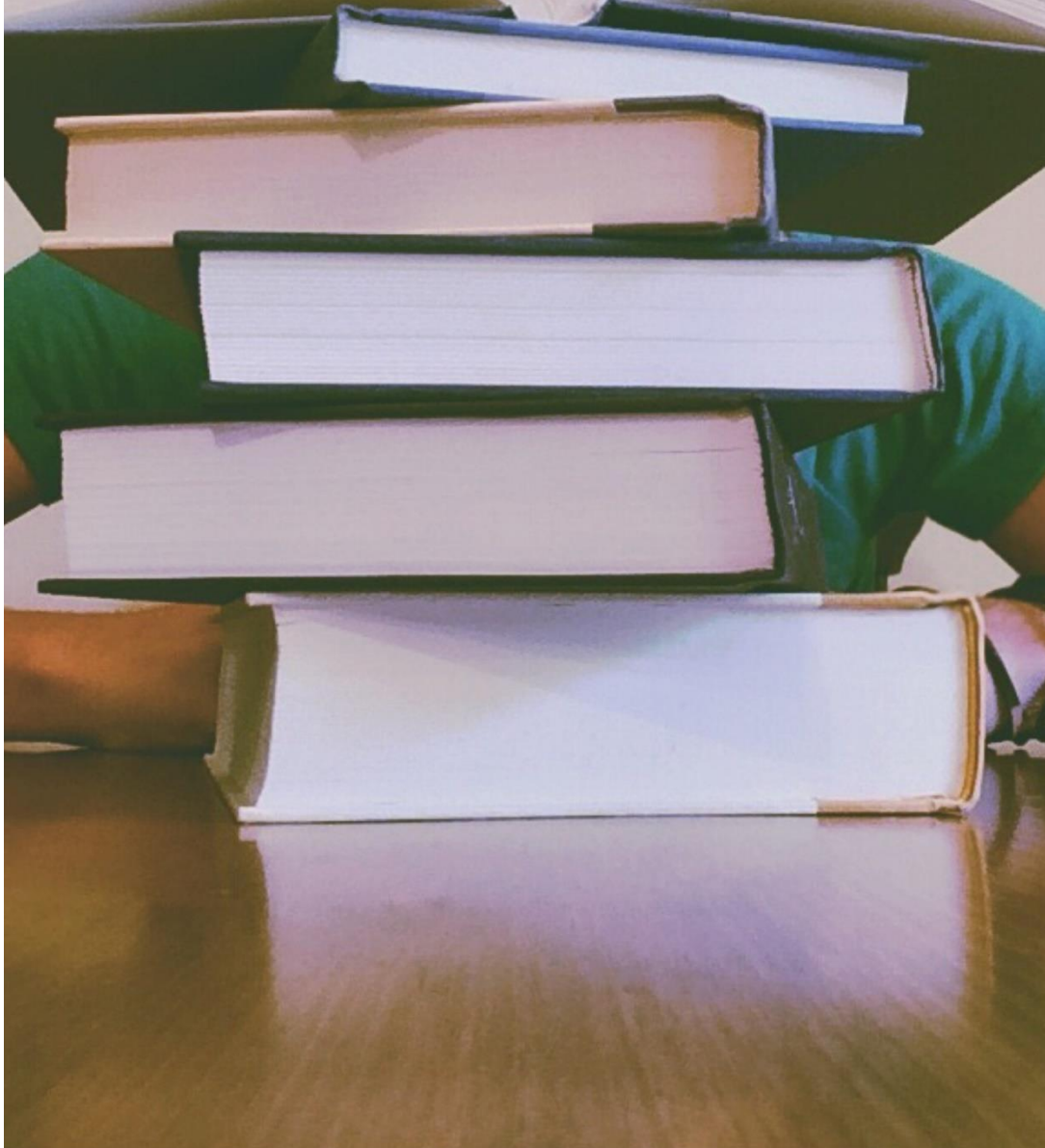


Dealing with Perfectionism



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Are you a perfectionist? There's nothing wrong with wanting things in your life just so, wanting things beautiful, wanting everything done right, and wanting to work hard to achieve great goals. However, there is no such thing as perfect, which is what so many people forget. You can't have a perfect home or a perfect life or do a job perfectly. Mistakes are made, flaws are present, and every day is not perfect. If your perfectionism is severe, it might have a negative effect on your mental health. Do you think your desire to have everything perfect all the time is hindering your ability to live a good life?

1. Your Views of Perfectionism and How They Affect Your Life

Set high standards for yourself in every area of your life. You don't want low standards to live by, but you cannot set high standards and expect perfectionism from each of them. There will never be a perfect job or a perfect mate. You will never look perfect or behave perfectly, and nothing will ever happen perfectly. Set high standards, and learn how to re-evaluate them as needed to allow for small imperfections.

