

What is Perfectionism?



Perfectionism is the belief that everything must be perfect all the time. A perfectionist sets *impossible* goals, and feels crushed when they are not achieved. Alternatively, someone who strives to do their best sets challenging but achievable goals.

Perfectionism	vs.	Striving for Excellence
Believes that everything must be perfect all the time.		Understands that some situations call for perfection (e.g. performing surgery), but other situations do not (e.g. choosing an outfit).
Spends excessive time on trivial problems.		Focuses time on the most important problems.
Sets impossible standards for success, and feels upset when they are not met.		Sets standards that are challenging but achievable, and feels content when they are met.
Motivated by the fear of failure, criticism, or rejection.		Motivated by the potential for success and happiness.
Sees self only in extremes, as either perfect or a failure.		Sees self from a balanced perspective, with both strengths and weaknesses.

Challenges of Perfectionism

Difficulty making decisions, then second-guessing or regretting decisions.	Difficulty with commitment, such as in relationships or choosing a career.
Avoidant of risks and new experiences out of fear of failure.	Self-esteem is dependent on meeting impossible standards.

Other Information

- Perfectionism contributes to problems such as procrastination, stress, anxiety, and depression.
- It is possible to be perfectionistic in one area of life but not in others.
- Perfectionism is a personality trait caused by both environmental and biological factors (e.g. upbringing and genetics). Despite being a personality trait, perfectionism can be changed.
- Therapy is effective at reducing perfectionism. Therapy can be used to explore one's strengths, develop more balanced thinking, and improve self-esteem.