

## Perfectionism and Mental Health

Perfectionism can lead people to develop mental health issues such as anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (otherwise known as OCD), and eating disorders, to name a few. Some signs that people demonstrate when dealing with this are self-criticism, sensitivity to criticism from others, the constant need for order and neatness, overworking to meet high expectations, inability to relax or let go of control, and regular procrastination. Believing that one can only be happy if perceived as perfect. Being afraid to make mistakes, which prevents one from living a healthy lifestyle.

### Learn About It

In psychology, perfectionism is a personality style characterized by imposing unrealistic expectations to strive towards perfection/flawlessness and hold oneself to impossible high standards. This makes people believe their self-worth depends on being seen as "perfect."

There are different types of perfectionism, three in particular. The first one is self-oriented perfectionism, the second one is other-oriented, and the last one is socially-prescribed perfectionism.

#### OTHER-ORIENTED PERFECTIONISM (PAGE 2)

This is characterized by individuals imposing unrealistic standards on those around them, and consequently being judgmental and evaluating them critically.

#### SOCIALLY-PREScribed PERFECTIONISM (PAGE 3)

Socially-prescribed perfectionism is when people believe that those around them (society) expects them to be perfect. They believe that to be valuable in a given space, they should not make mistakes in order to not be judged by those around them.

#### SELF-ORIENTED PERFECTIONISM (PAGE 4)

Defined as irrationally placing an importance on being perfect, having high expectations about oneself, and holding harsh self-evaluations.



### REMEMBER!

The goal isn't to achieve perfection, but to strive for improvement and enjoy the process of it. Failures and mistakes are part of being complex humans! Your value as a person isn't measured by whether you are perfect or not. There are many things that contribute to who you are. You are much more than a GPA, test grade, or achievements!

# OTHER-ORIENTED PERFECTIONISM

## What Is Other-Oriented Perfectionism?

This type of perfectionism is characterized by people imposing unrealistic standards on those around them, and consequently being judgmental and evaluating them critically.

## What Does It Look Like?

### CRITICISM OF OTHERS

People who are other-oriented perfectionists tend to set unrealistic perfectionism towards other people like friends or family members. They might set themselves as flawless, as the standard; therefore, they will view those around them as defective.

### UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Another effect of this type of perfectionism is unhealthy relationships. People with other-oriented perfectionism often lack soft skills, such as empathy. This can cause an imbalance because of the lack of honest and trustful communication due to people not wanting to disappoint those around them.



## Tips and Tricks



### What You Can And Can't Control

Start by understanding what is within you to control such as your response or attitude towards how others behave and act, which is something you cannot control

### Everyone Works Differently

Everyone has their own working style. A key point when working with others is being able to compromise. It is important to give grace to each other when working together.

### Handling Criticism

There is an important difference in how criticism is given. Constructive criticism means giving feedback in a positive, healthy manner, and it might even provide solutions in a healthy way. Destructive criticism is negative feedback that harms and undermines the person on the receiving end.



## REMEMBER!

The goal isn't to try to control everything around you in order to feel that things are going perfectly. Instead, approach situations as opportunities to learn from those who work differently from you, to exercise empathy and patience, and to allow yourself and others to learn from their mistakes.

# SOCIALLY-PRESCRIBED PERFECTIONISM

## What Is Socially Prescribed Perfectionism?

This type of perfectionism is characterized by people imposing unrealistic standards on those around them, and consequently being judgmental and evaluating them critically. They may believe that must be perfect to receive approval from those around them.

## What Does It Look Like?

### SELF-DOUBT AND LACK OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

Especially in a school setting, perfectionists tend to overwork themselves and become overachievers to the point of burnout. This is because they might value themselves through academic measures. Their surroundings could also contribute to that, such as parents and/or teachers upholding certain expectations like being a straight-A student.

### ALLOWING SOCIETY TO DICTATE YOUR LIFESTYLE

Some people have difficulties hypersensitive to the needs, preferences, and expectations of other people and have an intense fear of upsetting or disappointing others. In other words, perfectionists have a hard time pleasing people in order to appear as perfect and that they can do it all.



## Tips and Tricks

### Stop Excessive Checking

Not only can this be time consuming, it will also lead you to constantly doubt yourself and your abilities.

It can prevent you from having time to yourself. Instead, after you turned in or completed an assigned task, wait for feedback to correct any changes!

### Focus On Doing What You Love

This can start with you taking the time to do the things that you enjoy. It also means that you take on new tasks or new opportunities when you feel like they are appropriate for you, without worrying if you will disappoint your family, friends, or teachers.

