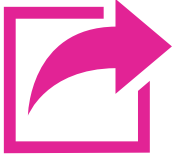




**INTRA- and
INTERPERSONAL
Imposter Syndrome**

Imposter Syndrome



Strategies to share with students

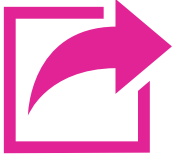
Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.

- Imposter syndrome self-reflection.** If you answer yes to one or more of the following questions, then you may be experiencing imposter syndrome. Recognizing imposter syndrome is the first step in developing skills to combat it.
 - Do you worry excessively about making mistakes or imperfection?
 - Do you worry that others will eventually decide that you are less capable than they thought you were?
 - When you succeed, do you think that you will be less likely to succeed in future related tasks?
 - Do you attribute your success to luck or timing rather than your own skills or talents?

- Mindfulness/grounding activities.** If imposter syndrome feelings lead to physical symptoms of anxiety, focus on calming and grounding your mind. Some strategies include (but are not limited to):
 - Breath Awareness. Set a timer for one minute. Sit still and focus on feeling your breath in your body. Notice where your breath lingers. Notice how long it takes for you to inhale/exhale.
 - Hold a piece of ice/put hands in cold water. How does the cold feel? Does the sensation change as your body gets used to the temperature?
 - Visualize your favourite place. What is special about this place? How do you feel when you are there?



Imposter Syndrome



Strategies to share with students

Suggested ideas and practices educators can share with students to support awareness of the topic and development of the skill. Strategies can be adopted/adapted as needed.

- Positive self-talk.** Using a mirror, begin each day by telling yourself (aloud) three things that you like about yourself. Then, name something that you have accomplished recently that you are proud of. Saying this aloud can help you get more comfortable accepting praise, compliments, and credit. Using a mirror is helpful for this exercise because it can help you see yourself more objectively, closer to the way that your friends and family see you.
- Success diary.** Write down the goals and objectives that you want to complete in this class (or, more broadly, during this term). As you complete these tasks and goals, check them off your list. Refer to your success diary often to reflect on what you have accomplished. To gain additional insight into your feelings around success and failure, jot some additional notes that respond to these questions:
 - How did you feel before you began the task?
 - What, specifically, did you do to achieve this goal?
 - What challenges did you overcome?
 - How do you feel now that it is over?

By celebrating your wins, you can gain momentum and reduce your feelings of fraudulence. Review your success diary before starting any new project or assignment to remind yourself of your capabilities.



Imposter Syndrome



Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

- Consider historical marginalization.** Imposter syndrome may disproportionately affect women, minorities, and first-generation post-secondary students. This is because students who have historically been excluded from post-secondary environments may not believe that they deserve to be or are qualified to be there. It is important for the instructor to recognize that these students may experience more feelings of fraudulence and self-doubt, particularly if the discipline of study has historically privileged students of specific genders, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds. To combat this challenge, provide diverse learning materials that reflect the identities of the students in your class. Beyond mere tokenism, this step can help validate student success by providing role models of other academics, researchers, and leaders in the field of study. This reinforces that your students belong and deserve to participate in the classroom learning environment.
- Provide mentorship opportunities.** Imposter syndrome is often deeply ingrained in and can be difficult to shift within the context of a single class, or even year of study. Where possible, provide opportunities for students to connect with upper year students, graduates, and other students to discuss feelings of imposter syndrome. If there is not a wide enough pool of upper students and/or graduates, consider inviting a handful of former students for a panel presentation organized around imposter syndrome followed by a student Q&A.



Imposter Syndrome



Tips for course design and delivery

Ways educators can bring awareness of the topic and incorporate development of the skill into post-secondary course design and delivery.

- ☑ **Talk openly about self-doubt and imposter syndrome.** Early in the course, model the importance of a growth mindset by sharing a time that you felt like an imposter. Tell the students how you combatted those feelings and share any specific strategies that worked for you. You could then invite students to volunteer their own experiences with imposter syndrome and similarly share their own strategies in overcoming this worry. Most people experience imposter syndrome at some point in their lives. Normalizing the existence and prevalence of imposter syndrome is important in helping students work past their own feelings of self-doubt.



