

The graphic features a central dark blue circle containing the text 'UIC' in light blue. This circle is surrounded by a yellow ring, which is further enclosed by a red ring. Four thick lines radiate from the center: a yellow line extending to the top right, a red line extending to the bottom right, a yellow line extending to the bottom left, and a red line extending to the top left. The background is a solid light blue color.

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Alumni Exchange

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APPLIED HEALTH
SCIENCES**

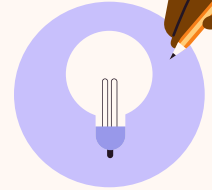


Strategies for Combating **IMPOSTER SYNDROME**

Leah Lebowicz, EdD, CMI
UIC Alumni Exchange



TODAY'S AGENDA

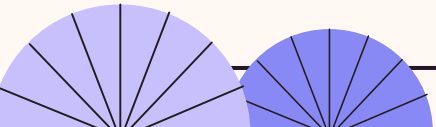


01 DEFINE
What is imposter syndrome

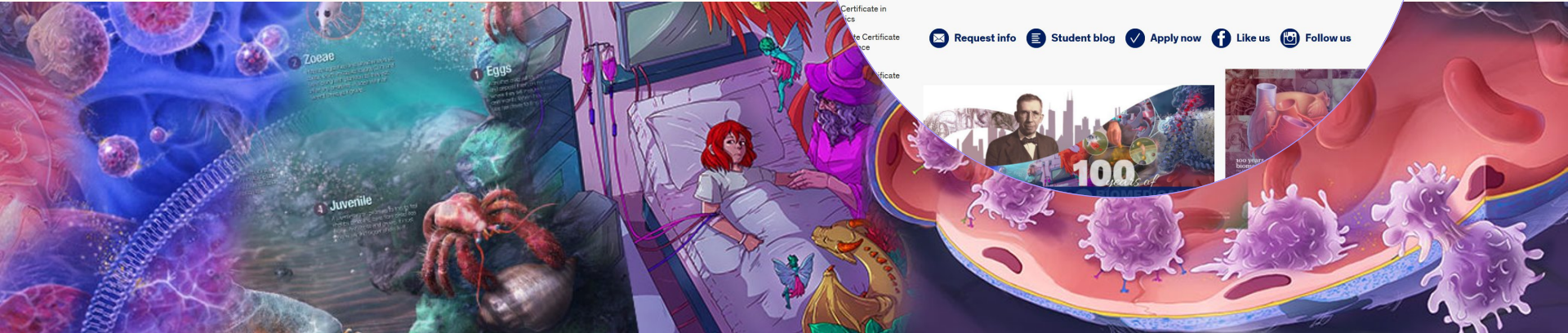
02 WHERE & WHEN
Where and when can imposter syndrome occur

03 STRATEGIES
For combating imposter syndrome

04 NEXT STEPS
Creating a supportive culture



Who am I?



RESEARCH COMMUNITY SERVICES ALUMNI

Search for the next AHS dean

Nominations and application are invited for the position of dean of the UIC College of Applied Health Sciences.

Biomedical and Health Information Sciences > Admissions and Programs > MS in Biomedical Visualization

MS in Biomedical Visualization

Where art, life science and medicine meet technology for visual communication

The UIC Master of Science in Biomedical Visualization provides an interdisciplinary graduate education to shape leaders in visual communication who create, disseminate and advance knowledge in the life sciences, healthcare and medicine.

Our MS in Biomedical Visualization—which we affectionately call BVIS—is the largest and second-oldest of four accredited programs of its kind in North America. With a curriculum at the cutting edge of science and technology, we attract candidates from among the life sciences, healthcare, fine and applied arts, and computer science. Our students become highly-skilled science visualization specialists in medical illustration, animation, interactive media, gaming, haptics, and virtual and augmented reality, working on the frontiers of discovery.

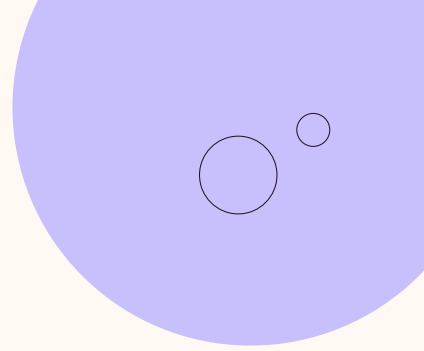
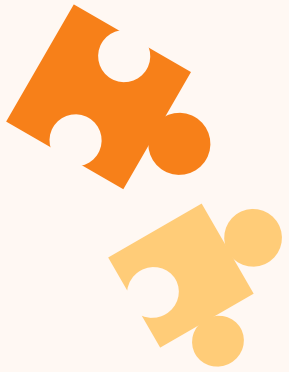
BVIS integrates medicine, life science, communication technology, visual learning, education science, research and artistic training. We collaborate with Medicine, Bioengineering and other departments at UIC, one of the nation's leading health research universities. Our close relationships with other Chicago medical universities, professional medical societies, medical advertising agencies, pharmaceutical companies, museums, animation studios and software companies give our students real-world, hands-on experience.

