Are you a graduate imposter at U of T?

Although real imposters do exist, chances are you are simply a real graduate student if you feel like an imposter or a fraud at some point during your graduate studies. To a greater or lesser extent, these powerful feelings can affect your life as a grad student and where these feelings continue or intensify, you may be experiencing “imposter phenomenon” (aka “imposter syndrome”). In particular, imposter feelings can arise during periods of academic transition (i.e. undergrad to graduate, masters to PhD, PhD candidate to whatever happens after completion).

Test yourself for The Imposter Syndrome

Do you:

- Experience self-doubt or lack of confidence (“I can’t do this. I am not as smart as they think.”)
- Undermine your achievements (“I don’t deserve this. It’s all a mistake.”)
- Feel afraid of being unmasked (“It’s only a matter of time before they find out I’m a fraud.”)
- Become paralyzed by perfectionism (“Everything must be perfect.”)
- Believe that everyone else is doing better than you?

What can you do?

- **Speak out!** Statistically speaking, you are not alone in feeling this way (around 70% of people experience imposter feelings) – more so since you are a graduate student at a competitive university like U of T! Talk to someone you like / respect about how you are feeling.

- **Check yourself.** Trust that telling your story out loud will sound different than it does inside your head, and the process can help you to reality-check feelings against facts. Still feeling like a fraud? Be kind to yourself - imposter feelings are easy to amass and difficult to Marie Kondo.

- **Celebrate the small stuff.** Did you get up today and turn on your computer? Great job! Put together a timeline that includes “me” time? Awesome!

- **Take a moment to think about your support network.** Who is there for you, what people might you need to reconnect with, what supports might you need to seek out to begin to reexamine your graduate school experience. Tried a new activity recently? Participating in activities outside of the walls of your department can show you other ways of measuring success and enjoying campus.

- **Visualize success.** What would success look like for you as a unique grad? Try to compare yourself to your own progress to really appreciate how far you have come as a graduate student from Day 1.

And a lot of other suggestions can be found in resources set out below....
Articles & blogs

U of T Magazine - Sept 2018 “Why do so many Students Suffer From Imposter Syndrome? New U of T research suggests ways to combat feeling like a fraud”

Varsity Magazine – February 2018 “Navigating U of T Life Sciences as an impostor - A student reflects on her experience with impostor syndrome” [UNDERGRAD]

Varsity Magazine – November 2018 “An unwelcome shadow -How impostor syndrome impacts U of T students”

GradLife Blog – October 2018 “Imposter Syndrome -You are not alone!” [GRAD]

GradMinds Elemental Magazine - Winter 2017 “The Imposter Syndrome” [GRAD]

Ultra Vires Magazine (U of T Law) – September 2017 “An Imposter at U of T Law” [PROFESSIONAL]


University Affairs Magazine - February 2014 “Do you suffer from Imposter Syndrome? There are steps you can take to help combat it.”

Inside Higher Education blog - June 2013 “How I cured my imposter Syndrome - The power of feminism and mentoring.”

Reddit Forum – January 2010 “Anyone else here feel like a major imposter?”


Videos

The Imposter Syndrome: How Successful People often feel like Frauds | Hugh Kearns
www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcpkbssrXtg

Opportunities to connect with other grads & supports

Grad Life & Student Life Leadership workshops & chats

Gradminds workshops & events

Learning strategists & Grad Writing Groups & workshops with Academic Success

Book an appointment or drop-by and talk with one of the G2G Peer Advisors from the Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre

gradcrc.utoronto.ca

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