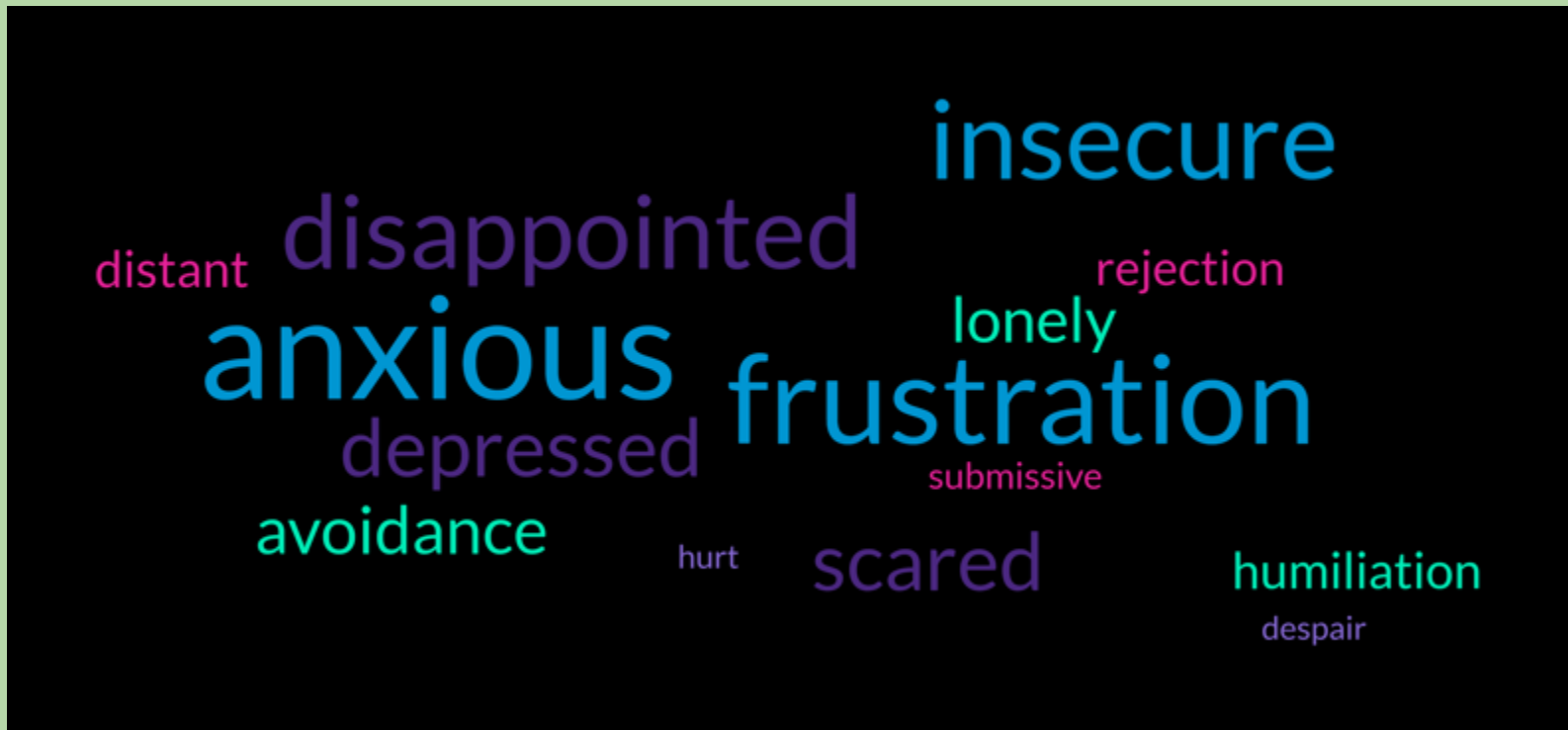
