



“I don’t deserve to be here” Coping with the Imposter syndrome

The ‘Imposter Syndrome’ is when a student feels like their successes and achievements are because of luck or help from others, and not because of their personal abilities. They constantly experience self-doubt and feel anxious that they’ll be ‘exposed’ or ‘found’. The student may feel like people around them are smart and deserve to be here but he is not as good and just got lucky or has worked much harder than others.

What does it feel/look like?

- Feeling like a ‘fraud’/like you’re deceiving others
- Feeling scared that you’ll make a mistake and everyone will find out that you don’t deserve to be here
- Find it difficult to accept praise (e.g. making self-deprecating jokes often)
- Thinking that getting into IIT (or other achievements) was purely good luck
- Thinking that everyone around you is extremely smart and you don’t deserve to be here
- Feeling scared to speak up in class or otherwise (what if I say something stupid)
- Overworking, spending more time than necessary on assignments (need it to be perfect)

It can be draining and extremely difficult to constantly experience these thoughts and feelings. Often, the high competitiveness on campus can make it worse. But know that you’re not alone and deserve to be here.

Here are some things you can start doing:

Talk to someone about what you’re feeling:

Reach out to anyone you feel safe with and share what’s going on.

1. Your mentor has probably felt the same too. Hearing their experiences and what helped them can be of great use.
2. Have an honest talk with your friends or batch mates you feel comfortable with. It can help to realize that many people feel the same way and you’re not alone.
3. Confide in parents, family members, significant others or friends. Sometimes, hearing from someone else and getting a new perspective can help tremendously.

Additionally, you could ask someone, who knows you well and you feel comfortable with, about what qualities they like about you and the instances in which they have seen you demonstrate those qualities.

Think about this and note down:

People I can reach out to:

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Additionally:

Working with the facts:

- 1) List down three things that you're proud of achieving:
- 2) List down five **personal qualities** that helped you achieve this:
- 3) What are some thoughts that come to your mind related to this:
(eg. It was a fluke, I just got lucky, Everyone here is so smart, I don't deserve to be here, everyone will find out that I'm stupid)
- 4) What are some balanced alternatives:
(I have proven that I am capable, I deserve this, I have qualities that brought me here)
- 5) Note how you will celebrate what you do well/accept praise gracefully:

Finally:

- Recognise your strengths and your area of expertise
- Tutor/mentor/help out younger students in any way that you can
- Find ways you can help others and benefit them from your knowledge/skills or strengths

Remember that just because we are feeling something doesn't mean it is true. If you want some support on this journey, please don't hesitate in reaching out to a counsellor at the Student Wellness Centre.