

## **Imposter Syndrome Case Study: Dr. A**

### **Issue and Impact**

Dr. A was an ST8 surgical trainee who applied for coaching to manage persistent feelings of anxiety over her performance both clinically and academically. These feelings had had a serious impact on her confidence and she was concerned at the affect this would have as she considered consultant positions post CCT.

### **Feelings and affect**

Dr. A stated that she had had these feelings throughout her medical career but they had increased as she had progressed with her training holding more senior positions of responsibility. She stated that she often held the belief that she was 'not as good as others' and this made her question her decision making and abilities/skills

### **Defined Goals**

- To feel more confident about her skills, abilities and achievements
- Manage her performance anxiety and stop comparing herself negatively to others
- To be able to more easily 'switch off' from work

### **Coaching**

*We began to look at what evidence she had for these limiting beliefs about her abilities/skills*

Her ARCP and multi-source feedback had been consistently good throughout her career and she had won a number of surgical prizes as well as making presentations at surgical conferences both nationally and internationally.

Dr. A also reflected on the values that gave her purpose and fulfilment such as compassion, empathy and development and identified how her 'imposter syndrome' beliefs directly contravened her core values

*We also looked back to what might be the sources of her 'imposter syndrome'*

A stated the first time she had felt 'imposter syndrome' type feelings was when she sat her Science A levels and had achieved lower than grades than expected. Her parents had high expectations and expressed their disappointment. She also mentioned that she did not feel comfortable acknowledging/celebrating her achievements as her siblings were not as academically able as her.

Dr. A reflected on how her beliefs around performance and acknowledging success had developed and been informed, which as a younger adult may have been useful or helpful for her to negotiate her environment and feel safe.

However, reviewing these beliefs through specific questions and exercises (Download Exercises: Ask 5 People/ Magazine Article) in combination with reflecting on her clinical and academic achievements as well as the positive feedback she had received in her career (Download Exercise: 7 Strengths), she began to realise how these limiting beliefs were no longer useful or truthful to her and wished to write herself a new script which her adult self could own

### *Writing a new life script*

A began to develop her self-belief and confidence by keeping a daily journal of her achievements/ positive feedback and regularly reflecting on her core strengths and skills (Download Exercises: Journal/ 7 Strengths)

She also nominated regular 'worry/concern time' began to capture, test and reframe her negative limiting beliefs with new compassionate and supportive ones and allow her to more easily switch off from work (Download Exercises: Post-It Notes/ Beliefs Diary)

