IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Do you ever feel like a fraud? Like you’re not qualified for the life you’re living and one day you’re going to be found out? You may experience that at times on a small scale; like if you’re asked a question and you feel compelled to answer, but you don’t feel qualified to speak on that topic. It can also show up in very significant ways; like being promoted to a job position that you don’t feel qualified to assume. This feeling is so common it has a name: Imposter Syndrome.

Imposter Syndrome refers to an internal experience of believing that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be. It can, and does, affect lots of people (one study found up to 82% of people), no matter their social status, work background, skill level, or degree of expertise.

To move past these feelings, consider the following:

- **Change you definition of “qualified”**. Imposter Syndrome is driven by a feeling of not being fully qualified for a responsibility. But being qualified for something exists on a spectrum and rarely means total and complete expertise. If you’ve been assigned a role, it’s likely because you’ve demonstrated skills and aptitudes others have identified as important – not because you’ve established yourself as the world’s leading expert. Try and identify the qualifications you do have, and let go of the need to be all or nothing.

- **Be mindful of your feelings**. When you start to feel insecure about your position in life, take time to investigate those feelings. What is being asked of you and what makes you feel unqualified for it? Do you feel you’re lacking specific skills? Do you feel like others have a totally false perception of your abilities? How do those feelings manifest in your life? Do you get paralyzed, or overcompensate? Once you’ve investigated these feelings then you can start to unravel those core beliefs that are holding you back.

- **Stop comparing**. Every time you compare yourself to others in a work or social situation, you will find some fault with yourself that fuels the feeling of not being qualified or not belonging. Instead of noting the qualities that another person holds and that you feel you’re lacking, focus on the skills and assets that you bring to a situation.

- **Use social media moderately**. We know that the overuse of social media can generate feelings of inferiority, especially if you’re following people who seem to have it all together, are experts in their field, or tout their own achievements. It’s nearly impossible to see that content and not internalize feelings of inadequacy. So, use social media sparingly.

- **Take a self-inventory**. Imposter Syndrome is derived from feelings of inadequacy. But everyone – even you – has a lot of impressive knowledge, skills and abilities. Spend a week writing down your positive qualities. At the end of each day, reflect on what contributions you made to your household, workplace, or community. That exercise will help you understand and embrace the positive qualities you bring to the different facets of your life.

- **Talk to a supervisor, mentor, or friend**. Recognizing and embracing our positive qualities is difficult for many people, but it’s an important step in overcoming Imposter Syndrome. If you’re struggling to recognize and embrace your positive qualities, ask others to help you identify them. The perspective of others often adds an element of awareness that we can’t get from self-investigation alone.

Are you struggling with Imposter Syndrome, or any other stressor in your life? Call Family Services EAP. Your employer has made Family Services EAP a resource for you AND members of your household and immediate family. **We are here to support you.** Contact: 978-327-6666, info@FamilyServicesEAP.org, or submit an online inquiry today.