Twitter Thread by Dr Nisreen Alwan ■



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1/ How many times have u been told that 'Imposter syndrome' is an internal problem? That it's your responsibility to make it go away from your mind. That it's entirely a figment of your own imagination. Well I don't think so, but the journey to this conclusion has been painful ■

2/ Let's start with the definition of Imposter syndrome: it's basically those feelings of inadequacy & doubt in your abilities to do the things that you've proved successful in doing by virtue of your achievements & qualifications. This in turn affects your confidence to do them.

3/We're told women, particularly those from minoritised backgrounds, have this more intensely though it can affect anyone. I've certainly felt it throughout my life intensifying at times of stress and overload. But is it entirely internally triggered? Well, this is the narrative.

4/ You go to courses, you read articles, you speak to mentors and what they usually tell you is that it's all in your mind. Perhaps triggered by your social upbringing & cultural background. So you must work on it. But I've realised recently that it's not just that.

5/ Some people in your surroundings trigger this, to be fair to them perhaps unconsciously. They may have in their minds a stereotype of you that is inadequate & incapable of achieving what you've achieved in reality. So they do or say things that trigger the feeling in you..

6/They do so by words or actions. Some are very skilled at it. Others are more blunt. This works to divert u into doubting yourself. Then you're busy dealing with it rather than progressing & achieving. I can't say what their motives r but I certainly see it happening frequently.

7/ Sadly there's not much 'evidence' to characterise such behaviour, understand why people do it & who it happens to more, so this is all anecdotal, but I felt the need to say this to validate the experience of those of you who keep blaming yourselves for your imposter syndrome.

8/ It seems the more you feel it, the more others feel that you have it, and some of them may exploit that. It helps me personally when I feel it reactively to someone's words or actions to remind myself that it could be a way of distracting me from what I'm doing or saying.

9/ This of course doesn’t mean we don’t take others’ feedback into consideration. Of course we should. You learn with time & experience to distinguish useful critical pieces of feedback from passive aggressive triggering ones. Find a trusted person you can reflect with on this.

10/Remember everyone makes mistakes. There’s a middle ground between denying mistakes & believing everything else you do is inadequate. Imposter syndrome is more than a torturing voice in your head. It’s a manifestation of an unequal society. Realising this may help u through it.