Pressure and Perfectionism

Your high standards are not your problem, but it's your perception of reality that is a problem. If you believe you cannot go through life if things are not just so, done this way, or appear that way, you are putting too much pressure on yourself. For example, if you cannot leave your home without everything being put away and all things looking perfectly clean, you might put a lot of pressure on yourself if you're already running late when you realize you need to clean up behind your kids.

Now you're late for work, your kids are late for school, and what did you get out of this? A clean house is what you got, but is that worth the detention your kids must now attend or the reprimand your boss issued when you rushed into the office 10 minutes late for a meeting?

If you put pressure on yourself to achieve perfection, you're going to get perfection. Unfortunately, you're going to get perfection in only the area on which you're focused. The rest of your life is going to fall apart.

Mental Health and Perfectionism

You'll drive yourself crazy if you want things perfect and don't allow any room for mistakes. You do want things to be perfect, and there's nothing wrong with that. You must simply allow yourself to understand that there will be things that prevent perfection. Until you understand that, you might just suffer from depression, anxiety,

stress, and even health issues that affect your physical body, your emotional health, and even the relationships you have with the people you love.

It's not easy to give up the idea that perfection does exist, but you cannot live like this if you want to maintain a happy and well-balanced lifestyle. You cannot live this way if you want to be healthy. It's time to face your fears and learn what makes you feel this way, fix the problem, and learn to talk yourself out of being perfect all the time.

2. Signs You Might Be a Perfectionist

While living your life as a perfectionist, you may not realize the toll perfectionism can take on your physical and emotional well-being. The quest for personal perfection often leaves the perfectionist with internalized feelings of self-doubt, low self-esteem and fear. If you are a perfectionist, you may recognize these signs and symptoms.

You Perceive Everything in Black and White

For the perfectionist, the world is black and white. You see only two sides to everything, the right or wrong, good or bad. You take first place, or the competition is lost. There is no middle ground and grey areas are unacceptable. Because of this black and white belief system, anything less than perfection is a failure in your eyes. You fear that mistakes prove you unworthy.

You Have Unrealistic or Demanding Standards

If you are a perfectionist, you may feel an unhealthy sense of competition. The expectations and amount of pressure you put on yourself are not always reasonable. You may set unrealistic goals causing you to feel stressed, anxious and fearful of imagined failures lurking around the corner.

Rather than enjoying the journey or process of an activity, you focus only on the outcome. You play to win, but may shun activities when you feel that others could out-perform you. You may also procrastinate projects when you fear that you may not excel.

You Are Highly Critical of Yourself and Others

Perfectionists are often as critical of others as they are of themselves. You may find that you are intolerant of other people's shortcomings. You may feel angry or resentful when other people fall short of your high expectations.

Since you may believe in only one right path to any goal, you may feel it necessary to do most tasks on your own, rather than trust, delegate or ask for assistance. You may also believe that asking for help is admitting failure.

You Believe You are not Enough on Your Own

As a perfectionist, your self-esteem and your perceived value to others are proven by your most recent accomplishments. You may respond to this belief by setting your

standards even higher and working even harder to accomplish more. You might wrongfully believe that your value in this world is reduced any by error or oversight.

These are a few examples of the beliefs and difficulties that haunt the perfectionist. Your quest for perfection does not need to continue. Recognizing some of your perfectionist tendencies could be your first step to creating more realistic expectations for yourself. You could begin living your life with less self-doubt and less self-induced stress when you allow yourself to be less than perfect.

3. Perfectionism: Finding a Healthy Balance

Perfectionism is a continuous obsession to be perfect. Perfectionists obsess over one thing that must remain perfect at all times due to a fear of failure. Common things to obsess over include (but not limited to) career, social acceptance, life goals, body image, academics, sports, or facial appearance. To avoid falling into the perfectionism cycle, practice these tips daily.

Embrace Mistakes

In school, various teachers emphasize mistakes and failures are bad while successes are good. This mentality created many perfectionists who won't try new things. In life, mistakes and failure are lessons. If people viewed mistakes and failure as a teaching tool, it makes setbacks easier to accept. Schools are adapting to life's teachings, so perfectionists should embrace life's teachings too.

Erase the Uncompromising Approach

Why add an all-or-nothing stipulation to everything? The correct question to ask is "why is there an all-or-nothing stipulation?" Life is infinite. Life's vantage point offers boundless possibilities to solve a problem that the mind didn't examine. There's room for compromise or happy mediums. Perfectionists cannot fathom that because they demand total control over their lives. Still, perfectionists can break the inflexible approach if they embrace mistakes and failure first.

Focus on the Journey

Obsessive perfectionists stressing over a real or imaginary destination is never satisfying. A satisfying outlook is appreciating the journey by smelling every rose. Concentrate on self-fulfillment and purpose and enjoy the process. Understand that progress and results will come, but it won't arrive on a set timetable.

