

# Imposter Syndrome

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## What is Imposter Syndrome?

Students who may be struggling with *Imposter Syndrome (IS)* may believe that their success or achievements are not attributed to their competence or intelligence but rather credited to luck, momentary effort, or someone they know. These students may feel uncomfortable accepting praise for their accomplishments, doubt their general intelligence, or feel others would be disappointed if people realized what they “really know.”

## Common Types of Imposter Syndrome:

### 1) The Perfectionist:

A perfectionist may give themselves excessively-high goals and tasks which can be difficult to achieve and eventually lead to decreased effectiveness at work and low job satisfaction. Which in turn can increase feelings of failure and self-doubt and reconfirm thoughts of not being able to measure up to their peers. Perfectionists may ruminate on these failures much longer than others and may have a hard time moving forward from what they view as failures.

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### **Ask yourself?**

- When you make a mistake do you have trouble letting it go?
- Are you over-prepared for meetings or presentations?
- Have you ever been accused of being a micromanager?

## **2) The Superwoman/man:**

Students who may experience Imposter Syndrome can be convinced that they are frauds amongst their peers, and will often push themselves to work even harder to measure up. Due to this insecurity, they may find themselves feeling burned out from overworking, pulling all-nighters, or canceling on social engagements. These stressors can harm student's mental health and well-being creating heightened anxious thoughts of being seen as more incompetent, which can then lead to depression or cause students to over indulge in quick "feel good" fixes such as sugar and alcohol.

### **Ask yourself?**

- Do you stay later on campus than the rest of your peers, even past the point that you've completed that day's necessary workload?
- Do you get stressed when you're not working and find downtime completely wasteful?  
Have you left your hobbies and passions fall by the wayside, sacrificed to work?
- Do you feel like you haven't truly earned your title (despite numerous degrees and achievements), so you feel pressed to work harder and longer than those around you to prove your worth?

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### **3) The Expert:**

Some students who struggle with Imposter Syndrome base their competence on “what” and “how much” they know or can do. They may find themselves constantly finding ways to educate themselves through additional trainings and certifications in order to feel “qualified” in fear of being exposed as inexperienced or unknowledgeable.

#### **Ask yourself:**

- Do you shy away from applying to job postings unless you meet every single educational requirement?
- Even if you’ve been in your role for some time, can you relate to feeling like you still don’t know “enough?”
- Do you constantly seek training even though others say you already have the credentials?

### **What to do when Imposter feelings arise?**

If you answered yes to the questions above I encourage you to keep a journal of the specific situations that may invoke personal triggers and responses to Imposter Syndrome.

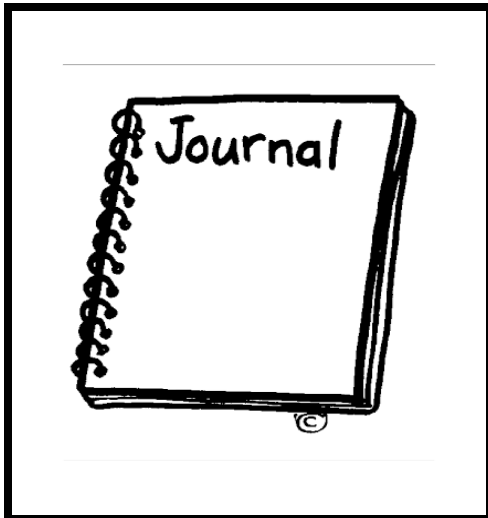
Gaining awareness on how your thoughts of Imposter Syndrome affect your emotions and behaviors is an important first step in overcoming the high amounts of self-doubt you may carry about yourself. When you begin to track the situations and patterns that heighten feelings of Imposter Syndrome then you can start seeking help to better cope within those circumstances.

In your journal I encourage you to reflect on the following questions about a recent time when feelings of Imposter Syndrome were heightened. Once you better

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understand your triggers and personal responses, you may find it easier to cope when these feelings arise.

1) What was the last situation that triggered feelings of Imposter Syndrome and how did it make you feel insecure?



2) How did you respond to this physically and emotionally?

3) What were you specifically afraid would happen?

4) What was the result and how did you get through the situation successfully?

5) What could have made you feel more confident at that time?

### **Now take a moment to ask yourself:**

What would you do if you thought you were ready and what are you not doing because Imposter Syndrome is holding you back?

### **References:**

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