

# The Imposter Syndrome and Self-Advocacy

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# Imposter Syndrome

- An internal experience of believing that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be
- Experience of feeling like a fraud
- Feeling like you don't belong where you are
- Concept was introduced in the 1970s to describe experiences of high performing women



# Imposter Syndrome: Thoughts

- “I don’t deserve this”
- “I’m only here because I was lucky”
- “Someone must have made a mistake”
- “I’m not up to this”
- “If I can do this, it can’t be that hard”



# Imposter Syndrome: Causes

- Early family/community influences: messages about success and failure
- First in your family
- Pressure to represent your group
- Unsupportive organizational cultures (competition, hostility)



# Imposter Syndrome

- Holds us back from self-advocacy due to self-doubt
  - Applying for jobs we want
  - Asking for a raise or promotion
- Overwhelm ourselves with unrealistic expectations, leaving us to feel 'not good enough'



# Imposter Syndrome: Characteristics

- **Disempowering**
  - Attributing success to external factors
- **Demotivating**
  - Focus on what we have not accomplished
- **Undermining**
  - Approaching work as a test rather than something we are trusted to do
- **Demoralizing**
  - Constant comparison of self to others in negative light



# Imposter Syndrome: Manifestations

- Feeds on fear and anxiety
- Leads to exhausting cycles of procrastination and over-work
- Cycle of self-criticism, low self-esteem and low self-compassion
- Leads to burn-out



# Imposter Syndrome: Symptoms

- Chronic fatigue
- Insomnia
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Consistent negative self-talk
- Inability to internalize accomplishments
- Obsessing over mistakes
- Feeling of never being good enough
- Anxiety about being 'found out'





# Overcoming the Imposter Syndrome

- Begin with shifting your language

Should	→	would be good if...
Must	→	would like to...
Have to		have the opportunity to...
Will		will try...



# Overcoming the Imposter Syndrome

- Shifting mindset: perfection vs. excellence

Doubt	→	Confidence
Fear	→	Taking risks
Anger	→	Powerful
Being right	→	Willingness to be wrong
Judgmental	→	Accepting
Taking	→	Giving
Control	→	Spontaneity
Pressure	→	Equilibrium



# Managing the Imposter Syndrome

- Tackling procrastination
  - The state of avoiding difficult tasks and deliberately looking for distractions
  - Psychologically more acceptable to never tackle a task than to face the possibility of falling short on results
- Identify your feelings
- Reconsider your perception of failure
- Reaffirm your self-worth
- Refrain from comparison
- Focus on your goal



# Becoming a Self-Advocate

- Ability to recognize your worth and taking on the responsibility of communicating your needs and goals to others
- Asking for support from others, setting boundaries



# Practicing Self-Advocacy

- Believe in yourself
- Know your rights
- Decide what you want and learn the facts
- Gather support
- Express yourself clearly
- Assert yourself clearly
- Be firm and persistent