Imposter Syndrome



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Imposter Syndrome Quotes

Overview

In this activity, students find quotes related to imposter syndrome and they look for common threads and themes within them. Students use these examples to create their own definition of imposter syndrome. This activity helps students to face imposter syndrome and to develop the knowledge to minimize its impact.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet
- Quotes on imposter syndrome



Imposter Syndrome

Instructions

1. Explain to students that knowing that imposter syndrome is 'real' and experienced by others can support a person in developing more confidence in their abilities.
2. Have students form small groups.
3. Invite groups to look for and record quotes on imposter syndrome. Let students know that celebrities, leaders, and other well-known people often share their words on imposter syndrome, so these would be good places for them to look.
4. Have students discuss and decide how to create an engaging representation of these quotes/ideas. Examples include:
 - Visual (collage, word cloud)
 - Memes/gifs to correspond with the entire quote or part of the quote
 - Song title and lyrics
 - Book title and chapter titles
 - Dialogue/skit
 - Social media (post, image, video, story, etc.)
5. Arrange for groups to present these products to their peers in an upcoming class and ask all groups to have their products ready to share.
6. When students share their products with the rest of the class, emphasize the prevalence of imposter syndrome. Ask students to comment about quotes that spoke to them and ask them to explain why. Focus on key words that emerge.
7. Ask students to reflect on moments where they felt doubtful of their abilities. How did they/might they resolve this tension?

Variation(s)

- Co-write (students and educator) a definition of imposter syndrome as informed by these quotes. You can also discuss strategies to overcome feeling like an imposter.



Imposter Syndrome



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Muddiest Point Exit Ticket

Overview

This activity involves reflecting on and sharing the 'muddiest point' of a lecture, reading, or assignment. Students anonymously write their response on a card that they leave behind at the end of class. These cards inform ways for educators to clarify confusing points. This activity highlights to students that it is natural to need support when learning and that it does not signify weakness.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet
- Exit card/online tool



Imposter Syndrome

Instructions

1. Explain to students that they may experience imposter syndrome, or self-doubt, when classes, readings, and module tasks start becoming complex. For example, instructors may end classes by asking if students have questions, students with imposter syndrome are unlikely to raise their hands due to fear that they may be the only one with a question.
2. Provide regular opportunities for all students to reflect on the “muddiest point” of the lecture, reading, or assignment. The “muddiest point” is one concept, theory, or task, etc. that students found hard to understand or difficult to complete. These can be recorded on a sheet of paper and left for the instructor as students leave class (exit card) or submitted electronically through an anonymous forum.
3. Collect these comments, read them, and decide on how you will approach the responses. You can share some responses with students in a future class. Make sure to mention which questions were asked by multiple individuals to help contextualize the learning.
4. Have students reflect on how identifying the muddiest point is helpful to them. You may wish to share that this activity validates students’ questions by ensuring that everyone has a chance to ask them, and it provides reassurance that more than one student had the same struggle. This exercise also gives ‘legitimacy’ to student confusion and keeps it from becoming perceived ‘evidence’ in the student’s mind of a weakness they have.

Variation(s)

- You could start the class by having students leave comments, suggestions, and questions related to the day’s upcoming learning or related to the previous class.



Imposter Syndrome



Activities to do with students

Downloadable activities with suggested guidelines that educators can do with students. Activities can be adopted/adapted as needed.

Activity: Syllabus Reflection

Overview

This reflection task involves students reviewing the course syllabus and identifying areas where they excel or have been previously successful. Additional prompts support students in recognizing their strengths beyond the classroom, thereby diminishing the feeling of imposter syndrome.

Review the [Educator Activity Guide](#) before getting started with this activity.

Time

- Under 20 minutes
- 20 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour
- Over several classes

Modality

- In person
- Online synchronous
- Online asynchronous

Format

- Individual
- In pairs
- Small groups
- Large groups
- Whole class

Resources

- Module notes
- Paper
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop/tablet



Imposter Syndrome

Instructions

1. Frame this activity by describing imposter syndrome as a deeply personal experience where a person doubts their abilities and accomplishments. You can refer to the module notes (www.hiddencurriculum.ca) for more details. To manage imposter syndrome, each person will need a set of strategies, steps, and scripts that are specific to them. One way that students can consciously break down imposter syndrome is by actively identifying their individual strengths.
2. Have students read through the course syllabus. As they do, they should make deliberate efforts to identify
 - an area they are familiar with or enjoy
 - an area they've demonstrated success in previously
 - an area that is new and seems exciting
 - a challenge that could lead to much growth
3. Invite students to offer relevant details for each of these prompts.
 - an area they are familiar with or enjoy (What is it about this area that they enjoy?)
 - an area they've demonstrated success in previously (How did they demonstrate success? What did this look like?)
 - an area that is new and seems exciting (What seems interesting?)
 - a challenge that could lead to much growth (What does potential growth look like?)
4. Encourage students to reflect on the importance of recognizing their strengths, both academic and non-academic, and acknowledge that learning is an ongoing process. How will this understanding help to lessen the force of imposter syndrome?

Variation(s)

- Students should be encouraged to repeat this activity with their other course syllabuses or with individual course tasks.

