HOW TO TACKLE IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Define **Detect** **Discuss** **Diffuse**
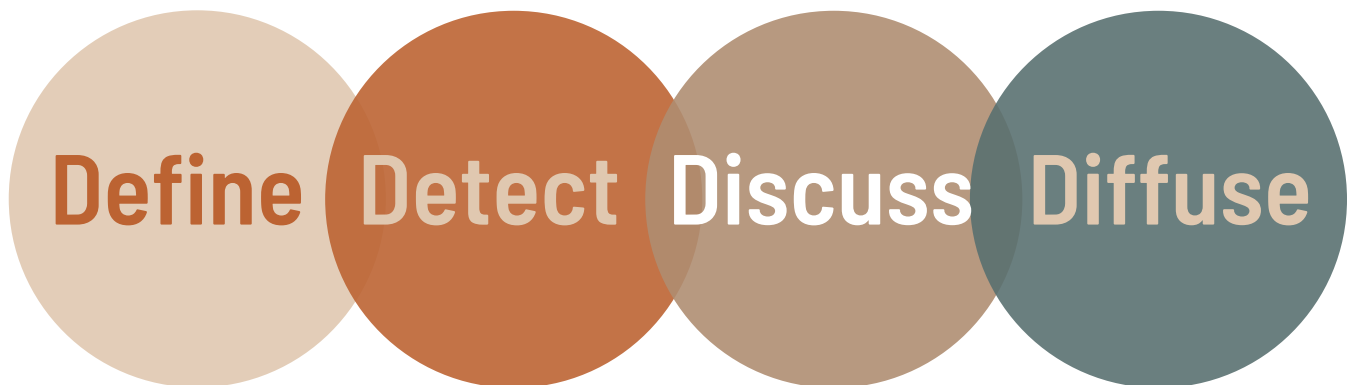
This booklet aims to raise awareness of a common, yet under-spoken feeling that many students feel and provide on-campus resources for those who wish to seek help.

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STEP 1: DEFINE

Imposter syndrome is an internal battle.

This phenomenon describes when individuals doubt their accomplishments and have a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of their competence, as stated in Ebony McGee's article, "Black Genius, Asian Fail".

It can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and self-doubt in personal, academic, and professional settings.

If you find yourself fearing when others will find out the "truth" that you are not actually capable, you most certainly are not alone.

STEP 2: DETECT

Imposter syndrome may not be easily detected by others since it is internalized, but it can manifest as certain behaviors. Some common examples include:

- not speaking up in class for fear of sounding stupid
- not attending office hours so that the professor won't realize how little you understand, or general feelings of anxiety when interacting with professors (read "Can you sign your book for me?" in *The Privileged Poor* by Anthony Jack)
- attributing your past successes to 'pure luck' or extreme dedication (Stephen Gadsby. 2022. "Imposter Syndrome and Self-Deception")

Anonymous Quotes from Amherst students reflecting their experiences with imposter syndrome

"The earliest experience of mine in STEM was one of not belonging, of being an imposter, and of not having had enough experience for the classes I was taking"

"For the longest time, I was always afraid to ask questions during class because I thought it would make me look stupid, or even afraid to go to a professor to admit that I was confused about a topic"

STEP 3: DISCUSS

Imposter syndrome is not uncommon, yet this feeling of fraudulence can cause people to think they are isolated and alone in their struggles.

Although anyone can develop imposter syndrome, it is more commonly found those who do not identify with the prevailing dominant group – white men – indicating it has ties with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The current STEM culture is very competitive and individualistic as discussed in the article "Giving Back or Giving Up: Native American Student Experiences in Science and Engineering" by Smith et al. Because of these specific dominant values, people who do not fit in (for example the Indigenous students who grew up in communal societies from the above article) tend to not only struggle more, but feel as if there is something wrong with them as opposed to the educational system itself failing *them*.

At its root, imposter syndrome is a manifestation of this 'deficit model' that we currently sit at, where students who don't feel like they belong see themselves as the problem when in fact it is our current structure that only benefits the dominant group. The deficit model idea was drawn from a snippet from a video titled 'Barnard CEP Basu Fall 2021' and also from "Planting Equity: Using What We Know to Cultivate Growth as a Plant Biology Community" by Beronda Montgomery. Accomplishments and competition center the STEM field and form a setting conducive to feeling like you do not belong or are not good enough if you are not like the others.

STATISTICS

A brief summary of the prevalence of imposter syndrome on campus at Amherst College

## __%

Some insights on relevant statistics/data

KEY FINDINGS

This section will be filled with the findings of a survey done in collaboration with the Psychology department on the prevalence of imposter syndrome on campus.

The specific survey questions could be on here with the breakdown of responses with graphics to easily display the data

STEP 4: DIFFUSE

So, what can be done to alleviate imposter syndrome? The first step is identifying that it is a common occurrence among students. Acknowledging that you are not alone in this struggle may provide some solace to the feeling of being an outsider. It may also help to find a community or niche group where you can foster relationships with others- making connections over shared values or activities can increase your sense of belonging. Here are some resources towards community-building and wellbeing.
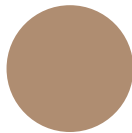
Campus clubs

Check out the Amherst Hub at https://thehub.amherst.edu/organizations and find a group that interests you! At the beginning of each semester is a Club Fair where you can speak to members and find out more about each club.

This section will include Club Fair dates
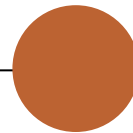
Office of Identity and Cultural Resources

Amherst College has a host of organizations that create inclusive spaces for a variety of students, for example the Multicultural Resource Center and the Women's and Gender Center. Check them all out at https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/oicr
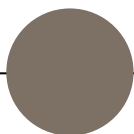
Student Resources Guide

The Amherst College webpage includes a guide for students with host of resources, including an events calendar and a hub for academic and accessibility support. https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/student-resources
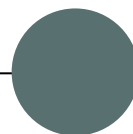
Workshops with the Counseling Center

This section will elaborate on a collaboration with the Counseling Center to form a group-therapy workshop or event to address feelings of isolation and self-fraud