

I am not a Fake: Beating the Imposter Syndrome



Goals



- What is Imposter Syndrome?
- Why are We talking about this?
- Strategies for Coping
- Resources on Campus

Definition of Imposter Syndrome



- Describes when a person is unable to internalize her accomplishments.
- Feelings of phoniness and self-doubt
- Fear of being “found out”
- Difficulty taking credit for one’s accomplishments
- Lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes

Journal

Respond to one or more of the following:



- Do you believe that other people are smarter and more capable than you are, and it is only a matter of time before they discover it?
- Do you sometimes shy away from challenges because of nagging self-doubt or because you want to avoid making a mistake?
- Do you tend to dismiss your accomplishments to being a “fluke,” “no big deal” or the fact that people just like you?
- Do you tend to feel crushed by constructive criticism, seeing it as evidence of your “ineptness?”
- When you do succeed, do you think, “Phew, I fooled them this time but I may not be so lucky next time?”


Imposter Syndrome Cycle



- In mid-1980s, survey found that about 70% of people from all walks of life (men/women) have felt like imposters at some point in their life.

New Task → Self-Doubt → Perfectionism → (Procrastination)
→ Overwork/Stress & Anxiety → Success → Discount Success

Vignette

- Carla is a second year undergraduate student at UCSC. In her first year at the university, Carla found that she had to work much harder than she had in high school to maintain high grades. She became frustrated because she wasn't getting straight A's.
-  When she did well on an assignment or exam, she figured the professor was just an easy grader or she simply got lucky. When she didn't do as well on her assignments or exams she felt discouraged and wondered if her professor was subtly trying to tell her that she wasn't college material. Carla's high school teachers had always complimented her on her writing and good work; she came to the conclusion that this was because she came from a crappy high school and they didn't know better.
- Carla began to wonder if she belongs at the university and has even considered dropping out of the program. She can't seem to move past the feeling that everyone else in her classes is doing just fine, and that they are probably receiving more positive feedback about their work. They certainly seem to belong here more than she does.
- In small groups: How many of you have met a student like Carla?

Strategies for Coping



- Talk about Imposter Syndrome.
- Remember: Your abilities have sustained you for years and are not likely to desert you in the next 24 hours or the next year.
- While grades may be important, the grade you get on a particular test or even in a particular course is not that crucial to your future welfare and happiness.
- It's OK to switch your major.

TWISTED THINKING



- Ten Forms of Twisted Thinking
- Strategies for Tackling Twisted Thinking

CAPS Services



- How to Access Services
- Crisis Services
- Let's Talk

Questions?