Please Note: Upon approval of our revised curriculum proposal later this academic year, the MS in Biomedical Visualization program will begin classes for newly admitted students on 8/15/2020, instead of 8/24/2020, as previously scheduled.

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Whose stories
will I be sharing?

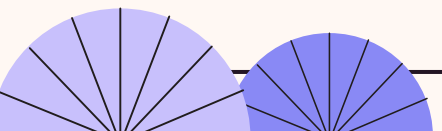
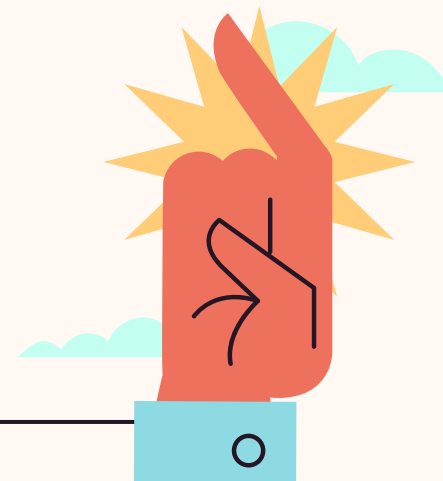
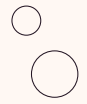




01.

DEFINE

What is imposter syndrome?



What does Imposter Syndrome mean to you?

“An overwhelming and constant feeling of not being qualified or prepared for working or existing in a certain space. It comes with a lot of anxiety when working in that space and a strong impression that everyone else is moving through it comfortably.”

“Imposter syndrome can describe deep feelings of inadequacy, that you don't belong or really deserve the successes you are achieving or experiencing. That it must be the result of luck or influence other than your own merit or work, which is surely not the case for other people in similar positions around you.”

What does Imposter Syndrome mean to you?

- “To me it means not feeling like you are qualified/skilled to do the work that you've been asked to do or are currently doing that you are more than qualified to do.”
- “The feeling that you're actually not qualified for the position you are in and that no one knows it but you.”
- “Imposter syndrome is the persistent, internal experience of believing that you are not as competent as others, as well as the tendency to believe that your success was not well achieved or deserved.”

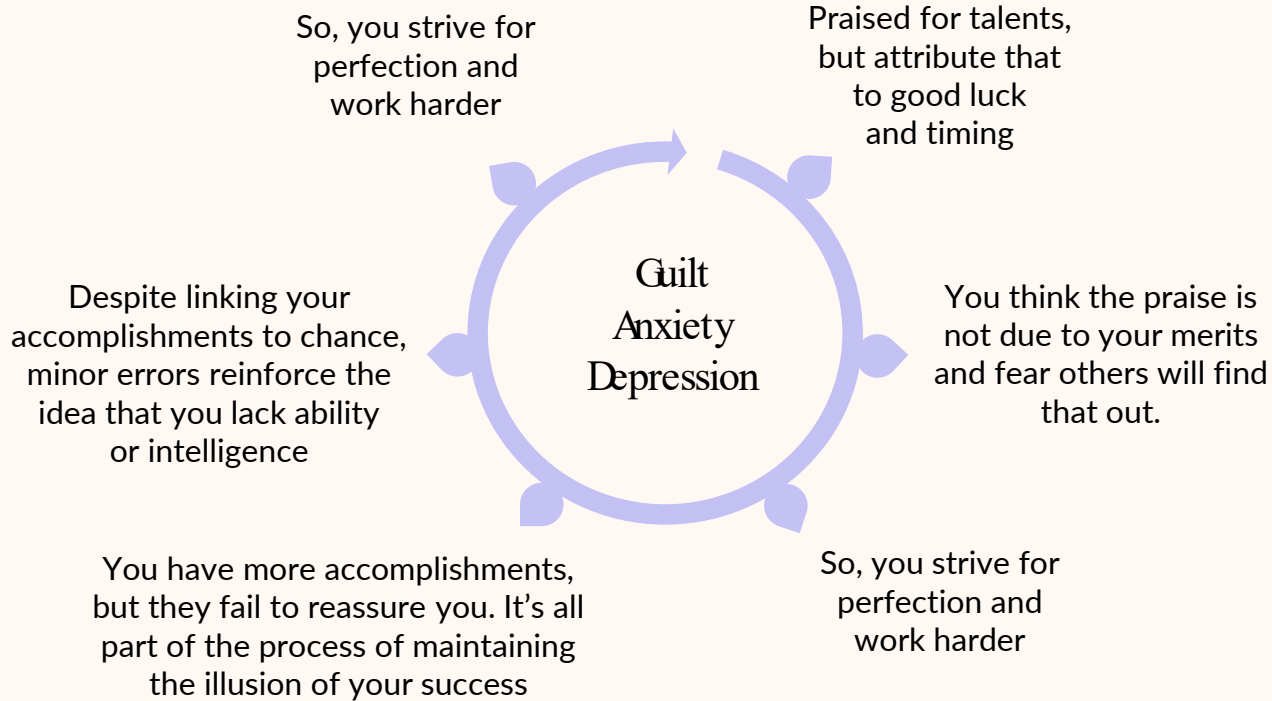
What does Imposter Syndrome mean to you?

