

PERFECTIONISM

- Does nothing you do seem good enough?
- Do you constantly postpone things for the sake of doing better?
- Do you believe that everything you do must be 100%, otherwise you will fail?

If these are what you are experiencing, you may be trying to be perfect. Perfectionism is a collection of thoughts and feelings that aim at reaching unrealistic, extremely high standards and that harm the person.

Vicious Circle of Perfectionism

1. Perfectionists set unattainable goals. 2. However, the constant pressure to reach the perfect reduces productivity and efficiency. 3. With extremely high standards and pressure, failure is inevitable. Constant failure generates feelings of guilt. Moreover, it may cause anxiety-related problems and depression.

Reasons of Perfectionism

- Fear of Failure: Perfectionists usually consider the failure at reaching their aims as equivalent to lack of self-worth.
- Fear of Making Mistakes: Making a mistake and failure are the same for perfectionists.
- Fear of Disapproval: Perfectionists believe that they won't be accepted because of their flaws. Trying to be perfect is a way of protecting self from criticism, rejection and disapproval.
- All-or-nothing: Perfectionists believe that their work has no value when it is not perfect.
- Overemphasis on shoulds/shouldn'ts: The life of a perfectionist is constructed around an endless should/shouldn't list that include rigid rules about how to carry on.
- Believing that others reach success easily: Perfectionists believe that people other than them reach success with minimum effort, error, stress and maximum self-confidence.

Interpersonal Relationships of Perfectionists

Perfectionists are afraid of being disapproved and rejected. Because of this fear, they automatically defend themselves against criticism and alienate others by enraging them.

They apply their unrealistic, extremely high standards also to people around them and be critical and pushy. For this reason, perfectionists have difficulty with intimacy and they have unsatisfactory relationships.

Chasing Success in a Healthy Way

People, who run after healthy aims, set their goals according to their own wish, rather than others' expectations. Their aims are realistic, internal and attainable.

When they are not approved or when they fail, their reaction is specific to that situation; they do not make general inferences about their self-worth.

What to do about perfectionism?

The first step is to recognize that perfectionism is an undesirable characteristic. The next step is to try changing the thoughts and behaviors that support perfectionism.

Some of the methods below may help:

- Set realistic and attainable goals, which depend on what you want and need. This will make you succeed and increase your self-confidence.
- Set subsequent goals. When you reach one, set the next goal one level above your current condition.
- Test your success standards. Choose an activity and aim 60% success, instead of 100%. This will show you that failing to be perfect is not the end of the world.
- Concentrate on the process, not on the outcome. Assess your success not just by what you have accomplished but also by how much you enjoyed doing it.
- Use the feelings of anxiety and depression as an opportunity to ask yourself this type of questions: "Am I expecting the impossible from myself?"
- Face the fear behind your perfectionism: "What am I afraid of? What is the worst thing that can be happen?"
- When you make a mistake, ask yourself what you can learn from this experience.
- Get rid of the all-or-nothing thinking regarding your goals. Learn to distinguish things that are more important to you from the unimportant ones and give priority to them.

You will notice that your life will be much easier when you try these suggestions.

For More Information

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