Stop Comparing Yourself to Others

With little evidence, perfectionists assume the best of everyone else and the worst of themselves. This creates comparisons, which leads to competition, which leads to rash decision-making, which leads to consequences and reverberations. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, websites, and social media add fuel to a perfectionist's fire.

The reality is everyone else is displaying a facade of his or her best selves without flaws. Besides, everyone has a separate race to run, and it doesn't coincide with your marathon. Therefore, say positive things daily, show self-gratitude, and focus on your journey. People comparisons are detours and dead ends designed to prevent and hinder personal success.

Reward Yourself

Congratulate yourself on small and big accomplishments by spoiling yourself on self-indulgence and incentives often. A cheat day, a spa, a vacation, a massage, and a baseball game are great examples of rewarding pleasures. Celebrate (for example) a test passed, a winning bid, a job promotion, or advice that worked like a charm. The rewards system is beneficial for recharging batteries too.

Perfectionism is beneficial when used correctly and self-destructive when used incorrectly. Find a healthy balance between ambition and perfectionism with these reality checks above. Breaking perfectionism requires baby steps taken one situation at a time. Surround yourself with a loving support system who will keep perfectionism far, far away.

4. Weeding Perfectionism Out of Your Life

It is not uncommon to want everything to run smoothly, however, some people take it to an extreme. Have you ever had friends or family label you as a perfectionist? It may be a badge you wear with pride. Sometimes, you can set standards so high, that they are even impossible for you. If perfectionism hinders your daily activities and goal planning, try some of these helpful hints for overcoming it:

Stop Taking Yourself So Seriously

Do you base every decision on what others may think? While we can consider other people's opinions, the ultimate decision is ours. Does it matter that all your glasses are turned the same way in the cabinet, or your car has a little ding in the bumper? Most of the things you fret about probably are not even noticed by others.

Take a breath, relax, and be yourself. Stop sabotaging your social life just because you think you think that nothing in your life "measures up". Give yourself the same courtesy that you would show to others. Instead of focusing on things that are not perfect in your life, concentrate on the blessings you have.

Do Not Use Perfectionism as an Excuse

How many times have you set aside your dreams and used perfectionism as an excuse? You may say that unless you can maintain a 4.0-grade average, you will not go back to school. What about hobbies you have wanted to pursue, or your dreams of

traveling? Your excuse may be that if it does not unfold as you planned, then forget it. These façades may hide the fact that you are nervous to try something new.

Write down some of your goals, and break them down into segments. Instead of dreading mistakes, embrace them as a chance to grow and learn. Celebrate each step to your final goal—whether it is perfect or not.

Let Up a Little on Others

Not only do perfectionists put unreal expectations on themselves, but they also apply them to others. Instead of being grateful and considerate of the people around you, do you constantly find fault and express disappointment in everyone? Maybe your parents were perfectionists, and their skewed reality affected you.

Giving people slack does not mean you give up on high standards. It means that you accept others as they are, and make the most of what you have. Offer your children loving guidance and encouragement instead of condemnation and criticism. Your relationship with family and friends will improve.

While you try to overcome perfectionism, remember that it is a process that will not be perfect. If you try too hard to change, then it can be self-defeating. Learn to take life as it comes, and enjoy every step of your journey.

5. 4 Tricks to Keep Perfectionism in Check on a Daily Basis

People who have never dealt with perfectionism might not think it's a terrible problem to have. After all, doesn't being a perfectionist make you more likely to be motivated and successful? On the contrary, perfectionism can make it hard to manage time and deal with everyday problems, as perfectionists often get hung trying to do even the least important tasks perfectly. Here are some tips to help you manage your perfectionism on a daily basis:

1. Prioritize

Perfectionists often spend far too much time trying to perform mundane tasks perfectly. One way to combat this is to prioritize your daily activities before you start working on any of them. List everything you need to do in order of importance, and try to tackle the most important tasks first--this way, if you're finding it hard to let yourself finish a task and move on, at least you'll be spending the extra time on something important.

2. Take Mistakes in Stride

If you're a perfectionist, you know that when you make a mistake, it can feel crippling and derail your productivity for the rest of the day. Making mistakes, however, is the best way to learn, so it's important to learn to take your mistakes in stride. Next time you mess something up, force yourself to analyze what you did wrong and figure out how to avoid the mistake next time.

For example, if you got a few questions wrong on a test, instead of worrying about the lower grade, figure out what you did wrong so you don't make the same mistake next time. It can be easy to get caught up on mistakes as a perfectionists, but try to remind yourself that by taking the time to learn from your mistakes, you can do things more 'perfectly' in the future.