“Feeling inadequate despite external (and even internal) validation that you've earned your place or done a job well.”

“That you're not quite as adept, knowledgeable, or skilled as you should be in your current position. "Fake it till you make it" except you haven't "made it" yet.”

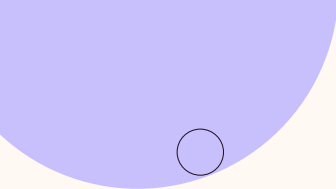
“Imposter syndrome means to me that I never fully feel confident and capable of what I am looked up to by other people for. It makes me feel like I don't deserve the position I am in and the experiences that I have. I think I am actually “tricking” other people to be where I am instead of accepting that I earned to be in my position and that everyone else is going through the same thing as me.”

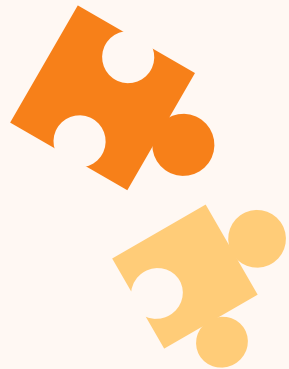
The Cycle



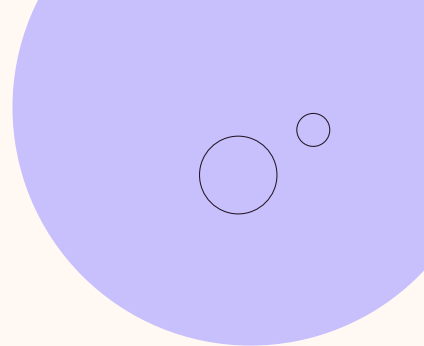
Common Theme

- Feeling doubt or worry that you'll be discovered as a fraud, despite evidence of competency, accomplishment and success.
- Imposter feelings represent a conflict between your own self-perception and the way others perceive you.



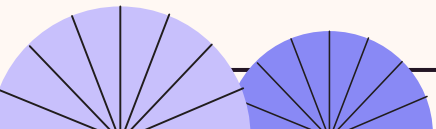
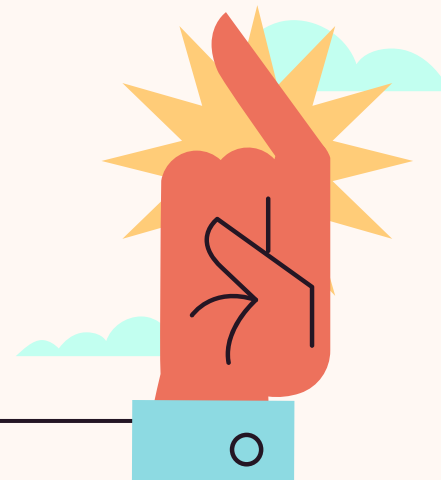


02.



WHERE & WHEN?

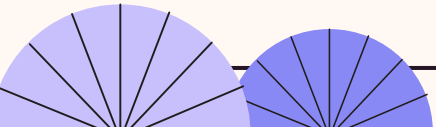
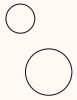
Where and when can imposter syndrome occur?






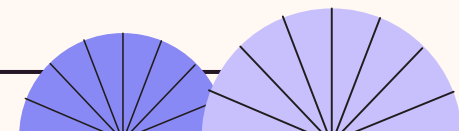
ANYWHERE

Anytime



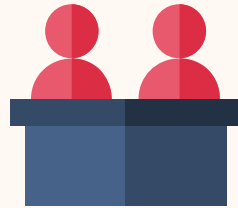


Links to Other Thoughts

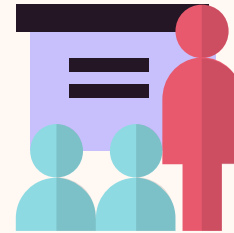
- Impostor Syndrome can be linked to other areas of self-doubt, but it's not simply about excessive humility or poor self-confidence. It involves a constant fear of exposure, isolation and rejection.
 - It can often strike at moments of success, such as receiving a promotion or award, starting a new job, or becoming a first-time parent.
 - You might feel like you need to work harder because of your perceived shortfalls, to avoid being "unmasked." This could then lead to further success and recognition – and feeling like an even bigger fraud.
 - However, not realizing your skills can result in "downshifting." This happens when you revise your goals and become less ambitious, thereby preventing yourself from fulfilling your true potential.
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Experiences with Imposter Syndrome

