

Managing Unhealthy Perfectionism

Unhealthy Perfectionism is a personality style characterized by striving for flawlessness and perfection. It is driven by internal pressure to avoid failure, criticism, and a way to gain a sense of control when in reality the person may feel unsettled. Perfectionism is often accompanied by shame, which is internalized negatively against the measure of self-worth; leaving the individual feeling embarrassed, humiliated, and not good enough when the task is completed, whether or not feedback is provided. Refusal to engage in a task or challenge and/or procrastination is often a coping strategy of perfectionism, and used as a way of eliminating the risk of failure or criticism.

Begin by asking yourself the following questions

- What are the benefits and the barriers of your perfectionism?
- Close your eyes and imagine what your life would be like if you were 20% less perfectionistic.
- How does your perfectionism get in the way of the perfect life?
- What is the difference between good enough and perfect?
- What are you afraid you'd lose and what do you think you would gain if you were less perfect?
- When is good enough - enough?
- How much time do you spend trying to make it perfect and it's only 3% better? Does anyone even notice the 3%?
- What is important? Is it progress toward your goal or perfect completion at a later time?
- Consider this; if you were on your death bed, what do you imagine your biggest regret would be?

Strategies for easing perfectionism

- Identify the source of your perfectionism and seek support through your EAP or counseling.
- Remember, criticism and/or feedback is someone's opinion. Keep the opinion in perspective and about the work, not your character.
- Pay attention to your self-talk. Is it kind? Is it true? Is it useful? If not, start changing your inner voice and practice self-compassion.
 - Check out the [Mindfulness Basics](#) and the [Self-Regulation Real Goals](#) for more information on self-compassion.
- Break the habit of "all or nothing" thinking. Setbacks will happen. There are more than two possible outcomes and often that space in between will hold different options.
- Identify who in your life is more focused on fun and being in the moment vs. "production." Take some time to have fun with them and get out of your head and into the moment and enjoy the experience.
- Consider when you are most productive and use this time to act.
- Limit the number of times or how much will spend editing, preparing, etc.

- Determine what really needs to be perfect and what doesn't. If it's not going to matter next week, next month, or even next year, then consider practicing a "good enough" effort.
- Progress over perfection. Reframe your work as a work in progress vs. getting it "right" the first time.
- Use a rough draft and brainstorm, without worrying about the proper order of the content.
- Schedule "no work" times (date night, Sundays, no work after 8) instead of waiting until finished to play or relax.

For other resources, go to: deancare.com/wellness/real-goals

For help to translate or understand this, please call (800) 279-1301. (TTY dial 711)