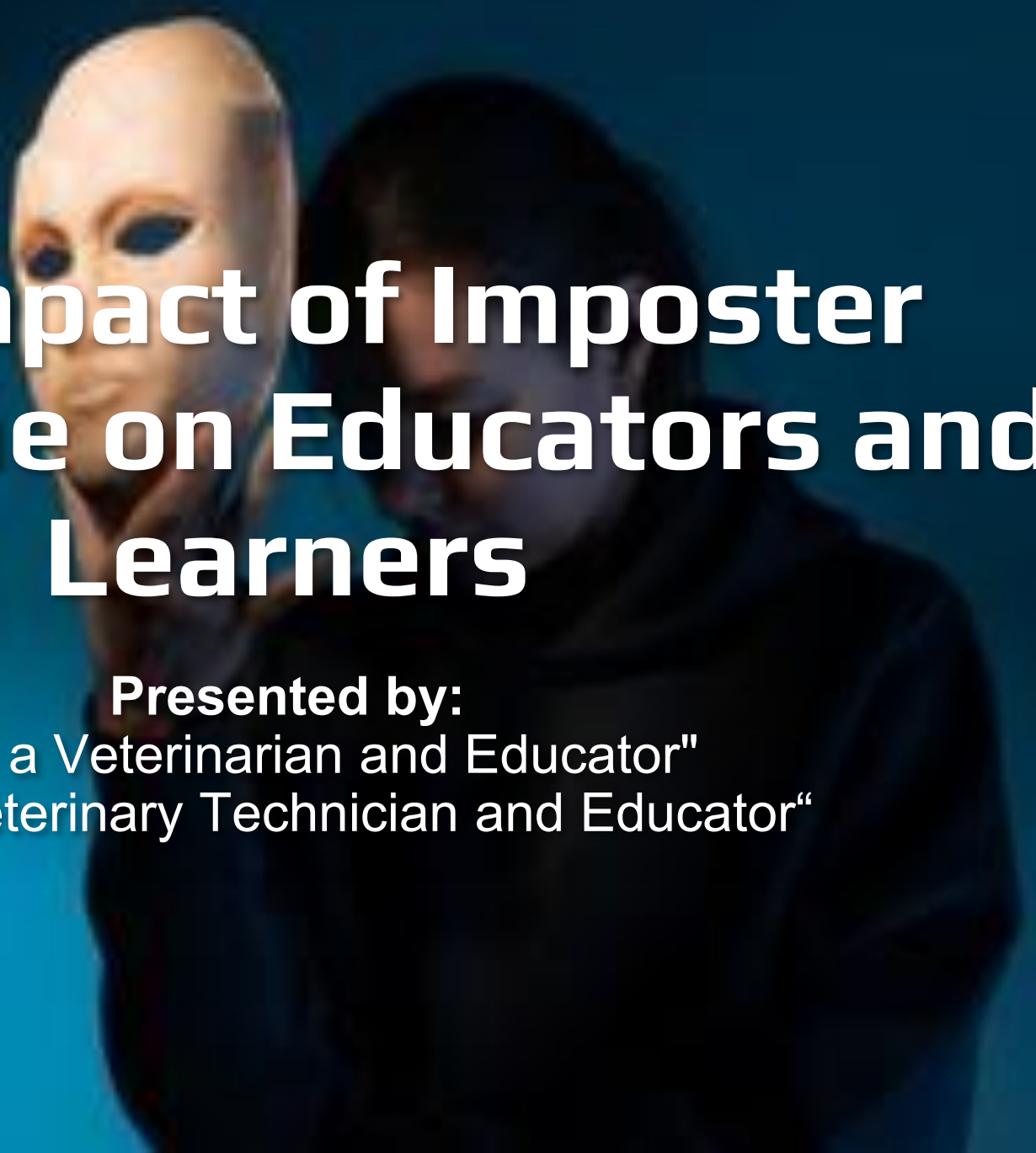


As you take your seat, please fill out the questionnaire on both sides.



A person with dark hair is holding a white, featureless mask over their face. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a solid blue color. The text is overlaid on the image.

The Impact of Imposter Syndrome on Educators and Learners

Presented by:

"Just a Veterinarian and Educator"

"Just a Veterinary Technician and Educator"





*"Whoooo has ever
thought... 'I'm not
good enough'?"*

Self-Assessment

- <https://mindfulhealthsolutions.com/identifying-imposter-syndrome-uncover-6-signs-and-take-a-self-assessment/>
- <https://impostersyndrome.com.au/index.php/questionnaires/>

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

Define	Define imposter syndrome
Recognize	Recognize signs in students and educators
Understand	Understand how imposter syndrome affects learning and teaching
Identify	Identify strategies to reduce its impact
Apply	Apply practical approaches within veterinary technology education

What is Imposter Syndrome?

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Imposter Syndrome as "a psychological condition that is characterized by persistent doubt concerning one's abilities or accomplishments accompanied by the fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of one's ongoing success."

- Fear of being "found out" as a fraud
- Difficulty accepting success
- Often accompanied by perfectionism and anxiety



Imposter Syndrome Subcategories

Perfectionist

- They believe that competence is defined by perfection and anything less than that is considered failure. They focus on what could have been done better.

Natural genius

- They measure their competence by how easily any achievement/success comes to him/her. Hardwork/perseverance are viewed negatively, as success should have come more easily.

Superhero

- They view competence as the ability to juggle multiple things at once and being successful at it all. Falling short in one area is viewed as a total failure.

Expert

- They measure competence based on their volume of knowledge/skill. They fear being exposed as inexperienced or lacking knowledge.

Soloist

- They measure competence by being successful on their own. Having to ask for help is considered a failure.

It Affects Everyone Across the Veterinary Profession

New veterinary technology students

Experienced assistants entering
school

New graduates

Credentialed technicians

Technician specialists

Veterinarians

Educators

Different Students - Different Signs: Still Imposter Syndrome

	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Experienced	• Question Intelligence or Ability • Perceived Overconfidence • Fear of Failure • Reduced Preparation • Pressure to Lead Classmates	• Question Intelligence or Ability • Fear of Judgement • Fear of Participation • Reduced Preparation • Pressure to Lead Classmates
Unexperienced	• Feel Behind Classmates • Fear of Participation • Increased Anxiety • Fear of Mistakes • Overwhelmed by Volume of Content	• Feel Behind Classmates • Fear of Participation • Feeling Inadequate • Feel a Lack of Knowledge to Collaborate • Feel Unsupported

Recognizing the Signs: Students

What Do We Hear?

- "I'm not smart enough."
- "I can't do it."
- "Everyone else gets it."
- "I'm never going to pass."



Recognizing the Signs: Educators

What Do We Hear?

- "I'm not qualified to teach this."
- "I don't know enough."
- "Someone else could do this better."



How Imposter Syndrome Affects Students

Students may be experiencing:

Reduced confidence

Increased anxiety

Avoidance of challenges

Hesitation during labs

Difficulty completing essential skills

Fear of asking questions

Fear of failure

Perceived overconfidence

Fear of judgement

Pressure to lead

Feeling unsupported

Feeling less than or worthless

Increased or decreased course preparation

Lacking knowledge to contribute

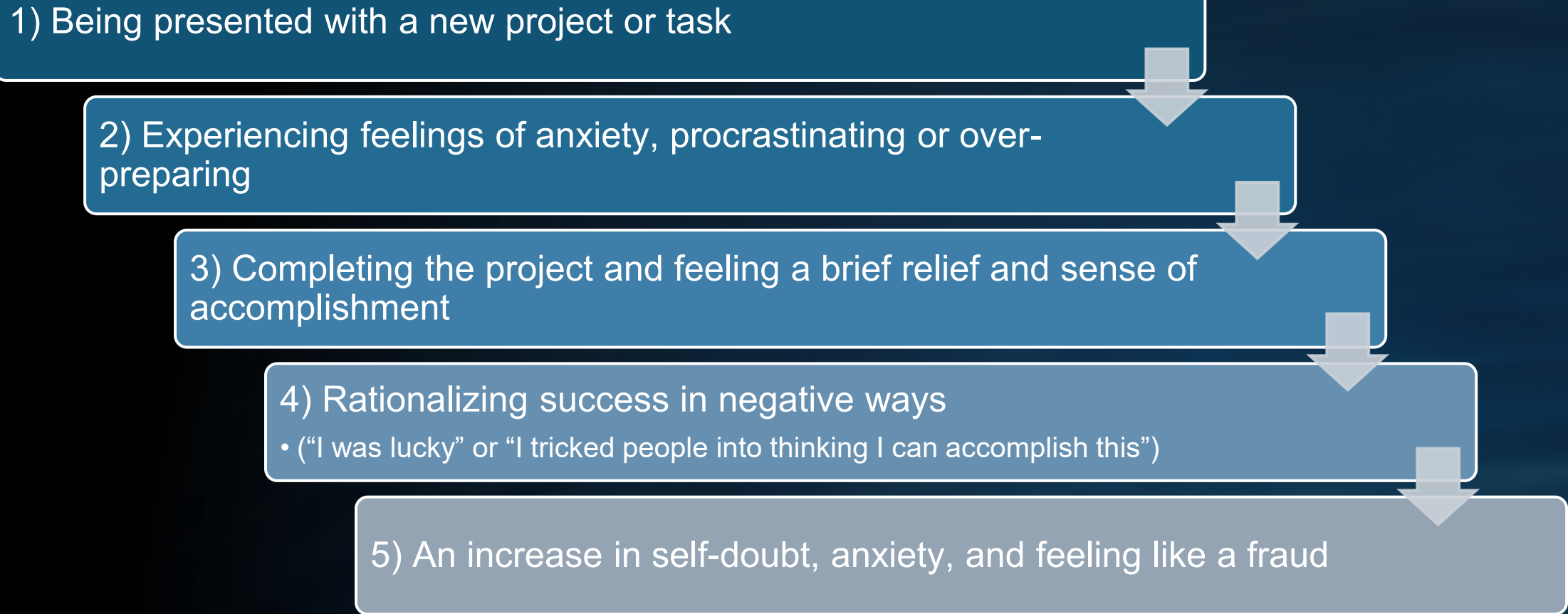
Perceived emotions

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Exhaustion
- Sadness
- Isolated
- Insecure
- Overeating/undereating
- Stressed



The Imposter Syndrome Cycle According to Stanford University:

1) Being presented with a new project or task



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graph TD; A[1) Being presented with a new project or task] --> B[2) Experiencing feelings of anxiety, procrastinating or over-preparing]; B --> C[3) Completing the project and feeling a brief relief and sense of accomplishment]; C --> D[4) Rationalizing success in negative ways<br/>• ("I was lucky" or "I tricked people into thinking I can accomplish this")]; D --> E[5) An increase in self-doubt, anxiety, and feeling like a fraud];
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2) Experiencing feelings of anxiety, procrastinating or over-preparing

3) Completing the project and feeling a brief relief and sense of accomplishment

4) Rationalizing success in negative ways

- ("I was lucky" or "I tricked people into thinking I can accomplish this")

5) An increase in self-doubt, anxiety, and feeling like a fraud

It Doesn't Stop After Graduation



The Impact on Educators

- Educators may:
 - Question their expertise
 - Compare themselves to colleagues
 - Fear not having every answer
 - Avoid opportunities
 - Hesitate to be vulnerable

"Have you ever worried you weren't qualified to teach a topic?"

What does the AVMA say?

“Remember: You are not an imposter. You're a developing professional navigating real complexity. These feelings don't make you less capable; they make you authentic. You don't need to prove you're enough. You already are.”

Why Educators Are Vulnerable

Veterinary Education is Diverse

- Faculty backgrounds include:
 - Veterinarians
 - Veterinary technicians
 - Specialists
 - PhDs
 - Master's degrees
 - Bachelor's degrees
 - New educators
 - Veteran educators



Different experiences strengthen a teaching team.

Our Experiences



Meeting Students Where They Are

Strategies We Use:

- Normalize self-doubt
- Focus on individual growth
- Reduce unhealthy comparisons
- Celebrate small successes
- Encourage questions
- Build psychological safety

Helping Students Build Confidence

- Practical approaches:
 - Frequent positive feedback
 - Growth mindset language
 - Scaffold skills
 - Low-stakes practice
 - Reflection exercises
 - Peer support



What Does Research Tell Us?

- Approximately 70% of the population has experienced imposter syndrome at some point in their lives.
- A study from Brigham Young University found that 20% of college students feel like imposters.
- Imposter syndrome is common among healthcare professionals.
 - Over 60% of health service providers experience imposter syndrome
- Associated with:
 - Anxiety
 - Burnout
 - Perfectionism
 - Reduced confidence
 - Dissatisfaction

Imposter Syndrome in Academia

- A systematic review was conducted looking at impostor syndrome among individuals in higher education
 - Reviewed 37 journal publications from 2019 to 2024 from 12 countries including U.S., China, Canada, and United Kingdom
- "Impostor syndrome is a prevalent issue among students and faculty academic staff in higher education, with varying degrees of severity."
 - Females are 1.7 times more likely to report imposter syndrome than males.
- impostor syndrome in faculty academic staff may be associated with:
 - peer comparison, faculty evaluations, public recognition, fear of unknown expectations, and perceived lack of competence, lower resilience, decreased job satisfaction

Combating Our Own Imposter Syndrome

Strategies for Educators

- Accept that no one knows everything
- Model lifelong learning
- Be comfortable saying:
 - "I don't know."
 - "Let's find out together."
- Seek mentorship
- Celebrate accomplishments
- Stop comparing yourself

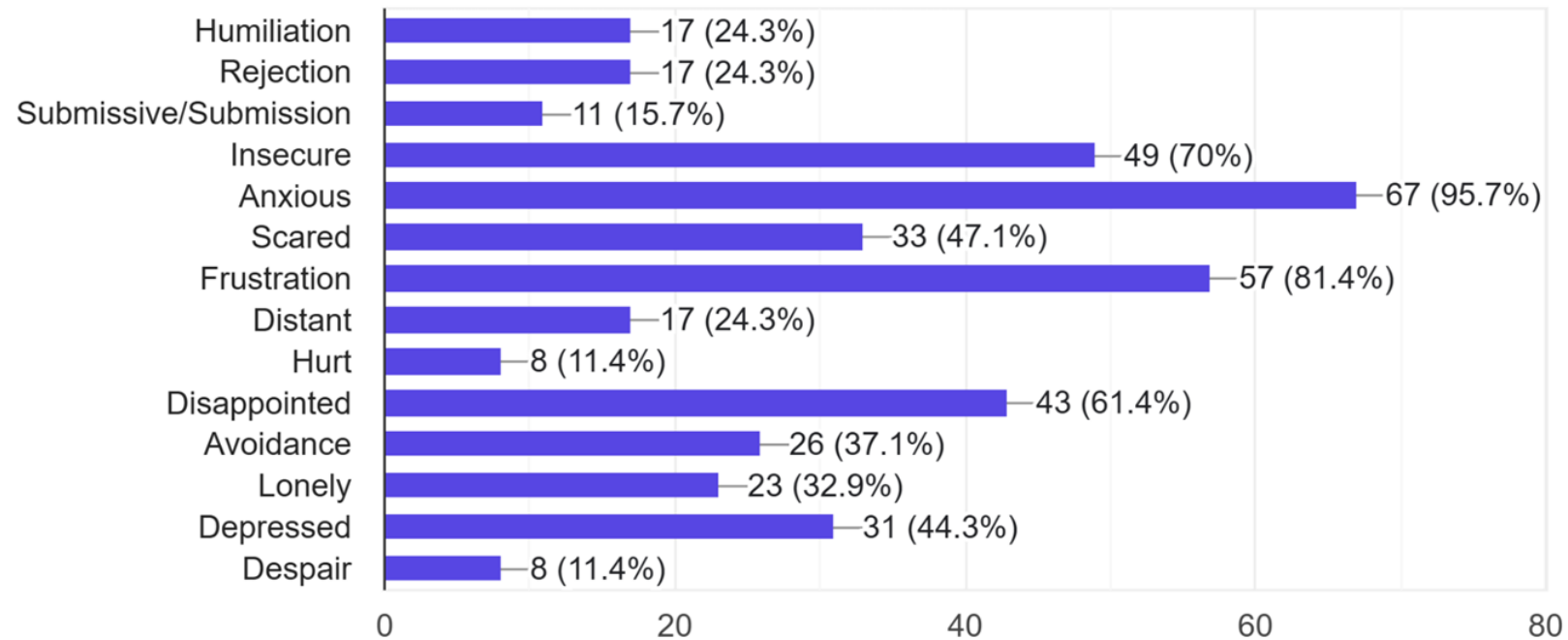
Failure is a part of growth, rather than proof of being an imposter.



Survey Results

3. The following is a list of signs of Imposter Syndrome. Have you experienced any of these as a student in a veterinary technology program? Choose all that apply.

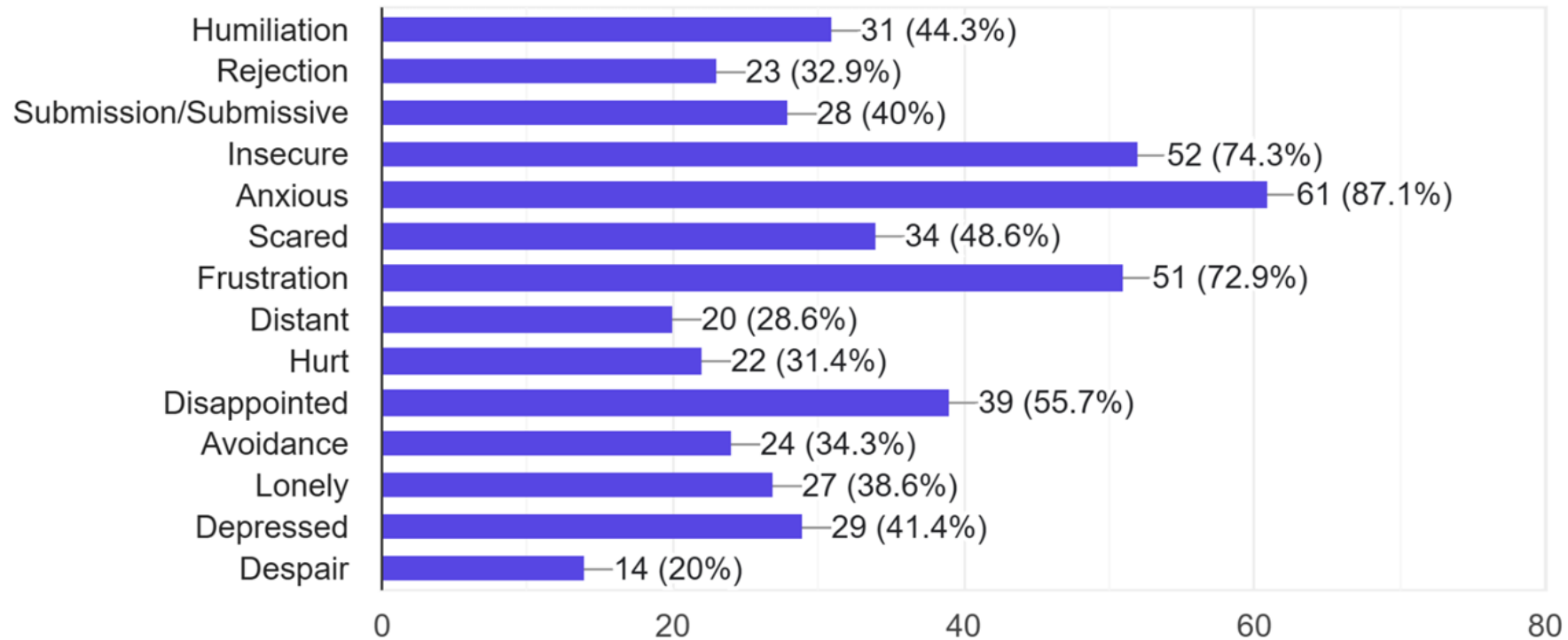
70 responses



Survey Results

4. The following is a list of signs of Imposter Syndrome. Have you experienced any of these as a veterinary professional working in practice? Choose all that apply.

70 responses



Survey Results

Anxiety and Stress: Many report experiencing overwhelming feelings of anxiety, pressure to perform, stress, and being "burnt out" while navigating clinicals, school, and professional environments.

Self-Doubt and Inadequacy: A recurring theme is the pervasive sense of not being "good enough," leading to feelings of worthlessness, fear of failure, and persistent insecurity regarding one's knowledge, experience, or professional competence.

Emotional Distress: Respondents frequently cite feelings of sadness, disappointment in themselves, frustration, and hopelessness, often accompanied by a sense of being a failure or a disappointment to their peers.

Isolation and Alienation: Many express feeling alone, secluded, unwanted, or "out of place," particularly when facing condescension from colleagues, feeling unsupported, or believing that their struggles are misunderstood by others.

[illegible]

"More of the rejection and insecure aspect as someone who feels nervous around everyone who knows so much more than I"

"The feeling of not being good enough"

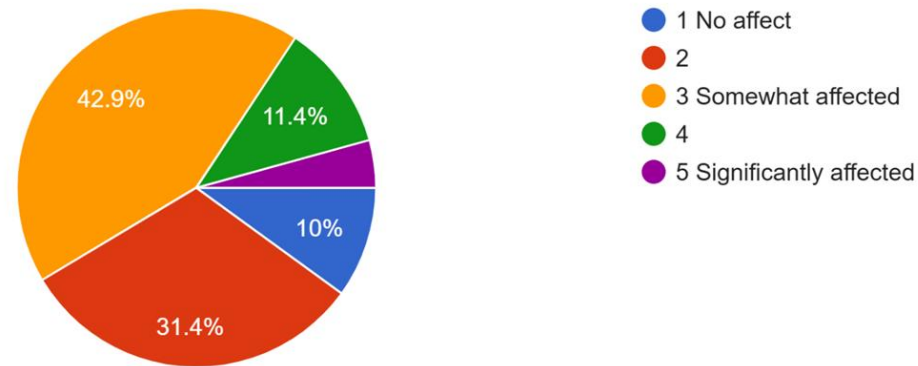
“Frustrated more than anything
that I was not perfect”

“sad, anxious, upset, fight
or flight”

“Unmotivated and disappointed in myself”

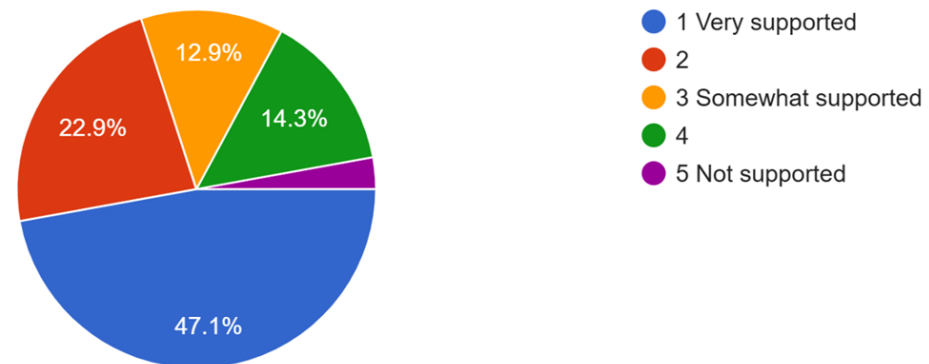
6. On a scale of 1-5, how significantly has Imposter Syndrome affected your learning?

70 responses



7. On a scale of 1-5, how supported have you felt by your Veterinary Technology instructors as it relates to Imposter Syndrome?

70 responses



- ***Encouragement:*** Offer frequent, constructive, and individualized feedback that recognizes effort and progress rather than just innate talent. Regular check-ins, being available for communication, and proactively reaching out to students can help create a safe, supportive environment where students feel seen and heard.
- ***Normalize Struggles and Vulnerability:*** Destigmatize imposter syndrome by discussing its commonality and openly sharing personal stories of professional challenges or feelings of not belonging. Explicitly framing mistakes and academic difficulties as natural parts of the learning process—rather than personal failures—helps alleviate student anxiety.
- ***Foster Connection and Awareness:*** Encourage student-to-student interaction to build community and prevent isolation. Integrating awareness of imposter syndrome into the curriculum, such as through dedicated discussions or mental health resources, can further support students in navigating their academic journey.

"Instructors can support us experiencing imposter syndrome by framing academic challenges and mistakes as standard parts of the learning process rather than personal failures. Also, help with self-doubt by shifting their feedback away from innate talent and focusing instead on individual effort and personal growth over time. Building personal trust through one-on-one check-ins creates a safe space for students to voice their anxieties without fear of judgment."

"I think talking about it helps"

**Sharing experiences of their own
where they felt as if they didn't
belong in the field.**

"Letting us know that it is
okay for us to make
mistakes because we are
still learning."

"I know it would be a difficult thing to ask, but I think something that would make a huge difference is shouting out achievements, recognizing good work. Giving out more personalized feedback would be great, too. I only say this because since this is an online program, you lose a lot of that personal connection between student and teacher. And speaking for myself, that is a huge aspect for me to feel motivated and connected to what I'm doing."



Reflection Questions

- Have you experienced imposter syndrome?
- How has it affected your teaching?
- How has it affected your students?
- What strategies have worked?

A photograph of three people in a modern office setting. A woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a black t-shirt, is standing and giving a high-five to a woman with long blonde hair wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. A man with dark hair, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt, is sitting at a wooden conference table and smiling. On the table are two laptops, a glass of water, and a dark coffee cup. Large windows in the background show a cityscape.

Practical Takeaways

What Can We Do Tomorrow?

- For students
 - Encourage questions
 - Normalize mistakes
 - Celebrate progress
- For educators
 - Practice vulnerability
 - Build supportive faculty relationships
 - Focus on growth, not perfection

Key Takeaways



Imposter syndrome affects all experience levels.



Students and educators experience it differently—but with similar outcomes.



Confidence grows through support, practice, and reflection.



Small changes in our teaching can have lasting effects.

Thank You

Questions?

- Sarah Charles, M.Ed., RVT, FVTE, CPEP
 - charlesse@appstate.edu
- Amberly Lovitt, DVM
 - Lovittay@ucmail.uc.edu

"You belong here. Your students do too."

Resources

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