In graduate school



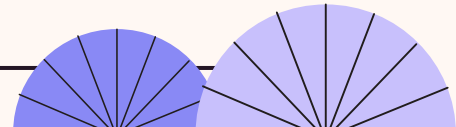
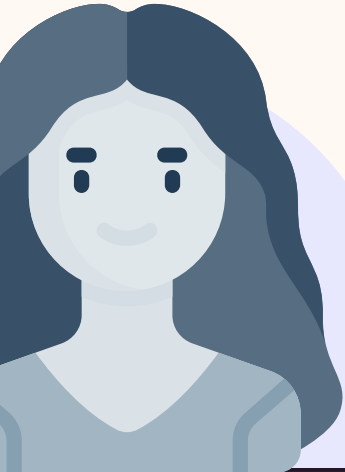
In the workplace



Experiences in Graduate School

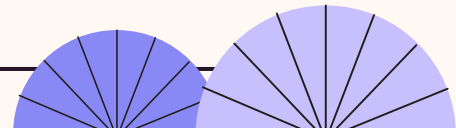
“Honestly, it never even crossed my mind that I might experience something like imposter syndrome prior to graduate school. I didn't even know what it was. When I experienced it, I thought I must be the only person feeling that way. Why would anyone else?”

They all seemed confidently deserving. When I did get the courage to talk to a few people about it, I found out they had experienced the same things. Which actually seemed preposterous to me. It was easy to see how wrong they were about themselves. But I just couldn't apply that same logic to myself and how I felt. Looking back, I know those feelings held me back and kept me from trying certain things or applying myself fully.”



Experiences in Graduate School

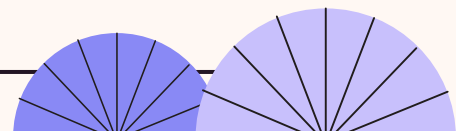
“In my work, I second-guessed myself frequently, resulting in overworking and exhaustion. I thought I needed to work 24/7 to not only continue to earn my place, but to "keep up" with my peers. I struggled to accept compliments or positive critique on work as true and questioned why my cohort would vote for me or why I was deserving of awards or recognitions.”



Experiences in Graduate School

“My imposter syndrome started early on in grade school, and since then has continued to grow and became worse in grad school. When I was young, I had issues with speech and was terrible at standardized testing, I was categorized at an early age as special and just felt dumb. I always thought very differently than most of my classmates. Those insecurities grew throughout my education especially in grad school where I felt like I started to compare myself to other classmates who were better at testing or writing. I just felt like I was never smart enough or always had to work 10x harder than most people.

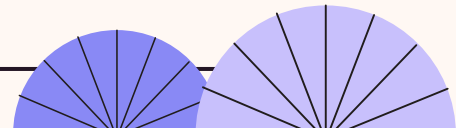
However, when I was young I had found one thing that I was good at, art and drawing. I enjoyed drawing so much as a kid, it was the one thing I felt came easy to me. When you have knack for something, you tend to become very prideful of it because that's the only thing you feel identifies you. However, when I started undergrad and grad school, I found myself obsessing over my art and calling myself a “perfectionist.” I have had professors come to me and say “I know you are a good artist, so I'm going to be extra hard on you.” Realizing it now, I had put so much pressure on myself and my art because I felt like that was the only thing I was good at, and I had to keep up with standards to prove to my professors that I was good enough to succeed in my career.”



Experiences in Graduate School

“I still feel it, and I'm near graduation. When I was admitted to the program, I looked over social media to see the work that my fellow admittees were doing, what their education was, what they were like. That was my first dose of imposter syndrome.

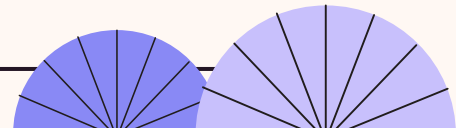
Since then, I feel it especially after I give a presentation or talk with my peers or incoming students. I beat myself up afterward for acting like I know what I'm talking about. Talking with others makes me feel like I'm exposing myself as a blathering idiot, that their opinion of me must take a hit each time I open my mouth. I try not to let this feeling affect me too much though.”



Experiences in the Workplace

“I experienced a strong sense of imposter syndrome for about six months in my current workplace and I still experience it in certain work situations. There were many formal administrative terms and workflows that were being introduced constantly that I was unfamiliar with. I was scared to ask for explanations of those details because I was worried I would be further perceived by my manager / co-workers as not ready or prepared for working there.

I ended up working harder and longer hours to sort of make up for me being a new medical illustrator and not being as fast as others at getting things done. I wish that I would have been as insightful early on like I was in BVIS (Biomedical Visualization graduate program) and been more open to asking for support or clarification. Unlike BVIS, I was truly the least experienced medical illustrator there and did not have a group of people to talk with about the uneasiness.”

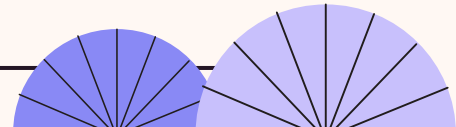


Experiences in the Workplace



“When I first started working at my job, I felt the need to prove myself to show that I was worthy of being hired. The first six months felt incredibly stressful due to feeling like I wasn't good enough. That feeling on top of adjusting to working with much tighter deadlines, reviews from my manager, reviews from clients and correcting my mistakes just added to the stress.

