

PERFECTION ISN'T PERFECT

Presenter: Adrienne Gratten

- **Welcome/Introduction**
- **Objectives:**
 - To understand the concept of perfectionism
 - To identify characteristics of perfectionism
 - To be able to implement strategies to combat perfectionism

Definitions

- **Perfectionism:** a personal standard, attitude, or philosophy that demands flawlessness and rejects anything less than perfect
- **Perfectionist:** a person who demands perfection of himself/herself or others and is displeased with anything that is not perfect or does not meet extremely high standards.

Myths and Realities

Myth: I wouldn't be the success I am today if I weren't such a perfectionist

Reality: Perfectionism does not lead to success and fulfillment. Although some perfectionists are remarkably successful, what they do not realize is that their success has been achieved despite-not because of-their compulsive striving.

Myth: Perfectionists get things done and they do things right.

Reality: Perfectionists often have problems with procrastination, missed deadlines, and low productivity.

Myth: Perfectionists are determined to overcome all obstacles to success.

Reality: Although perfectionists follow an "I'll-keep-trying-until-it's-perfect" credo, they are especially vulnerable to potentially serious difficulties such as depression, writer's block, and performance and social anxiety.

The First Step Is Admitting It

Put a check in the circle for all that apply.

- Does your child feel that what he/she accomplishes is never quite good enough?

- Does your child often put off handing in assignments or projects, waiting to get them just right?

- Does your child feel that he/she must give more than 100% on everything he/she does or else he/she will be mediocre or even a failure?

- Does your child often compare himself/herself with others?

- Does your child stay up extremely late in order to make sure that his/her assignments are perfect?

- Does your child procrastinate or refuse to do assignments or projects due to fear of not making the assignment or project perfect?

If you checked any of the circles, it is possible that rather than working toward success, your child may be trying to be perfect.

Characteristics of the "Perfect" Child

- Sets standards beyond reach and reason
- Is never satisfied by anything less than perfection
- Becomes dysfunctionally depressed when experiences failure or disappointment
- Is preoccupied with fear of failure and disapproval—this can deplete energy levels
- Sees mistakes as evidence of unworthiness
- Becomes overly defensive when criticized

The Harsh Reality

Perfectionists Are Vulnerable To The Following

Depression	Writer's Block
Loneliness	Frustration
Performance Anxiety	Anger
Obsessiveness	Impatience
Test Anxiety	Compulsiveness
Social Anxiety	Suicidal Thoughts

How Did This Happen!?!

Causes of Perfectionism

- Self Talk
- Fear of Failure
- Fear of making mistakes
- Fear of disapproval
- All or none thinking
- Believing that others are easily successful

The South Indian Monkey Trap: A Parable

One of the characteristics of perfectionists is their “value rigidity.” They refuse to let go of particular ideas, even in the face of obvious evidence to the contrary. Here is a fable illustrating the pitfalls of value rigidity, adapted from Robert Pirsig’s well-known work, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

The “South Indian Monkey Trap” was developed by villagers to catch the ever-present and numerous small monkeys in that part of the world. It involves a hollowed-out coconut chained to a stake. The coconut has some rice inside which can be seen through a small hole. The hole is just big enough so that the monkey can put his hand in, but too small for his fist to come out after he has grabbed the rice.

Tempted by the rice, the monkey reaches in and is suddenly trapped. He is not able to see that it is his own fist that traps him, his own desire for the rice. He rigidly holds on to the rice, because he values it. He cannot let go and by doing so retain his freedom. So the trap works and the villagers capture him.

There Is Hope Of Getting Out Of The Monkey Trap

Combating Perfectionism

- Set Realistic and Reachable Goals:
- Set Subsequent Goals in a Sequential Matter:
- Experiment with Standards
- Focus on the Process
- Use Feelings of Anxiety and Depression as Opportunities to Ask, “Have I Set Impossible Expectations for Myself in This Situation?”
- Recognize the Mistakes
- Savor Past Accomplishments

It's A Family Affair

Words of Advice to Parents

- Beware of Re-living Your Own Life
- Let Your Children Do It By Themselves
- Teach Your Child to Delay Gratification
- Be an Active Listener
- Try to Help Find Answers
- Check Your Own Behavior
- Be Aware of How You Praise
- Allow Your Child to be a Child
- Consider Using “Bibliotherapy”

Acknowledgements

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