

Imposter Syndrome

By Dr. Margaret Rea

As you are embarking on a new academic year, or are beginning the process of training, you are faced with new responsibilities which can have associated challenges. There is hopefully excitement as you dive into the new opportunities for growth and learning. However, with the new demands, it is not unusual to experience some self-doubt. It is expected that, at times, you can find yourself wondering if you can accomplish what is being asked of you. However, what we want to avoid is you spiraling into an episode of Imposter Syndrome. Imposter syndrome was first described by psychologists Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes in 1978. This phenomenon can occur among high achievers like yourselves and it is a form of intellectual self-doubt whereby the individual is unable to internalize and accept success. Accomplishments are attributed to luck rather than to ability:

"It wasn't really that hard, everyone did well"

"It was just an easy class"

There can also be a fear that others will eventually unmask you as a fraud. Imposter syndrome also impacts learning as students can become less likely to speak up for fear they will be wrong and be found out as being a fraud. It is typical to have self-doubt, but this is more of an all-encompassing fear of being found out to not have what it takes. The impostor phenomenon and perfection-

ism often go hand in hand. In case you feel alone with this experience, you are in good company. Maya Angelou the renowned American poet and civil rights activist addressed her imposter experiences when she said, "I have written eleven books and each time I think, 'Uh Oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out.'"



Impostor feelings can be accompanied by stress, anxiety and depression. By definition, most people with impostor feelings suffer in silence as individuals don't talk about it as they are afraid they're going to be found out. It is key to challenge your impostor thoughts in order to maintain your well-being and so you can continue to learn and grow. Consider the following questions:

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Wellness Events

UC Davis Health Farmers Market

Ed Bldg. Outdoor Quad Thursdays 3 to 7:30 p.m.

Living Fit Forever Classes

http://intranet.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml

Work Life and Wellness Events

<http://www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/index.html>

UCDMC Yoga

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gz23GMJbZJDI-wzn9g8NxUnia4lFuVsHah4ola-v7Ow0/edit#heading=h.ey7tt6v51js4>

"Navigating Through Test Anxiety"

Dr. Stephen Simonson and Dr. Lindsay Ulrey
Monday, August 14th, 2017
12:00-1:00pm,
Education Building
The first 30 students will receive free lunch

Therapy Dogs

Thursday, August 31st 2017
12:00-2:00pm
Education Building
On Grass outside Café

Wellness Tip

An additional helpful strategy for challenging Imposter feelings is to practice self-compassion. Try this Self-Compassion Break from the work of Kristen Neff. There is a link to an MP3 below as well.

Think of a situation in your life that is difficult, that is causing you stress. Call the situation to mind, and see if you can actually feel the stress and emotional discomfort in your body.

Now, say to yourself:

1. This is a moment of suffering

That's mindfulness. Other options include:

- This hurts
- Ouch
- This is stress

2. Suffering is a part of life

That's common humanity. Other options include:

- Other people feel this way
- I'm not alone
- We all struggle in our lives

Now, put your hands over your heart, feel the warmth of your hands and the gentle touch of your hands on your chest. Or adopt the soothing touch you discovered felt right for you.

Say to yourself:

3. May I be kind to myself

You can also ask yourself, "What do I need to hear right now to express kindness to myself?" Is there a phrase that speaks to you in your particular situation, such as:

- May I give myself the compassion that I need
- May I learn to accept myself as I am
- May I forgive myself
- May I be strong
- May I be patient

This practice can be used any time of day or night, and will help you remember to evoke the three aspects of self-compassion when you need it most.

<http://self-compassion.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/self-compassion.break.mp3>

<http://self-compassion.org/>

Monthly Recipe: Very Strawberry Salad

Dr. Oliveira from the UC Davis Department of Integrative Medicine offered a great Summer recipe using delicious fresh fruit - "Very Strawberry Salad." This recipe is wonderful as it stands, but the dressing is delicious and can be used with other salads. "Very Strawberry Salad because it is packed with 3 cups of wholesome fresh strawberries, which are used in both the salad and the home-made dressing. The salad is composed of three simple ingredients: leafy greens, strawberries and walnuts, then we teach you how to whip up a fruity, oil-free dressing that complements the fresh produce perfectly. A light, healthful and refreshing option, this dish can be enjoyed as an appetizer, side dish, or main entree."

<http://ucdintegrativemedicine.com/recipes/very-strawberry-salad/#gs.xWLDmMo>

Wellness App: Three Good Things - A Happiness Journal

This App can help you remember your accomplishments and other "good," things that happen and, in turn, be another tool to help you challenge your imposter feelings.

"It's been shown that if you write down three good things that happen to you everyday, your happiness and positivity increase. Three Good Things, a happiness journal, enables you to do exactly that....Rather than remembering all of the good things in their lives, people often focus on the things which they don't like. With Three Good Things, you can rewire your brain to focus on the positive by writing down good things that happen to you everyday.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/three-good-things-a-happiness-journal/id1242079576?mt=8>