

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is often defined as the need to be or appear to be perfect, or even to believe that it's possible to achieve perfection. 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.

It is typically viewed as a positive trait rather than a flaw. People may use the term "healthy perfectionism" to describe or justify perfectionistic behaviour.

Signs you might be a perfectionist

Most people engage in perfectionism from time to time or in certain areas of life. People who are nearly full-time perfectionists may feel the need to achieve perfection constantly. They might also:

- Not be able to perform a task unless they know they can do it perfectly.
- View the end product as the most important part of any undertaking. As a result, they may focus less on the process of learning or completing a task to the best of their ability.
- Not see a task as finished until the result is perfect according to their standards.
- Procrastinate. People with perfectionism may not want to begin a task until they know they can do it perfectly.
- Take an excessive amount of time to complete a task that does not typically take others long to complete.

Examples of perfectionist behaviour

Most people want to achieve success, but working hard to reach your goals does not always indicate perfectionistic behaviour. People who are perfectionists typically believe that nothing they do is worthwhile unless it is perfect. Instead of being proud of their progress, learning, or hard work, they might constantly compare their work to the work of others or fixate on achieving flawless output.

Even when people with perfectionistic traits get their desired results, they may still be unsatisfied. They may feel that if they truly were perfect, they would not have had to work so hard to achieve their goals.

Some examples of perfectionism include:

- Spending 30 minutes writing and rewriting a two-sentence email.
- Believing that missing two points on a test is a sign of failure.
- Difficulty being happy for others who are successful.
- Holding oneself to the standards of others' accomplishments or comparing oneself unfavourably and unrealistically to others.
- Skipping class or avoiding a chore because it is pointless to make an effort unless perfection can be achieved.
- Focusing on the end product rather than the process of learning.
- Avoiding playing a game or trying a new activity with friends for fear of being shown up as less than perfect.

The **What is Perfectionism?** resource explains the difference between perfectionism and a healthy level of hard work, along with other helpful information. Using this worksheet will help you to gain insight into perfectionism, and learn to differentiate between reasonable and unreasonable expectations.

Resources:

What is perfectionism?

Perfectionism

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/perfectionism>

How perfectionism affects your mental health

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323323#How-perfectionism-affects-our-overall-health>

10 ways to overcome perfectionism

<https://oregoncounseling.com/article/10-ways-to-overcome-perfectionism/>