Addressing the Elephant in the Room

Course Strategies to Help Students Manage Feelings of Imposter Syndrome
Imposter Phenomenon (IP)

- feelings of intellectual fraud
- persistent belief that past successes are not earned
- terrified of failure and being “outed”

1978 Clance and Imes described “Imposter Phenomenon” in high achieving women

Some Features of Imposter Phenomenon

• Self Critical
• Over-Estimating Others
• Dismissive of Success
• Difficulty Accepting Praise
• Introversion
• Generalized Anxiety
• Dread of Evaluation
• Terror of Failure

EXAMS, MIDTERM GRADES
How Can We Help Our Students?
Sometimes, even if I stand in the middle of the room, no one acknowledges me.
Clance Imposter Scale

Now available as quick on-line test

http://impostortest.nickol.as/

Developed a series of questions to help determine level of Imposter Feelings
Discussion Prompt

- Were you surprised by your IP score? Why or why not?
- Can you describe an experience when you felt like an Imposter?
- Did your experience affect your motivation?
- Did it make you feel isolated?
- Did it impact your willingness to take risks/pursue new opportunities?
Step 2

Name it

• Cartoon by John Atkinson. ©John Atkinson, Wrong Hands
5 Types Of Imposter Syndrome

• The Perfectionist
• Superwoman/man
• Natural Genius
• The Soloist
• The Expert
The Perfectionist

- Sets unrealistic expectations
- Feels inadequate when can’t meet them
- Obsesses over minor errors
Superwoman/man

- Constantly working to measure up
- Works much harder than peers
- Seeks external validation of worth
- Feels haven’t earned success
Natural Genius

- Operates under a Fixed Mindset
- Judges themselves based on ease and speed in accomplishing tasks
- Feels shame if mastery takes time
The Soloist

Should be able to do everything themselves

Only frauds need help
The Expert

- Measures their success by how much they know
- *Never thinks they know enough*
- Always someone smarter out there
Discussion Prompts

• Which Imposter type did you most identify with?
• Which one resonated the least?
Step 3

Manage it
Managing Imposterism

9 Ways to Cope With Imposter Syndrome

- Know the signs.
- Know you're not alone.
- Distinguish humility & fear.
- Let go of perfectionism.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Track your success.
- Talk with your mentor and a manager.
- Say "yes" to opportunities.
- Embrace the feeling.

https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/impostor-syndrome-tips
Facilitating Conversations

Could all be used for credit, extra credit or simply informational

- Assign Clance IP test and background readings as Group Assignments
- Incorporate as Discussion board prompts.
- Have students interview people in their lives. Have they ever felt like Imposters?
- Provide IP materials to struggling students (Starfish, Midterms, Remediation)
- Have students suggest and try different coping methods and report back on effectiveness.
Imposter Syndrome Resources

• **Research**
  - Dr Pauline Clance: [www.paulinerooseclance.com](http://www.paulinerooseclance.com)
  - Dr Valerie Young: [https://impostorsyndrome.com/](https://impostorsyndrome.com/)

• **Short Articles**
  - Impostor Phenomenon Measurement Scales: A Systematic Review
  - Speaking of Psychology: How to overcome feeling like an impostor
  - The 5 Types of Imposter Syndrome

• **Books**
  - The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It
  - The Imposter Cure: Escape the mind-trap of imposter syndrome
  - Yes! You Are Good Enough: End Imposter Syndrome, Overthinking and Perfectionism and Do What YOU Want
  - The Empress Has No Clothes: Conquering Self-Doubt to Embrace Success
Imposter Syndrome Resources

- **Videos/Ted Talks**
  - I Don’t Deserve My Success
  - Thinking your way out of imposter syndrome
  - How students of color confront impostor syndrome
  - What is imposter syndrome and how can you combat it?
  - Know your worth, and then ask for it