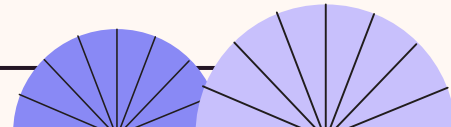
Over time the feeling has dwindled as I felt more confident, but it does come back at times in waves where I still feel like I am not that good at my job. Especially when a client or my manager may be hypercritical of the work I've done.”



Experiences in the Workplace



“I had a degree in Biology and got a job in a lab and was convinced that I was not supposed to be touching those chemicals or performing those experiments because I wasn’t qualified.. when I got a whole bachelor’s degree in this field!”



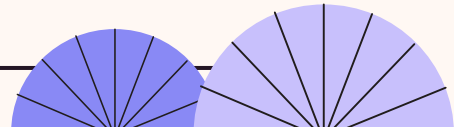


Experiences in the Workplace



“I have had times of over-promising and uncertainty that have bordered on imposter syndrome. Times where I've promised deadlines for projects that did not have a clear vision, and times where I've taken on projects using programs that I hadn't used in a long time. Times when I'm working with other talented medical illustrators, and I start to feel doubt my abilities.

These times were sometimes concerning, but never a huge deal. But the times where I've felt it most is when I'm not properly prepared for a task and am caught unaware. Then I feel like a huge fraud.”

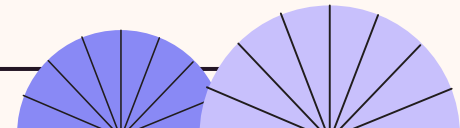




Institutionalized Racism and Gender Bias

also play a significant part in imposter syndrome feelings

- While anyone can experience imposter feelings, they tend to show up more often in women and people of color (Feenstra et al., 2020).
- Awareness of the bias against your race or gender might lead you to work harder in order to disprove harmful stereotypes. It might make you think you need to spend more effort than anyone else in order to be taken seriously or gain recognition for your hard work.
- Just being aware of these negative stereotypes can affect your work performance and cause you to focus on your mistakes and further doubt your abilities.

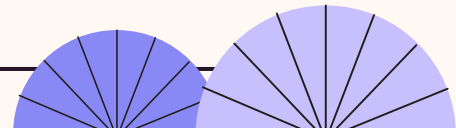


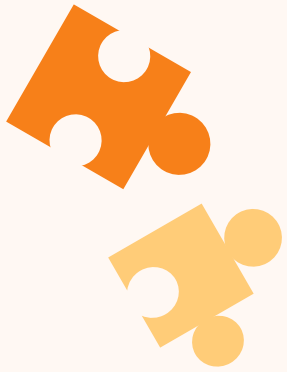


Institutionalized Racism and Gender Bi

also play a significant part in imposter syndrome feelings

- Discrimination and microaggressions— both blatant and subtle — will reinforce the feeling you don't belong. This is, of course, exactly what they're intended to do.
- Even the term “imposter syndrome” can reinforce the perception of yourself as unworthy. The word “imposter” carries a strong association of deceit and manipulation, while “syndrome” generally denotes illness.

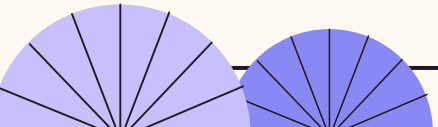
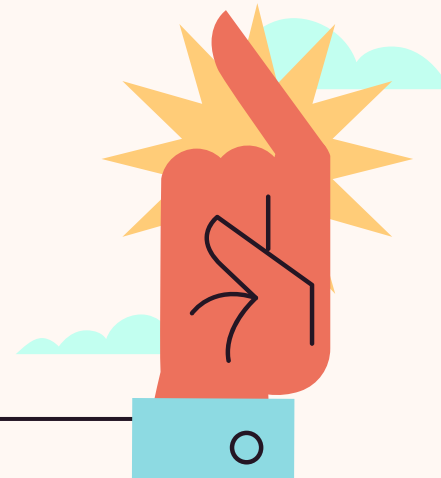
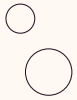
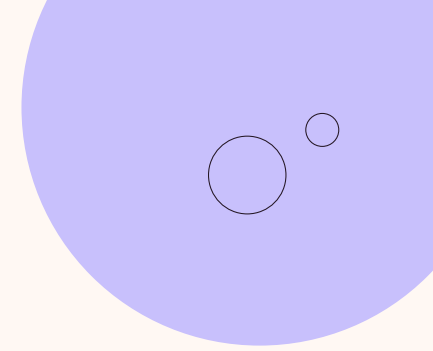




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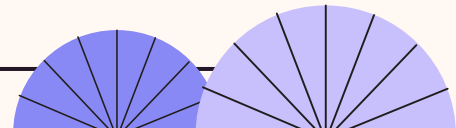
STRATEGIES

For combating imposter syndrome



Challenge the Doubts

- Separate feelings from facts. Just because it enters your brain as a thought, does not make it true.
- When the imposter feelings surface, ask yourself whether any actual facts support these beliefs. Then, look for pieces of evidence to counter them.
- **For example:** Imagine you're considering applying for a promotion, but you don't think you have what it takes. Maybe you made a small mistake on a project a year ago, but it still troubles you. Or maybe you think the coworkers who praise your work do it just because they feel sorry for you.
- **Stop and think about the facts:** Tricking all of your coworkers would be pretty difficult, and poor work probably wouldn't go unnoticed long term. If you consistently receive encouragement and recognition, that's a good sign you're moving in the right direction— and deserve a chance for promotion.



