

OVERCOMING Imposter Syndrome

Many students at UF struggle with self-doubt and comparison. Sydney Carroll shares her personal experience with imposter syndrome and how she is learning to embrace her accomplishments and strengths.

BY: SYDNEY CARROLL



FINDING MY PLACE AT UF

Hello, my name is Sydney Carroll, and I am a fourth-year psychology student at UF! Attending school here can be challenging in itself, with rigorous coursework and the difficult task of making new friends. However, one of the biggest challenges I have faced throughout my time here has been imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome has always been something that I struggle with, but it has gotten even worse since getting into college. When I first began the college application process, I was extremely overwhelmed. Not only was I terrified of starting this new chapter of my life, miles away from all my friends and family, but I also had no idea where I wanted to go or what I wanted to study. This made me feel incredibly anxious, and I often avoided even opening the Common App website.

I procrastinated so badly that I did not even submit my application to UF until the day of the deadline. When I finally completed the process, I felt an enormous sense of relief and pride, especially upon receiving my acceptance letter. However, when I started attending my classes during freshman year, I quickly began to feel like a fraud.

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FEELING LIKE A FRAUD

I was an exploratory student who had no idea what field of study I wanted to pursue, while everyone around me seemed to have a set plan for the future. On top of this, everyone in my classes seemed to be so much smarter than me in the way they knew the answer to every question in class or wrote eloquent discussion posts with a much more advanced vocabulary.

I quickly went from being proud of myself for being among such impressive students to feeling like a fraud who got into UF out of pure luck. While I am trying to be kinder to myself and engage in more positive self-talk by telling myself that I am just as intelligent or deserving as my peers, it is still something that I struggle with from time to time.

A MOMENT OF REALIZATION

For example, the other day I went to a presentation on vaccines led by the wellness chair of my student organization. She seemed so knowledgeable on the topic that it made me feel inferior, since I was learning all this information for the first time. I had to remind myself that she is a nursing major, so it is something she studies every single day, whereas I have no background in the medical field.

It is not surprising that she is much more well-informed on vaccines than I am. Perhaps if it were a lecture on mental disorders, I would be more knowledgeable on the topic since I am studying psychology.

LESSONS IN SELF-COMPASSION

It is important to remember that everyone is good at different things, so we should not compare ourselves to others or hold ourselves to unrealistic standards. It is also crucial that we are kinder to ourselves and acknowledge that we are all deserving of our accomplishments. There is a reason why we are all at this place in our lives, and it is because of our unique strengths and perspectives that we each have something valuable to offer.