

UNDERSTANDING IMPOSTER THOUGHTS

Imposter feelings often increase during times of challenge or transition, such as starting college, taking advanced courses, or beginning research. Remember, you do not have to know everything before you begin. Academic success comes from curiosity, persistence, and a willingness to learn, not from being perfect or having all the answers.

Common Imposter Thoughts

You may be experiencing imposter thoughts if you find yourself thinking:

- I don't belong here
- Everyone else understands this better than I do
- My success was just luck

Remember, thoughts and feelings are not always facts.

Strategies for Responding to Imposter Thoughts

Separate Feelings From Facts

Feeling uncertain does not mean you are unqualified. Remind yourself of the evidence that you belong, such as your accomplishments, growth, and ability to overcome challenges.

Recognize That Struggle Is Part of Learning

Successful students do not understand everything immediately. Asking questions, seeking feedback, and making mistakes are all part of becoming a stronger learner.

Focus on Your Own Growth

Avoid comparing your process to someone else's results. Measure progress by how you are learning and improving over time.

Take Action Before You Feel Completely Confident

Confidence often develops through experience. You do not need to feel completely ready before taking on new challenges.

Quick Reset When You Feel Like an Imposter

Pause: Notice the thought.

Question: Is this a fact or a fear?

Reframe: Replace the thought with a more balanced perspective.

Continue: Take the next step, even if you feel uncertain.



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