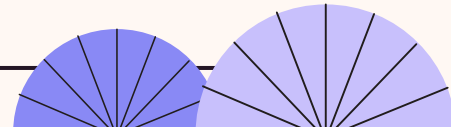
Take Note of Accomplishments



- When you are feeling inferior, it helps to have a tangible reminder of your successes.

- Save emails that acknowledge your hard work
- If your child makes you a card that talks about how great you are as a parent, save it and hang it somewhere you'll be able to see it
- Write down your accomplishments that highlight your strengths

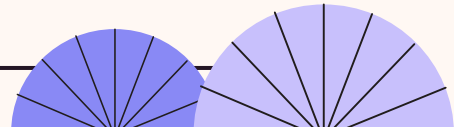
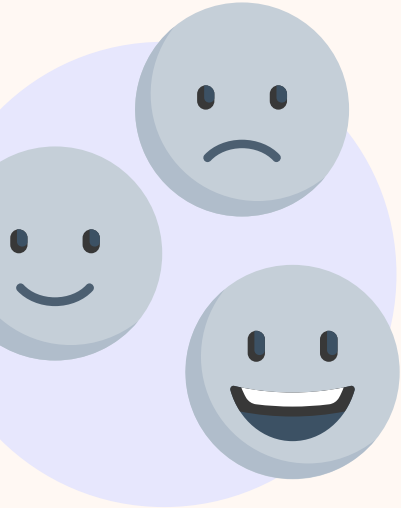
- Read those notes when things are tough



Acknowledge your Feelings



- Identifying and acknowledging your feelings can accomplish a few things:
 - Make the feelings feel less overwhelming
 - Gain outside perspective and context by talking to mentor or friend
 - Opening up about your struggles will help encourage others to do the same, and can help you realize you aren't alone in how you are feeling

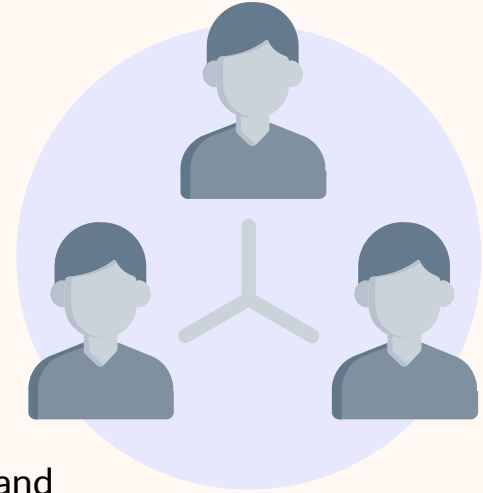


Establish a Support Network

- **Build Connections:**

Turn to friends, family, classmates, academic peers, coworkers, etc. to create a network of mutual support. Your network can:

- Replace negative self-talk
- Offer support and guidance
- Validate your strengths and skills
- Encourage your growth



- “I began to make stronger connections with the members on my team and was able to identify a few things that made me feel like I belonged there.

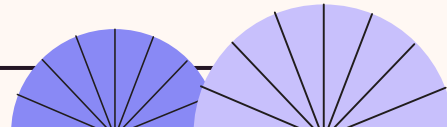
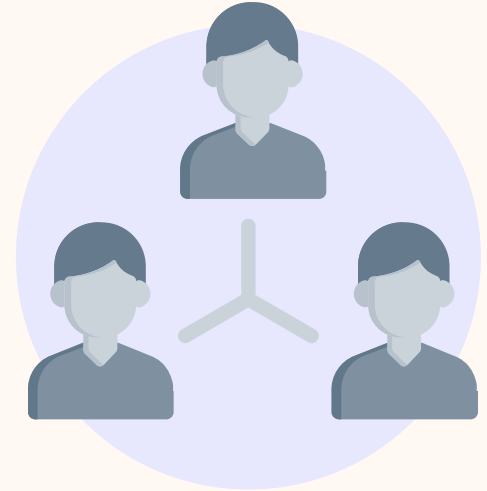
- Finding ways to feel integrated and valued as a team member has been very helpful for getting past the imposter syndrome.”

