

I USED TO BE A PERFECTIONIST NOW I

JUST WANT TO GET IT RIGHT!

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You know how it goes – you feel like what you achieve is never quite good enough - you go over and over the things that you have done because you want them to be right - you worry about whether the meal you cooked is up to scratch and you find yourself unable to stop thinking about that drop of ketchup on your jacket as you are sure everyone is thinking this is a sign of how inept you really are. You often feel you have to give more than 100 percent in everything you do otherwise you feel bad about yourself and see yourself as a failure.

You may not be aware of it but you suffer from what could be called “perfectitus”. Perfectionists spend all their time trying to do their best but end up feeling that they never quite succeed. What’s really sad is that all the current psychological research demonstrates that perfectionists are less likely than their realistic counterparts to achieve success and that even those that do are more likely to suffer from a host of stress-related problems.

If you recognise yourself above and would like to change your ways so you can become more successful, feel good about what you do and cut your risk of those nasty stress-related illness then the following tips will help you learn to develop a more realistic attitude to life.

- Human beings are imperfect and that *includes you!* There is no such thing as being 100% right, good, capable or strong. If you spend your life believing that perfection exists you will always be disappointed, unhappy, stressed and in danger of being depressed. There is nothing wrong with wanting to do things well but set yourself realistic rather than perfectionist standards.
- Stop comparing yourself to other people as this can only lead to resentment, frustration or disappointment. If you admire someone there is nothing wrong in modelling your behaviour on theirs – what did they do and how did they do it? Modelling is not the same as comparing yourself and it allows you to add your own unique personal style to the process. Remember there will always be people who are better than you and people who are worse – what's the point of comparing when you know it will only make you feel bad?

- No one is ever *all good* or *all bad*. Good people sometimes do bad things and bad people sometimes do good things. If you behave in a way that you think better about then apologise, explain and see what you can do to put things right. However, doing something you later regret does not make you a bad person just as doing one good deed does not make you a saint. If you keep on seeing yourself and/or others in this ‘all or nothing’ way you place unrealistic pressure on everyone. Being perfect isn’t just difficult for the person concerned but also for those around them – living with a perfectionist can be a tiring thing to do.
- Keep things in proportion. Blowing things out of proportion wastes time and energy – if you have made an error it is not the end of the world so start to tell yourself that. When you find yourself getting yourself all wound up about a situation ask yourself “what’s the worst that can happen” – you’d be amazed at how this simple question can help you keep things in proportion.
- Live a lifestyle that is supportive of your health – there is no point making yourself ill from overwork or abusing your body. If you do this you will diminish your confidence and probably shorten

your life. If you want to stop being a perfectionist you need to ensure you look after yourself so you have the energy to do the things you need to.

- Make sure you have non-perfectionists as friends and *listen* to what they say – they are likely to help keep your feet firmly on the ground pointing out when you are making unreasonable demands on yourself and others.
- Set goals for yourself that are designed to reduce not add pressure to your life. Decide what you want to change and how you will do it and make sure you praise yourself for what you have achieved. Perfectionists find it hard to praise themselves or others as they always focus on what they did not do or could have done better. However, more and more research shows that the better you feel about yourself the more you actually do and the less it takes out of you. Also, if you praise others they are more likely to do more not less for you.
- Recognise that change cannot be achieved overnight and that you need to keep on working at challenging those negative thoughts and behaviours. As a coach I have seen too many people damage

their progress because they expected too much too quickly and forgot that change takes time – if you find yourself thinking you are not changing fast enough it is likely that the old “perfectitus” is running riot.

- Spend time and money on yourself - you are worth it! Learn to pamper yourself. You probably spoil other people so why not yourself. So many people say they cannot find time for themselves and yet I have usually found that when I sit down with them and force them to find the time they do! It might only be 2 hours once a week but it's two hours to yourself. Remember that no one ever got to their deathbed wishing they had spent more time at the office or cleaning the house or washing the clothes! As a perfectionist you have to learn to spend time on yourself and that nothing awful happens if some things don't get done.

If you want more help or are interested in Life Coaching then you can contact The Association for Coaching at

www.associationforcoaching.com

The Association for Coaching is one of the UK's leading coaching bodies and has an on-line directory of coaches in the UK and Ireland.

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