3. Take a Perspective Break

Next time you find yourself panicking over a small detail that isn't perfect, try to take a step back and give yourself a 'perspective break.' This refers to the simple process of asking yourself how important a task really is, a trick that can be surprisingly helpful for perfectionists. By forcing yourself to acknowledge whether whatever you're doing is important in the long run, you'll be able to recognize when you're obsessing over less important tasks and save time for working on the things that actually matter.

4. Get a Friend's Take

Another way to keep your tasks and problems in perspective is to ask a friend for their take on things. If you're convinced that your room just doesn't look right no matter how you arrange it, for example, asking a friend what they think can show you if something is actually off or if it's just your inner perfectionist speaking. For people who find it hard to give themselves a perspective check, asking someone you know and trust for their opinion can make it easier to realize when the detail you're stuck on simply isn't a big deal.

6. Reward Progress Instead of Perfectionism

If anything proves that too much of a good thing isn't always great, the constant self-evaluation of a perfectionist is it. In striving to be at their best, people can often fall short of their expectations just by simply burning out while trying to steam ahead.

Instead of waiting to earn a reward only after every milestone is made, learn to reward each accomplishment as a step on the path towards progress.

Break It Down to Build Yourself Up

Struggling with perfectionism can often result in a lot of negative feelings and self-doubt. Evaluating your goals and breaking them down into manageable tasks or smaller accomplishments makes it easier to achieve you short-circuits in the end.

This short circuits sometimes grander expectations of getting everything done at once and teaches the mind to compartmentalize better. These micro-achievements build on each other to increase a sense of completion and comprehension, which can have a direct and positive impact on someone's self-esteem when they're struggling to feel they have it all under control.

In many cases, a goal may be lifelong or ongoing — which means looking at everything as only a work in progress instead of some peak to reach goes a long way towards easing stress.

Holding Yourself Accountable with Kindness

There's nothing wrong with striving for excellence, but if that comes at a cost to sanity or self-esteem, then somethings definitely not right. Staying kind and understanding about your own flaws and inconsistencies is key to sharing that generosity of spirit with others.

When you're your own worst enemy, you have firsthand knowledge of what makes you feel the most vulnerable and like a failure. While it's common for perfectionists to engage in harsh and demeaning self-talk, it's all the more powerful when they can use positive reinforcements instead.

Look back at your track record for the successes instead of the failures and know when to give yourself a break.

Stay Challenged Enough to Be Inspired

For the practiced perfectionist, advice that tells them to chill out and do as little as possible might as well be a punishment. There's a fine balance to strike between being an industrious individual and a stressed-out mess, though.

Scheduling each day with a reliable routine and some basic structure helps a lot of people keep a sense of accomplishment going on an everyday level. Plugging in special projects, ideas or necessary tasks into this daily schedule can manage those higher functioning goals working despite any ups and downs throughout the weeks.

Understanding how to compartmentalize expectations using rotating schedules and a fair measure of time management helps keep you busy but flexible in case changes or challenges to your plan arise.

7. How to Use Your Journal to Help You Ease Your Desire to Be Perfect

Journaling is one of the most therapeutic ways to change your life. It relieves stress, it helps you gather your thoughts into one place, and it even helps you work through your issues as you simply write them down. Journaling is beneficial in so many ways, but did you know it can also help you with your perfectionist tendencies? Here's how to use journaling to help you with your perfectionism.

Spend a Few Minutes Each Day with Your Journal

The most important thing to do here is to spend time each day with your journal. You can draw a picture, tell a story, write out your frustrations, or even focus on detailing

your day. Whatever comes to your mind is what you can write down. Now you want to make it a point to go back and read your entries every few weeks to see what you said.

You might begin to notice patterns. Perhaps you feel stressed so much it changes your handwriting. Does your writing clue you into what is stressing you out? Does your mood change and shift based on certain things you did, said, or bothered you on a specific day? Patterns are what help you learn more about yourself and how to change your life.

No One Reads This

Here is where your journal is really going to help your perfectionist traits. No one else ever reads it. It's all your private thoughts. You can write down about how much you hate when your mother-in-law visits because she is so critical of any imperfections. Over time, you will learn to recognize what sets you off and causes you to seek perfectionism.

Keep A List

Your journal is for whatever you want to use it for, but keeping a list in your journal is a nice way to learn more about yourself and help with your perfectionism. Keep a list of things you really want versus things you really need. Do you see a connection? Sometimes seeing what you need in life versus what you want in life helps you realize it's all right to settle for your needs and work on your wants. This helps your goals, and it helps you overcome your perfectionism.

The purpose of a journal is to help you get your thoughts out of your mind and onto paper. Sometimes that's enough to calm you down and talk you off the ledge that's bothering you. Other times it is not enough, and sometimes it takes more time. Perfectionism comes from a place of not feeling in control of certain aspects of your life so you look for other areas of your life in which you can control. Journaling can help you identify these problems and work on changing your life.