

# **Self help matters.**

Helping you to find your solutions

## **Perfectionism**

# Perfectionism

Perfectionism refers to a set of self-defeating thoughts and behaviours aimed at reaching excessively high and unrealistic goals. Perfectionism is often mistakenly seen in our society as desirable or even necessary for success. However, perfectionist attitudes actually interfere with success. The desire to be perfect can both rob you of a sense of personal satisfaction and cause you to fail to achieve.

If you are a perfectionist, it is likely that you learned early in life that other people valued you because of how much you accomplished or achieved. As a result you may have learned to value yourself only on the basis of other people's approval. Therefore, your self-esteem may have come to be based primarily on external standards. This can leave you vulnerable and excessively sensitive to the opinions and criticism of others. In attempting to protect yourself from such criticism, you may decide that being perfect is your only defence.

A number of negative feelings, thoughts, and beliefs may be associated with perfectionism, such as fear of failure, fear of making mistakes, fear of disapproval, all-or-nothing thinking, over-emphasis on "shoulds" and believing that others are easily successful.

Perfectionists tend to perceive others as achieving success with a minimum of effort, few errors, little emotional stress, and maximum self-confidence. At the same time, perfectionists view their own efforts as unending and forever inadequate – they never achieve the unrealistic goals which they set themselves so the vicious circle continues, leading to self-critical and self-blaming behaviour which results in lower self-esteem, and may trigger anxiety and depression.

## Top Tips

**Journey.** Focus on the process of doing an activity not just on the end result. Evaluate your success in terms of what you accomplished and how much you enjoyed it. Recognise that there can be value in the process of pursuing a goal.

**Healthy Striving.** Healthy goal-setters and healthy strivers tend to set goals based on their own needs and wants rather than in response to external expectations. Their goals are usually just one step beyond what they have already accomplished. Their goals are realistic, internal, and potentially attainable. When they experience disapproval or failure, their reactions are generally limited to specific situations rather than generalised to their entire self-worth.

**Reality check.** Being “perfect” is undesirable, impossible, counter-productive, selfish, self-defeating and an illusion.

**Goals.** Set realistic and reachable goals based on your own wants and needs and what you have accomplished in the past. This will enable you to achieve and also will lead to a greater sense of self-esteem.

**Chronology.** Set subsequent goals in a sequential manner. As you reach a goal, set your next goal one level beyond your present level of accomplishment.

**Test yourself.** Experiment with your standards for success. Choose any activity and instead of aiming for 100%, try for 90%, 80%, or even 60% success. This will help you to realise that the world does not end when you are not perfect.

**Emotional barometer.** Use feelings of anxiety and depression as opportunities to ask yourself, “Have I set up impossible expectations for myself in this situation?”

**Fear check.** Confront the fears that may be behind your perfectionism by asking yourself, “What am I afraid of? What is the worst thing that could happen?”

**Embrace mistakes.** Recognise that many positive things can only be learned by making mistakes. When you make a mistake ask, “What can I learn from this experience?”. More specifically, think of a recent mistake you have made and list all the things you can learn from it.

## Resources

### MOODZONE

Boost your mood, cope with stress, anxiety or depression or simply improve your overall emotional wellbeing.



**Opening Hours:** Online

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx)

### LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

Want to know how to feel happier, more confident & worry less right now? Would you like to learn new ways of dealing with what life throws at you?



**Opening Hours:** Online

<https://lltf.com/>

### MINDFULNESS FOR STUDENTS

Helping you to stay calm, focused & better manage the pressures of student life.



**Opening Hours:** Online

<http://mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk/>

### UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN SERVICES & SUPPORT

A range of support resources for everyone at University



[www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support)

### THE MIX

Provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile.



**Opening Hours:** Online

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

### TOGETHER ALL

Online community of people who are anxious, feeling low or not coping who support and help by sharing what's troubling them. This is a free, online, moderated service and confidential.



**Opening Hours:** Online

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

#### **If you are experiencing a crisis - please contact any of the following**

- **Emergency Services** - telephone 999 (Free) 24 hours
- **Samaritans** - telephone 116 123 (Free) 24 hours
- **Breathing Space** - telephone 0800 83 8587 (Free) Mon-Thu 6pm-2am, Fri-Sun 6pm-6am
- **Nightline** - telephone 01224 272829 (local rate) term-time only, between 20.00-08.00
- **NHS 24** - telephone 111 (Free) 24 hours

For other support resources, please see - [www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling)