

# Parks Aviation Safety Newsletter



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## *Combating Imposter Syndrome in the Cockpit*

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Have you ever felt like you are not good enough? That you don't have the skills or competence to successfully perform during a flight? Is it hard to visualize yourself flying for an airline or getting that dream job one day? If so, you are most likely feeling what is known as "imposter syndrome." This term comes from Dr. Pauline Clance, a psychologist, who studied the phenomenon and discovered 70% of people suffer from imposter syndrome. The self-doubt feelings encountered with imposter syndrome are heavily prevalent in high-achieving people, members of minority groups, and students.



Flight training, let alone flight training at a Part 141 university, is both arduous and at times unforgiving. It is evident there are quite high standards we as students are held to in this training program. Some students might wish to exceed these standards to the point they become unrealistic and other students may suffer from a lack of confidence. No matter where you may stand, it is important to know you are not alone. These are common feelings in student pilots which correlates to self-handicapping according to an Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University study called "What Type of Collegiate Pilot is Likely to Experience Imposter Phenomenon?"<sup>1</sup>

In the desired path towards becoming professional pilots many of us share, the character required of a pilot seldom permits a weak appearance. The vast majority of us can agree that we don't openly choose to talk about insecurities and instead we allow ourselves to internalize them. If you find yourself fighting imposter syndrome, I encourage you to have the necessary conversations with your friends, family, flight instructor, or an individual you feel will support you. Without bringing these feelings to light, one is unable to grow their mindset and as a result they will reach difficulties in maximizing their performance.

However, there are things you can do on your own to be proactive in countering imposter syndrome. The first step you can take is ensuring you are proficient in stick and rudder skills, procedures, checklists, airspace, and aircraft knowledge. We all have received the infamous "what's the difference between currency and proficiency" question on a check ride and we know the dangers of prolonged periods of not flying or not brushing up on ground knowledge. Another piece of advice is to reaffirm your abilities with positive statements such as being capable of passing. If you find yourself facing a setback or failure, understand that it is a part of the process and these tribulations accompany great learning opportunities for the future. With every situation, there is always something positive, so focus on that and how you can better prepare yourself for the future. Lastly, understand what is factual such as passing the exam or possessing a certificate. The feelings you feel are not always true and may not be an accurate representation of yourself or your abilities.

Ultimately, these years are fundamental opportunities for learning and growth to mold us into successful and competent professional pilots. Determine what works best for you and do not be afraid to speak up if something does not feel right.

1: <https://commons.erau.edu/jaaer/vol29/iss3/3/>