### Have A Sense Of Humor!

It's okay to take some things in a light-hearted way. If you make a minor mistake like giving the wrong answer in class, it's okay to laugh it off! If you forgot to do or turn in an assignment, don't overthink it.. These things are bound to happen.

## REMEMBER!

It's okay to set boundaries with those around you. What matters most is how you feel. You know yourself best and what you are willing to take on. Don't forget to do things that bring you joy. It is not your responsibility to fulfill standards or expectations that others have placed on you!

# SELF-ORIENTED PERFECTIONISM

## What Is Self-Oriented Perfectionism?

Self-oriented perfectionism is defined as irrationally placing an importance on being perfect, having high expectations about oneself, and holding harsh self-evaluations.

This desire to be perfect can lead people to fixate on finding flaws in themselves. Individuals who struggle with perfectionism avoid situations where they might appear as “imperfect.”

## What Does It Look Like?

### DISSATISFACTION WITH PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

One way that self-oriented perfectionists display having low satisfaction with themselves is by not being content with themselves because they believe they aren't good enough. They might find certain aspects about themselves as not presentable. For example, if they are dealing with acne, they might believe that everyone is judging and looking at them.

### SELF PUNISHMENT

Self-oriented perfectionists deprive themselves from enjoying everyday things or simple human needs because they believe they don't deserve it. This mainly happens when they failed to meet a goal, so they punish themselves as a result for not being able to meet their high expectations.

“Due to the self-oriented perfectionism I developed, I could produce high-quality work frequently. And although I expected myself to be perfect most of the time, I also understand when there's a time that I have to give in and accept the fact that I will not do everything right the first time.”

- Brialis Phan, 2022  
Mental Health Advocacy Academy

## REMEMBER!

It all takes time. Don't expect to see and adapt to the changes you are trying to implement overnight. Everyday we grow as human beings. The goal is to set healthy boundaries and give grace to yourself!

## Tips and Tricks

### The “Perfect Body Image”

Influencers and celebrities alter the photos of what their bodies actually look like. We cannot compare ourselves to people who have makeup artists and stylists working for them at all times. All bodies are beautiful, and skin has texture! Acne, stretch marks, weight fluctuation are all part of the human experience!

### Enjoy The Big And Small Joys Of Life

Find a healthy middle ground between over achievement and high performance. It is okay to make mistake, that's how people learn. Enjoy the process of growth regardless of the outcome you get! Don't lose yourself while trying to attain a certain image. Let go of the all-or-nothing attitude!

### Celebrate Yourself!

Take the time to reflect and celebrate your growth and achievements. Do you like pampering yourself? Do your skincare routine, do your makeup, go out with friends! Understand that rest is something that you need, not something you earn. Celebrate all of your big and small victories!



# PUT IT INTO PRACTICE!

Try these activities to help motivate positive change in your daily practices



## ACTIVITY 1: Week Trial Method

- Set 1-2 goals you want to achieve in Week 1. Remember that they have to be reasonable and reachable.
- Goals can be related to your personal, academic, and/or extracurricular life.
- You have a one-week time frame until the goal is achieved.
- Weren't able to complete it? That's OK! Keep trying until achieved or revise your goals.
- Change goals as you achieve them or need to revise.

*The idea of this is not to stress, overwhelm, or overwork yourself, but to enjoy the process of being mindful.*



## ACTIVITY 2: Gratitude Jar

- For each day of the week in which you are doing the Week Trial Method, write a kind message to yourself or about yourself. These messages can be about something you are grateful for or something you did well on a particular day.
- These seven messages need to be written on separate pieces of paper and put into a jar prior to starting Activity 1. You can replace the messages as you'd like. Get creative!
- The message has to be positive and free of judgment.
- Examples: You did well today! Thank you for getting through the day! You did your best in class/at work.
- Read the message even if you didn't achieve the goal. Be kind to yourself!

*The goal is to celebrate yourself, even if you didn't complete the goal during the trial week.*



## ACTIVITY 3: Write It Down

- At the end of each day, write down any phrases that you came off as judgmental or negative. Under those same phrases, write the positive version of it.
- Example: I didn't participate in class as much as I should have (X).
- I participated to the best of my abilities during today's class (O).
- Take the positive sentences/phrases and write them together on a different piece of paper.
- Read the entire paragraph out loud and congratulate and reward yourself.

*Some examples of rewards can be watching your favorite movie, going for ice cream, or doing your favorite activity.*

For more information, please visit the **Your Voice is Your Power** website at <https://www.activeminds.org/your-voice-is-your-power-hs-edition/>