



## Normalize Feelings of Imposter Phenomenon

Normalizing feelings of imposter phenomenon so that students and colleagues become aware of how common it is among students, staff, faculty, and leaders can help them reframe their thoughts and feelings. They may be able to shift their perspective from “This means that I don’t belong” to “Most of us have experienced this.” Changing beliefs about one’s capabilities can change one’s ability to perform (Dweck, 2016). Reducing the impact of imposter phenomenon for everyone on campus can lead to improved academic and job-related outcomes as well as improved mental and physical health.

Helping students and colleagues understand that feeling like an imposter is not unusual may lessen its impact in two ways:

1. People recognize that it is a common experience and not related to actual skill, capability, intelligence, or potential.
2. People build common ground with peers and instructors, thereby lessening the feelings of not belonging and the social isolation that is common with people experiencing imposter phenomenon.

### Start With an Anonymous Survey

Sharing research on imposter phenomenon may help people recognize it in themselves and know that they are not alone in the thoughts and feelings they may be experiencing. Opening a class session or meeting with an anonymous poll or survey with questions relating to imposter phenomenon and then sharing the results may help relieve anxieties, build a sense of community, and help campus members become more aware of what they are experiencing and why.

The following is a link to a brief survey published by the nonprofit Imposter Syndrome Institute (2022) that you might use to facilitate discussions with your students or colleagues:

<https://impostersyndrome.com.au/index.php/questionnaires/>.

### Sharing the Research

Along with exploring feelings associated with imposter phenomenon, it can be helpful to share research about the topic. Students and colleagues may find this information useful as they address their own experiences associated with imposter phenomenon. Research shows that the following behaviors are common:

- not speaking up in class, taking part in discussions, or attending staff meetings
- social isolation, including an unwillingness to serve as a mentor, or present at conferences, or attend campus social events



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- submitting late or incomplete assignments and conducting less research
- an unwillingness to present at conferences or to publish research (University of Waterloo, n.d.; Weir, 2013).

## Sharing Stories of Imposter Phenomenon

As part of your efforts to inform and support students and colleagues about the feelings and behaviors associated with imposter phenomenon, it may be helpful to share your own experiences if you, at any time, experienced imposter phenomenon. Having someone they look up to, such as an instructor or colleague, disclose their own feelings of imposter phenomenon can reinforce that their feelings of fraud are not related to their actual capabilities or potential, but rather are a common feeling for many people (Williams, n.d.).

## References

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