Establish a Support Network



- **Seek out a mentor:**

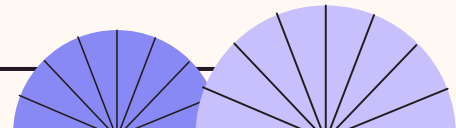
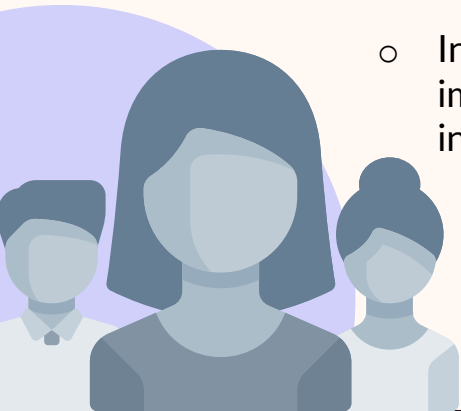
Reach out to a teacher, coach, or senior colleague for help navigating difficult and intimidating situations and environments. If possible, seek out a mentor who matches your gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity.





Avoid Comparing Yourself to Others:

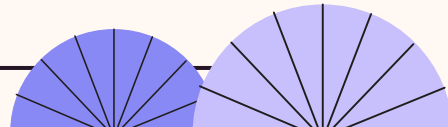
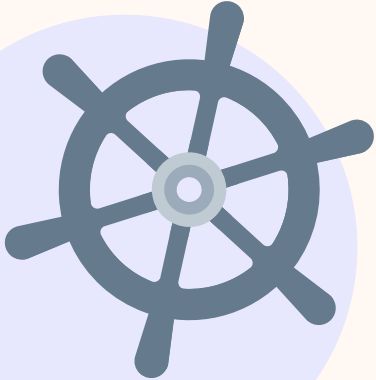
- Focus on your accomplishments instead of how they compare with other people's.
- Remember that everyone is unique and has different abilities.
- It's easy to think someone may have it all together without knowing their whole story.
- Instead of allowing other people's success to highlight your imperfections, consider exploring ways to develop the skills that interest you.



Turn it on its Head



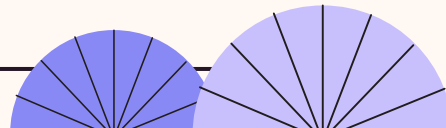
- Remind yourself that high-achieving, smart, and talented people often deal with imposter syndrome.
- Therefore, the very fact that you recognize it in your thoughts, says a lot about you.



It's OK to Not Know



- Remind yourself that it's ok to not know what you're doing.
- After any big life event, like starting a new job, earning a promotion, or going back to school, there's a steep learning curve.
- Don't hide and think you are unqualified, instead think of yourself as someone who is learning and gaining expertise. When you are enthusiastic about learning, people will respect that and cut you slack.



Break Down Barriers

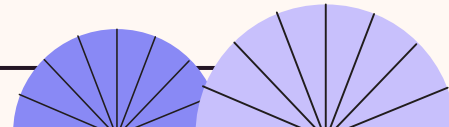


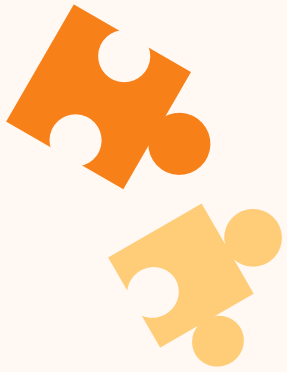
- Tackle persistent stereotypes in society.
- Increase diversity across professions and ranked levels and guarantee equal treatment for all individuals.
- Contextual interventions like these—as opposed to more individualized approaches—could also help *prevent* impostor feelings, as opposed to merely coping with or combatting them once they emerge.

Talk to a Therapist



- A therapist can help support with:
 - Overcoming feelings of unworthiness or perceived deception
 - Addressing depression, anxiety, or other emotional distress
 - Challenging and reframing unwanted beliefs
 - Creating an action plan for moving forward and creating new behaviors.

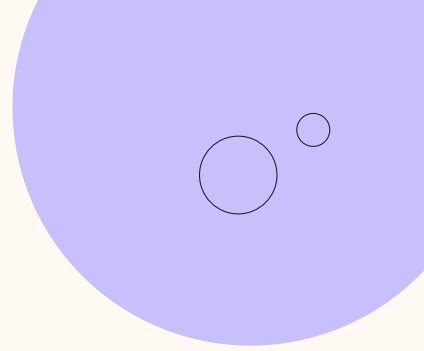
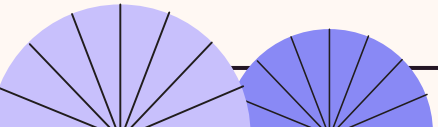
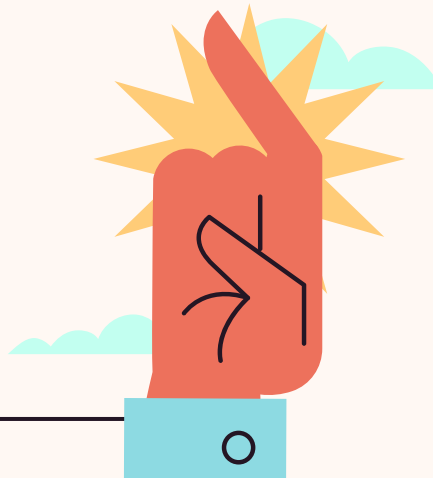




04.

