Feeling Like you Don’t Belong as a Doctoral Student?

Tips to Overcome the Imposter Syndrome
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- You can download the PPT slides in the Download Files Pod
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Presenters

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Objectives

• Describe the Imposter Syndrome
• Discuss how it impacts students
• Provide strategies to overcome the cycle
Does this sound like you?

I’m not supposed to be here.

What if it’s not good enough?

I don’t deserve my success.
The Imposter Syndrome

• First described in 1978 by Clance and Imes

• Characterized by:
  – Negative cycle of over preparation (Kolligan & Sternberg, 1991)
  – Attribution of success to external sources (Caselman, Self, & Self, 2006)
  – A fear of discovery (McGregor, Gee, & Posey, 2008)

• Correlated with:
  – High levels of anxiety (Kolligan & Sternberg, 1991)
  – Perfectionism (Chrisman, Pieper, Holland, & Glickauf-Hughes, 1995)
  – Self-handicapping behaviors (Ferrari & Thompson, 2006)
Imposters are...

- Successful people who:
  - Struggle with accepting praise
  - Struggle with internalizing success
  - Fear they will be discovered as a fraud
  - Overwork
  - Are perfectionistic
  - Are stuck in the “Imposter Cycle” when presented with tasks

“Every time I was called on in class, I was sure that I was about to embarrass myself. Every time I took a test, I was sure that it had gone badly. And every time I didn’t embarrass myself— or even excelled—I believed that I had fooled everyone yet again. One day soon, the jig would be up ... ”

— Sheryl Sandberg
The Imposter Cycle

1. Start a project
2. Feeling like a fake, depression, anxiety
3. Anxiety, Self-doubt, Worry
4. Over-prepare
5. Hide, ignore, procrastinate
6. It’s over!
7. Ignore any positive feedback
Impact on Students

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Lack of satisfaction
- Reduced engagement
Tips to Battle the Imposter

• Acknowledge it and Discuss it
• Look at the Big Picture
  – You’re more than 1 assignment
• Take Chances
  – Look for conferences
  – Look for promotions
Tips to Battle the Imposter

- Check your posture
  - TED Talk: Your Body Language May Change Who You Are
  - Dr. Amy Cuddy
Tips to Battle the Imposter

• Avoid Procrastinating
  – Develop a plan
    • Academic Skills Center Success Strategies – Procrastination & Productivity
  – Manage your time effectively
    • Academic Skills Center Success Strategies – Time Management
What Now?

• List 1 strength
  – What are you good at?
  – What have you been praised for?

• List 1 person
  – 1 person you can talk to about imposter feelings
  – 1 person who inspires you

• List 1 goal
  – Want to present at a conference?
  – Want to publish an article?
Questions?
- Contact the ASC with questions at Academicskills@mail.waldenu.edu
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