Competence Challenges vs. Confidence Challenges: Exploring Tools for Combatting Imposter Syndrome

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Resources for Combatting Imposter Syndrome

● Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well, Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen
● Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ, Daniel Goleman
● The Etiquette Edge, Beverly Langford
● Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Carol Dweck
● Strengths Finder 2.0, Tom Rath
● Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most, Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen
● The Essential Associate, Jay Harrington
● Swimming Lessons for Baby Sharks, Grover Cleveland
● IAALS Foundations for Practice: iaals.du.edu/publications/foundations-practice-whole-lawyer-and-character-quotient
How Can Clinical and Externship Faculty Disrupt Imposter Syndrome (IS)?
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● We have greater access to students, which means we can:
  ○ Identify IS: Our access to students primes us to identify IS because we get to know the students well, often through individual counseling.
  ○ Train/educate supervisors. In the externship setting, supervisors are also in a position to identify IS. Institutional level trainings for supervisors can help.
  ○ Facilitate mentoring arrangements. We formally and informally pair students with mentors, such as former students. These mentorship relationships can combat IS.
    ■ For formal pairings, consider pairing students with both a junior and a senior attorney mentor. The differing perspectives from the mentors can really help the student.
    ■ Have the students in externships and clinics mentor other students via informal connections. Having a student with IS be the mentor can help disrupt the IS because it helps the student realize they know more and can add more value than they previously thought.

● Build reflective habits around identifying competence. If you give reflective assignments or have students do any assessments, consider these:
  ○ To-Dos to Ta-Das. Reflective prompt: What is one Ta-Da from this week, & what does that Ta-Da say about who you are and of what you are capable?
  ○ Reframe gaps as opportunities to learn instead of as liabilities. Reflective prompt: (1) What is something you learned in the field this week that you didn’t know last week?
  ○ StrengthsFinder & similar assessments help students know their top skills.
  ○ Reflective exercise - ask junior attorney what was biggest challenge of first year of practice.

● Use self-evaluation and harvesting proof/solid evidence as tools. If you have students do any self-assessments, have them also write what their solid evidence is for why they self-assessed themselves at a particular level. Having them use their lawerly skills to back up their claim helps them think in a more realistic way.

● Build awareness around supervisor expectations of student performers. Look to data like IAALS and ask students how they demonstrate behaviors.

● Model vulnerability. Showing your vulnerability deepens their learning.

● Seminar topics. Addressing in class or via reflections can help disrupt IS.
  ○ Growth mindset.
  ○ Navigational guidance for sector they’re externing in to demystify it.