NEXT STEPS

Creating a supportive culture



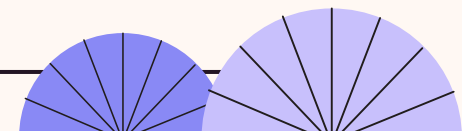
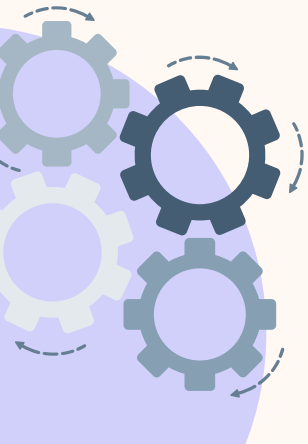


Start the Conversation


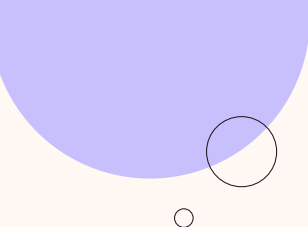


The Bottom Line


- Success does not require perfection. True perfection is nearly impossible, so failing to achieve it doesn't make you a fraud.
- Offer yourself compassion and kindness instead of judgment and self-doubt. This can help you keep a realistic perspective and encourage you to grow.
- If organizations can provide a culture that reinforces feelings of inclusiveness, challenge societal norms and stereotypes, and state clear standards of equal treatment in the organization, it can help decrease imposter feelings in minority groups.
- Build and seek opportunities for sharing and creating a supportive culture around difficult topics such as imposter syndrome.



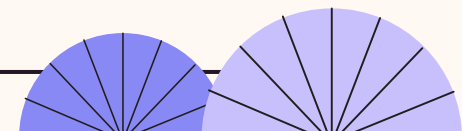

Additional Pieces of Advice



“The advice I would give would be to just talk about it openly. Knowing that these same kinds of feelings affect other people provides a source of comfort. I now know that talking about it provides a greater understanding of yourself and others. I'm still struggling with this now. But it helps to know that other successful people felt (or feel) this way and have still gone on to do some pretty admirable work and find success. I can rationalize that I should still move forward, regardless of feeling like an imposter.”




“No one is judging you as harshly as you judge yourself, it's hard to remember sometimes, especially when you've fallen short of a goal you set yourself. But it's good to know, at the end of the day, people aren't looking for you to fail.”






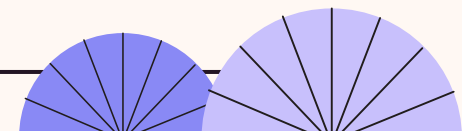
Additional Pieces of Advice



“When you feel like the project or assignment you have been given is far above your abilities, separate the assignment into small manageable portions. You will find that it is far more productive than trying to do it all at once. That voice you hear that's saying that you aren't good enough is lying and while it may not fully fade always truly trust the people around you who are able to see your talents. Don't let the fear of failure keep you from trying. You'll succeed. You truly will. You are not defined by your work or ability. What someone says about the work you do is not a direct reflection of you, your character, value or worth. As much as it may feel like an affront/attack to you, it is not. You are valuable simply for being you.”




“I think the best thing I have been doing to combat it is to just keep moving forward and trying to hone in on goals and techniques I want to achieve and improve upon.”







Additional Pieces of Advice

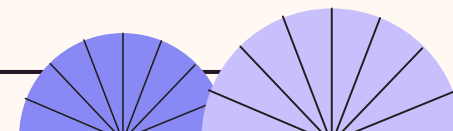


“With the recent pandemic and devastating loss of lives of colleagues and friends at my institution, there has been an effort to create space and acknowledgment of imposter syndrome among others. It helped me acknowledge that I'm not alone and it may even help others to express our vulnerabilities. We are human after all, and we are here for each other.”




“Identify your weaknesses and work on them, put yourself in situations where you utilize your strengths. Identify miscommunications and ask questions. Most of my feelings of imposter syndrome stem from a lack of preparedness, as well as miscommunication. To make sure I feel prepared, I actively listen to clients and coworkers, do research before meetings, ask appropriate questions, stay organized, do sketches, write things down so I don't forget, and admit when I don't know something.”




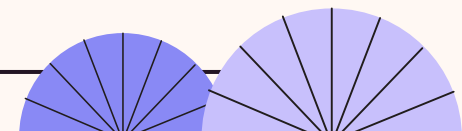





Additional Pieces of Advice



“Identify imposter syndrome and have it be a 'guest' in your mental 'home'. It is allowed to visit and don't push it away, but let it know that it's not invited to stay and it won't get special attention. Trust in time because you'll look back one day and realize how much you've overcome, what things matter the most to you, and how much you've forgotten because it wasn't that important in the first place. Also, talk therapy. You're not alone and you don't have to be in pain.”



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Questions?

Thank you!

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