



Students enjoy their walk to class on Feb. 26, 2026, following three days of snow in Storrs, Conn. Despite the previous winter weather, the snow began to melt as students made their way to classes. PHOTO BY SYDNEY CHANDLER, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Later, I will read this article

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I sit here, swathed in the ambery light of the cat-shaped Tiffany lamp on my desk, fingers hovering over the middle of my keyboard, and I do not even want to start.

This is a feeling that comes to me every time I write an article, and it's not because I dread deadlines or because I hate doing the work. I love the work, and I love to write. It's because I want every word on the page to be perfect, and I know that nothing I write will ever be absolutely perfect. But if it's not going to be flawless, should I even bring it into existence? This sentiment, this doubt that engulfs me, is called imposter syndrome.

Maybe I could call it a personal idiosyncrasy, but it seems to be a problem that affects many women in higher education and high-powered careers. According to find-

ings published by the Survey Center on American Life, 55% of young women ages 18 to 29 report feeling like they are "not good at their job." However, only 46% of young men report feeling that way, and this gap between men and women continues throughout different age groups, up to men and women ages 65 or older.

There is no logical reason for women to feel this way. An article published by Forbes states that there are millions more women enrolled in institutions of higher education than men, and women are outpacing men in graduation rates. So, if women are proven to have the capabilities, what is it that plagues us with imposter syndrome?

I theorize that the reason women have continuously felt self-doubt and impostor syndrome is that societal and gendered conditioning, as well as historical exclusion in workplaces has made women feel that, in anything we do,

we must work twice as hard to prove ourselves as competent as the men in our professions.

From childhood, women are conditioned, by either their parents or by society itself, to be humble and to avoid being too assertive. Most women feel these traits carry into their academic and professional lives, and it causes them to downplay their achievements or not think of their achievements as anything to celebrate. It also causes them to attach little importance to their own capabilities. When a woman begins to feel that her capabilities are of little importance, she also starts to doubt that any capabilities she has are good enough to accomplish her academic or professional goals.

This self-doubt can also be attributed to the exclusion that has plagued women historically. Having women in the workplace was not normalized until the 1970s, and

though women have made significant strides since then, they are still the minority in the workplace. We have had to fight so hard and for so long that now, when we should be enjoying the benefits we have gone through so much strife for, we are instead fighting again to prove ourselves. This time we are fighting from the inside of workplaces.

What we do not realize is that we don't need to. Yes, we should work hard. Yes, there is still much for us to accomplish. But so many of us are caught up in proving ourselves to be smart enough, hard-working enough, that we forget to relish our accomplishments. We let the doubt hold us back, when we can work through it.

To cut through this collective mindset, women must continue to lift each other up and talk about these feelings. Talking about this self-doubt, bringing these feelings into the open, takes away the power

they have over us. It means that women can look at new challenges through a fresh lens; challenges are opportunities to demonstrate our abilities and are not there to diminish us.

I have no doubt that any woman reading this might then open Google and look up "how to beat imposter syndrome." Doing so elicits many responses, including that one should make a "brag file" of their accomplishments to remind themselves of how much they have done.

I have my own version of the "brag file." As corny as it sounds, whenever I have an article published, I like to cut it out and put it on my bulletin board, alongside pictures of me and my friends. Seeing my own name in print is very rewarding, but I rarely ever read my own articles because my impostor syndrome had led me to believe that I shouldn't. Every time I write an article, though, I begin to believe that my next one will be better than the last. I think later, I am going to read this article.

CLIPART COURTESY OF CREATIVE COMMONS

What ONSTERS, INC. reminds us about FOSSIL FUELS

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If you were born in the early 2000s, you've probably heard of the film "Monsters, Inc." You might've seen it back then and thought fondly of it, but nothing more. Last week, I rewatched the movie, and in my illness-induced haze, decided that "Monsters, Inc." is not just a fun take on the whole "monster hiding under your bed" trope.

It's about fossil fuels.

"Monsters, Inc." takes place in a world fueled by the screams of human children. The titular Monsters, Inc. is a company that provides these screams by sending monsters into the bedrooms of human children at night. The monsters do their best to scare the kids and make them scream.

Scream energy is an analogy for fossil fuels. Scream energy is an incredibly widespread power source, used to do everything from heating, lighting and fueling cars, as stated by a commercial for Monsters, Inc. at the start of

the movie. In our world, as of 2024, over 80% of global energy consumption comes from fossil fuels, with the three components of energy consumption being heating, electricity and transport. Fossil fuels are equally as pervasive in our world as scream energy is in "Monsters, Inc."

The similarities don't stop there. Right off the bat, we're shown that scream energy is not a sustainable energy source long-term. In the same commercial from the beginning, we find out that human children are getting harder to scare, making it more difficult to source scream energy. The monster world is already feeling the effects of this. A newspaper headline declares: "ROLLING BLACKOUTS EXPECTED." Protagonist Sulley even makes his friend Mike walk to work instead of taking his car to save energy, paralleling how we are encouraged to drive less to cut down on carbon emissions.

Now, living in New England in 2026, the idea of us running out of energy doesn't seem likely to happen. But

"Monsters, Inc." started development in 1996 and was made by a bunch of people born in the '60s. And from the '70s to the early 2000s, Hubbert's peak oil theory, (in very simple terms, it's the idea that we are eventually going to run out of oil), appeared to be true. Although peak oil theory seems to have been debunked as of 2008, it doesn't mean we're in the clear. Global electricity demand is projected to grow, (especially with all these AI data centers), and it's not totally clear that we can meet it.

Aside from its lack of long-term potential, collecting scream energy is also shown to actively cause harm. In the movie, this is because in order to obtain energy, you have to purposely instill fear in a child (which hopefully, you agree is unethical).

In real life, obtaining fossil fuels also causes harm, though on a much different scale. Fossil fuel production drives global warming, causes earthquakes and pollutes water and air, overall damaging both the environ-

ment and human health.

So if these particular methods of energy sourcing are so bad, why aren't they causing outrage?

In "Monsters, Inc.," this is because of widespread anti-children, pro-scream energy propaganda. In the monster world, children are widely believed to be extremely toxic and dangerous. The CEO of Monsters, Inc., Henry J. Waternoose, declares at the beginning of the movie that "a single touch from a child could kill you!" Later in the movie, we see that this is a lie, as various monsters come into physical contact with a human child and don't die (unfortunately including Waternoose). It's through this misinformation that the corporation gets away with the unethical aspect of scaring children.

In real life, misinformation is also (at least partly) the reason behind why sourcing fossil fuels doesn't lead to as much public outcry as it should. Major fossil fuel companies (colloquially known as "Big Oil") have worked for de-

cades to stop the public from thinking unfavorably of fossil fuels, including spreading misinformation about the true impacts of using fossil fuels and denying climate change.

So far, everything I've discussed is pretty grim, but not all of the movie is doom and gloom. Although the scream factory gets shut down, it's replaced by a more ethical, more effective energy alternative: children's laughter.

We're not trapped in using unethical fossil fuel energy in our world, either. Although they have their issues, solar and wind energy are less harmful to the environment and more efficient in the long run than fossil fuels.

"Monsters, Inc." is a children's movie that came out a quarter-century ago, but it's still relevant today. A good story mirrors and inspires deeper reflection on our world. "Monsters, Inc." is the story of dismantling an existing unethical, unsustainable energy production system in favor of a more effective one that prioritizes minimizing damage. We should strive to do the same.

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