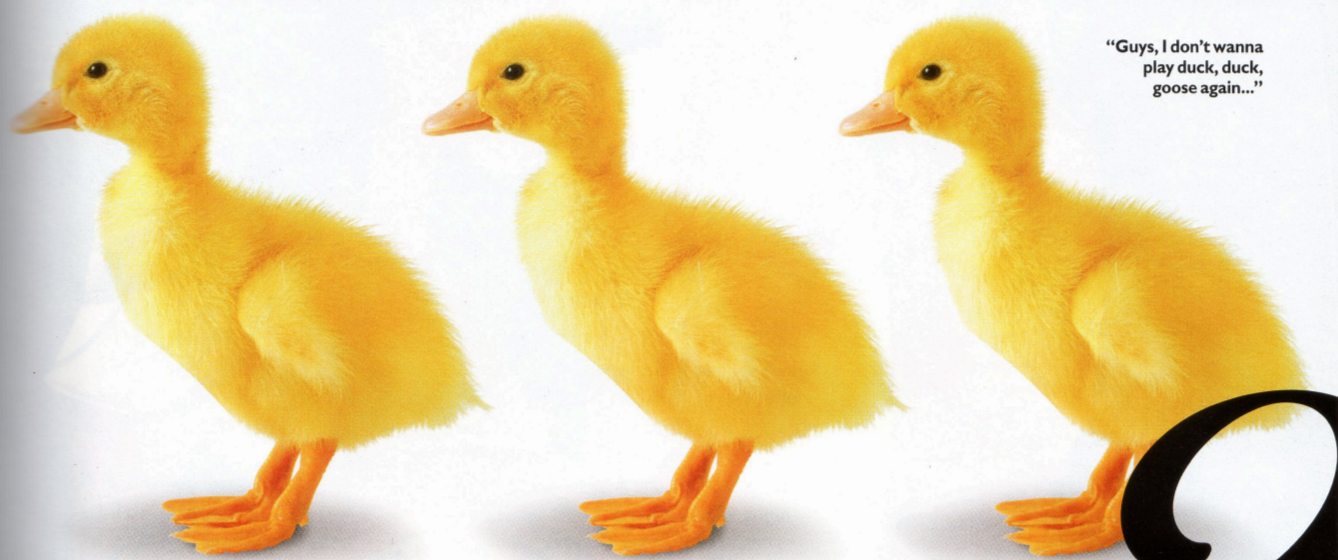
some other unsettling force that pushes us out of our comfort zones. One-third of us experience it on a chronic level, which can be frequent, intense and have a huge impact on our lives, says Suzanne Mercier of [imposterhood.com](http://imposterhood.com).

“Imposter Syndrome is a very distorted self-view,” Mercier explains. “It’s a perception that we’re actually not good enough – that we don’t measure up to an ideal. This manifests in feeling like a fake and a fraud.” And the more successful you are, the more likely you are to experience Imposter Syndrome. “What happens is people focus on their weaknesses and failures rather than their successes, because they can’t see their successes,” says Mercier.

## STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

Take 28-year-old Stephanie, formerly a ministerial advisor (now a communications and government relations consultant) and a classic high achiever. “Although I was providing direct advice to very high-level people, I still wondered ... waited, even [to be found out],” she says. “I’d get terrible





"Guys, I don't wanna play duck, duck, goose again..."

# at work.

headaches and anxiety, thinking about what would happen if I made a mistake, and what would happen if they found me out." To some extent, Stephanie knew she was doing better than OK. "There's a constant battle between the intellectual side that knows you've done the work, and the emotional side that makes you think 'What if they find me out?'" she explains.

Some of the causes of Imposter Syndrome operate at an individual level. You're more likely to suffer from it if you grew up in a household with perfectionist parents, for example, or if your personality leans towards the dramatic or emotionally reactive.

## UNREALISTIC GOALS

However, Imposter Syndrome is so common – especially among women – that we can't help but think there's something more cultural at play as well. "There's kind of a group girl thing of it's good to be modest and to be humble," says Karen Adamedes, author of *Hot Tips for Career Chicks*. Admit it – you probably found Carey Mulligan's every-girl insecurities

pretty endearing. As a generation, we may have plenty of ambition, but it's still not cool to brag and say it out loud. "It has a sense of a little bit of arrogance," admits Adamedes.

Then there's the question of our sky-high perceptions of how much talent is actually required in order to be successful – what Suzanne Mercier calls "the perfection driver". As Adamedes explains: "Women sometimes have unrealistic expectations about what is 'good enough'. It's part of thinking that whatever we do wouldn't be good enough, because we need to be operating at an extraordinary level. If you set your standards for success too high, everyone's going to struggle to measure up."

At its worst, Imposter Syndrome can hamper your ability to progress your career, form relationships, travel and have new experiences in life. However, while Imposter Syndrome is common, it's not inevitable – nor is it a reflection of any genuine deficiency on your part.

"The fear you're feeling is real, but the interpretation of the situation that led to the fear is probably not," says Mercier. **Rachel Hills**

## Blitz your fake-it fears

Try these four tips to keep Imposter Syndrome at bay...

### Know your strengths.

If you feel your achievements aren't up to scratch, write them down. Can't think of any? Ask a friend where they think your talents lie.

**Get numerical.** It's easy to feel like an underachiever if you constantly compare yourself to CEOs. Instead, assess your achievements using quantifiable goals. Saying "I increased sales by 10 per cent", will boost your confidence, says Adamedes.

**Let it go.** Everyone makes mistakes. When it happens to you, don't dwell on it. "Take the lesson and let it go," says Mercier.

**Talk about it.** You'll probably find you're not alone. "Talking to people made a big difference," says Stephanie. □