My Impostor Feelings Map

Feeling like a fraud is common. It is a feeling about me, not a verdict on me.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 Impostor thoughts I know

Tick the ones that sound like my inner voice, even if only sometimes

- ☐ I only got here by luck or timing
- ☐ Praise is just people being nice
- ☐ Needing help proves I do not belong
- ☐ One mistake would expose me
- ☐ Soon they will find out I am not that good
- ☐ If it came easily, it does not count
- ☐ Everyone else knows what they are doing
- ☐ It has to be perfect or it is a failure

Where it shows up most (new role, exams, meetings, other): _____

2 My impostor cycle

Think of one recent task and fill in each stage. The loop often repeats with the next task

1. The task	2. Before	3. What I did	4. After
What was coming up	The doubt or fear	Overprepared or put off	How I explained it

What this cycle costs me (sleep, time, joy, chances I skip): _____

3 How I explain my successes

Write the first explanation, then a fairer one that gives skill and effort their real share

A recent success	How I first explained it	A fairer explanation
e.g. Passed the exam	e.g. "It was an easy year"	e.g. "I studied for weeks"

4 What else might be going on

Impostor feelings grow in some settings. Tick what fits my situation

- ☐ I am new, and new feels shaky for most people
- ☐ Feedback here is rare or vague
- ☐ The bar keeps moving
- ☐ I am one of few people like me here
- ☐ Mistakes are treated harshly here
- ☐ I compare my inside to their outside

One thing about the setting, not me, that feeds this feeling: _____

Something I could ask for (clear feedback, a mentor, a peer group): _____

What I would say to a friend who felt this way in my place: _____

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My Owning It Practice Plan

The goal is not zero doubt. It is letting doubt ride along without driving.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 My 7 day evidence file

Once a day: one thing I did or handled, what it took, how I first explained it, a fairer view

Day	What I did or handled	What it took	First explanation	A fairer view
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

2 Say it out loud

Impostor feelings shrink when they are shared. Pick someone who has been kind before

Someone I trust who might understand: _____

What I will tell them (one or two sentences): _____

What they said, and how I felt afterwards: _____

3 One small experiment

Test what the impostor voice predicts instead of obeying it

The prediction (e.g. "If I ask a question, they will see I do not belong"): _____

How sure I am, 0 to 100%: What I will do instead: _____

What actually happened: _____

How sure I am now, 0 to 100%, and what I learned: _____

For therapists and clients

1. Impostor syndrome, or the impostor phenomenon, is a pattern of feelings, not a formal diagnosis.
2. Doubt in a new or demanding role is common. Aim to act well alongside it, not to get rid of it first.
3. Context matters. Bias, isolation and vague feedback can feed these feelings, and that is not a personal flaw.
4. Instead of a pep talk, try kindness plus evidence. Self-compassion has early trial support here.
5. Therapists: impostor feelings often travel with depression, anxiety and burnout. Check for them too.

In the US, call or text 988 (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) any time, day or night.

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