A common challenge that many graduate students face is a striving to overcome feelings of inferiority. This is due, in part, to the inherent rigor of graduate training that demands a candidate reach a high level of mastery in their respective field. This high demand for achievement is contextualized for an individual by their specific mentoring environment, which can vary wildly between individual students resulting in vastly different abilities that could enable (or limit) their capacity to overcome feelings of inferiority. Lacking the appropriate skills to address feelings of inferiority places a strain on creativity, authenticity, and resilience – critical factors that help fuel a productive research program. Women and underrepresented minorities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of feeling inferior for reasons described by research on the Imposter Syndrome and institutional forces that affect campus climate. Although we now have a deeper understanding of the effects of feeling inferior for reasons described by research on the Imposter Syndrome and institutional forces that affect campus climate. Although we now have a deeper understanding of these issues we continue to lack a range of practical tools that helps students to thrive by addressing the causes and challenges of feeling inferior. This Winter we will offer a training experience that will empower graduate students to cultivate skills and practices that help them to effectively overcome feelings of inferiority. The Interactive workshop will help participants articulate the experiences and effects of feeling inferior and teach participants how to develop daily practices that promote creativity, authenticity and resilience in order to substantially mitigate the effects of feeling inferior. Through this training, students will be empowered to shape their specific mentoring environment, which will enhance their overall graduate experience and foster their research productivity.

Forging a New Narrative: Skills and Practices for Combating Imposter Syndrome

Vladimir Diaz-Ochoa; Coy McNew
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**Introduction**

A common challenge that many graduate students face is a striving to overcome feelings of inferiority. This is due, in part, to the inherent rigor of graduate training that demands a candidate reach a high level of mastery in their respective field. This high demand for achievement is contextualized for an individual by their specific mentoring environment, which can vary wildly between individual students resulting in vastly different abilities that could enable (or limit) their capacity to overcome feelings of inferiority. Lacking the appropriate skills to address feelings of inferiority places a strain on creativity, authenticity, and resilience – critical factors that help fuel a productive research program. Women and underrepresented minorities are particularly vulnerable to the effects of feeling inferior for reasons described by research on the Imposter Syndrome and institutional forces that affect campus climate. Although we now have a deeper understanding of these issues we continue to lack a range of practical tools that helps students to thrive by addressing the causes and challenges of feeling inferior. This Winter we will offer a training experience that will empower graduate students to cultivate skills and practices that help them to effectively overcome feelings of inferiority. The Interactive workshop will help participants articulate the experiences and effects of feeling inferior and teach participants how to develop daily practices that promote creativity, authenticity and resilience in order to substantially mitigate the effects of feeling inferior. Through this training, students will be empowered to shape their specific mentoring environment, which will enhance their overall graduate experience and foster their research productivity.

**Cultivating Resilience**

Resilience – the ability to overcome adversity

- They are resourceful and have good problem-solving skills.
- They are more likely to seek help.
- They hold the belief that they can do something that will help them to manage their feelings and cope.
- They have social support available to them.
- They are connected with others, such as family or friends.

Interactive Resilience Activity:  

**Practice Authenticity**

Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.

Practicing Authenticity:

Living authentically is a choice we get to make on a day-by-day, experience-by-experience basis. Let’s get intentional about exploring what holds us back from living more authentic lives and identify a practice we can dedicate ourselves to as an expression of who we are.

- List out unexpressed ideas, opinions, and contributions you’ve had in the last week.
- Explain why you haven’t shared it (them) with someone.
- What do you need to believe about yourself to have the courage to express what you’ve been wanting to express?
- Identify one daily practice that you will adopt as an expression of your authentic self.

**Interactive Creativity Activity:**

What are you already doing in your daily life that’s creative?

In the creativity sandbox draw, journal, list, and/or brainstorm areas in your life where you find your creative energies flowing.

**Fueling Your Creativity**

The Comparison Mandate

- Conform and complete
- Fit in and stand out
- Be like everyone else but better!

Interactive Creativity Activity:

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In the creativity sandbox draw, journal, list, and/or brainstorm areas in your life where you find your creative energies flowing.

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**References**

1. Thielk, D. “The Imposter Syndrome: Why Successful People Often Feel Like Losers.”

**Attendee Feedback**

- 48 registered participants
- Very engaged group discussions
- Overwhelmingly positive feedback

Did you find the workshop to be useful for your personal and professional development?

Average score: 4.4/5

How likely are you to attend a similar workshop in the future?

Average score: 4.2/5

What skills and/or practices did you learn today?

- "How to be more forgiving to myself and put my destructive thoughts into context."
- "How to counter my negative feelings of self doubt and being an imposter."
- "Embracing creativity as an important part of my life."

What topic of the workshop resonated with you the most? Why?

- "Authenticity. I never realized how important it is to me, and how it’s been missing lately."
- "It’s all in my own head but there are external ways to handle it."
- "The talk I had 1 on 1 with another participant!"
- "The stories you shared about your own experiences during your careers.
- "Creativity – I dropped all creative endeavors my first couple years of grad school."

What do you think would help improve future workshops on this topic?

- "Longer amount of time to get into issues."
- "Longer or more focused sessions."
- "More take home materials so we can work on these issues independently."
- "More time for reflection and take home exercises."

"Thank you for sharing these great tips and creating a safe atmosphere to talk about this!"