Unlocking the Authentic Self

A Leadership Development Program for women physicians

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**Background**

Impostor syndrome (or impostor phenomenon) was first described in 1978 by Clance and Imes (1). They described a constellation of findings in high achieving women that they had worked with in a psychotherapy practice. The women they were treating did not have internal feelings of success, despite external evidence of achievement. They described themselves as fakes or frauds, and lived in constant fear of being discovered. Clance went on to develop a well-validated assessment (the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Survey), but very little research has been conducted related to impostor phenomenon (2,3).

There have been several studies of impostor phenomenon in different populations of individuals. For example, impostor feelings are relatively common among undergraduate students (4,5). In this population, impostor phenomenon is negatively associated with career striving, career planning and motivation to lead (5). In managers, impostor phenomenon is associated with higher levels of stress, emotional instability, negative self-evaluation, and perfectionism (6). In another general study in the workplace, impostor phenomenon affected all work-related outcomes (7).

Although medicine is a field full of high-achieving individuals, very little work has been done to assess impostor phenomenon in the healthcare setting. One study assessed impostor phenomenon in medical students and found that 49% of women and 24% of men had high levels of impostor phenomenon (8). The authors also examined burnout in this group and found that it was associated with impostor phenomenon. In a study of family medicine residents, approximately a third reported impostor phenomenon feelings and behaviors (9). In a study involving internal medicine residents, 44% were found to have impostor phenomenon and this was again associated with higher levels of burnout.

Though very few studies have examined impostor phenomenon in medicine, the studies that have been done show relatively high percentages, and suggest that women are more affected than men. Furthermore, there is an association with burnout and other factors affecting leadership and career advancement. Extrapolating from literature from other professions, it is likely that impostor phenomenon does affect the work, psychological health, career trajectory and leadership for women physicians.

**Unlocking the Authentic Self program**

This program is designed to use group and optional individual coaching to teach tools and skills to address the downside characteristics of impostor phenomenon.  It is an outcomes focused approach to help individuals identify self-limiting beliefs and behaviors and develop personal strategies to overcome those. The program is limited to small groups of between 6 and 10 women physicians. All sessions take place in a live virtual classroom setting. There are 6 group coaching sessions lasting 90 minutes. The optional individual coaching program consists of 5 individual coaching sessions targeting some of the major impostor phenomenon challenges. Participants in this program can claim a maximum of 12.25 hours of continuing medical education (CME approved through University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences).

The program focuses on the three major and consistent challenges for women suffering with impostor phenomenon: taming the internal critic and limiting self-sabotage; reframing your personal competency model and developing more meaningful personal rules; strategic goal setting and limiting the fear of failure. Each week, participants will be asked to complete pre-work and homework (usually less than 1 hour).

The group coaching work done in the virtual classroom is very powerful and even transformational for participants. Highly interactive breakouts, coaching demonstrations, reflective writing, and powerful exercises are used to teach and demonstrate the use of immediately applicable tools and skills. Group participation and committing to practicing the skills and tools are critical for success.

**The Course Agenda**

Week 1: Pre-call with the facilitator (15 minutes)

Week 2: The physiology of impostor syndrome

Week 3: Taming the inner critic

Week 4: Combatting self-sabotage

Week 5: Recreating our impostor syndrome avatars

Week 6: Goal-setting to overcome the fear of failure

Week 7: Envisioning your future and wrap-up

**Program Cost:** *The cost includes CME (up to 12.25 hours), access to the virtual classroom software, access to the learning management system during the course, handouts and written materials. The cost does not include the required equipment needed for joining the live virtual classroom: A computer or smart device, a headset with microphone and headphones, and a web-cam or camera-enabled smart device*.  *Please note: only a small number of slots are available for individual coaching, on a first come basis*

Group coaching program: $600

Group coaching program and individual coaching: $1600

**A few comments from past participants**

“This has been eye-opening work on many levels. The strategies to attack different aspects of my impostor syndrome were immediately applicable to real life.”

“My impostor syndrome has receded into a manageable area in my life.”

“The group sessions allowed me to connect with other women with similar goals and roadblocks and we helped each other through them.”

“I am absolutely sure that this will help me going forward in my leadership roles.”

**About the facilitator**

My name is Jennifer Hunt, and I am board certified and practicing pathologist. I am the Chair of a relatively large academic department of Pathology (2011 to present), have served as Chief of Staff for hospital, and am active in several of my national and international professional societies. I am trained in Executive Coaching, Neurolinguistic Programming, Group Coaching and Emotional Intelligence assessment (EQ-i 360). I am currently finalizing certification with the International Coaching Federation (ACC level). My coaching practice is focused on women in medicine, with a strong emphasis on working with emerging and current leaders.

**Accreditation Statement**

In support of improving patient care, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

**AMA Designation Statement**

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences designates this live activity for a maximum of 12.25 *AMA PRA Category 1 CreditsTM*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

The proceeds from this course are used to support leadership development with a goal of increasing women and minorities in leadership positions at our institution.

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