

AWBW / Facing Imposter Syndrome

What Is Imposter Syndrome?

Imposter syndrome is an unwanted thought pattern in which an individual doubts their skills, talents, or accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a “fraud.” This can feel like we don’t know what we’re doing even in areas in which we excel, and we subsequently assign guilt to those feelings of ineptitude and inadequacy. Many systems and institutions also fail to uplift and empower the voices and experiences of marginalized groups, and this exclusion can then perpetuate feelings of being an “imposter.”

In this workshop, you can help release feelings of being an imposter by quieting the mind with messy mark-making, releasing attachment from your thoughts & emotions, creating your imposter and antidote, connecting to a sense of stability, and reflecting on mindfully moving towards your truth with art.



Read more about imposter syndrome in this [blog](#).

Materials

- Printed images, magazines, or other collage materials
- Scissors
- Glue
- Large sheets of paper
- Writing utensils (such as markers, crayons, oil pastels, etc.)

Steps

1. Introduction: Messy Mark-Making

The first step is to recognize when imposter syndrome is emerging in unwanted thoughts, skewing your internal perspective of your own value, skills, etc. One way of quieting the mind is to scribble it out, letting your mind and body move in whatever way it wants to release. Using a writing utensil of your choice, you can use colors you dislike and create something intentionally “ugly,” going against the chaotic (and often harsh) inner-critic. This is to connect with your mark-making without judgment and give yourself permission to make a mess.

- **Reflect:** Try looking at your paper without any emotion or judgment. See it as simply marks on a page– nothing more, nothing less. What comes up for you? How do you feel? Uncomfortable, free, or another emotion?

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2. Warm-Up: Release Attachment From Thoughts & Emotions

We often take our thoughts as truth. By shifting to observing our thoughts from a distance, we can begin to release attachment to them. Using words, colors, shapes, and/or symbols, incorporate movements to your creation that illustrate the concept of observing these thoughts from a distance. Did your relationship to placing marks on paper change? If so, how?

3. Creation: Creatively Explore Your Imposter & Antidote

Part 1 - Imposter: Open the space to listen within and observe your imposter as a separate, external entity. Release your imposter onto a clean sheet of paper using words, colors, shapes, and/or symbols, giving yourself permission to be messy. What does your imposter look, sound, feel, think, and act like? What comes up for you as you create your imposter?

Part 2 - Antidote: Exploring an antidote, think about what could help quiet the imposter. Is it acknowledging your accomplishments, thinking of your strengths, focusing on your goodness, or something else? Add any words, colors, shapes, and/or symbols that remind you of what is true to help silent the imposter.

4. Connection: Connect to a Sense of Stability

The farther we move away from unhelpful thought patterns, the closer we move towards our grounded and stable self. Choosing images that resonate with your most grounded core self, place them either on your prior creations or on a clean sheet of paper, in a way that visually communicates a sense of stability and connection.

5. Reflection: "Is It True?"

All humans are wired with a negativity bias that automatically draws our attention towards negative thoughts and emotions. This helps create an environment where thinking and feeling like an imposter thrive. Rather than believing the imposter, we can stop to ask ourselves, "Is it true?" Consider how you can use your art to identify imposter syndrome when it arises and mindfully quiet it, moving towards your truth. You can also remind yourself that all humans have a growth edge, and that it is normal and even healthy to make mistakes, grow, and learn.

