

# **CLIENT WORKBOOK**

## **OVERCOMING PERFECTIONISM**



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## Consider the long-term costs and benefits of perfectionism

In this worksheet consider the impact on areas of your life if you continue to have perfectionism, and what your life would look like in these areas if you did not have perfectionism.

| <b>In one year's time .... Still having perfectionism</b>     |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Area of life</i>   | <i>What will have happened in this area?</i> |
| My social life  |  |
| My work/education   |  |
| My emotional health   |  |
| My relationship with my partner                               |  |
| My relationship with close friends                            |  |
| My relationship with family                                   |  |
| <b>In one year's time .... No longer having perfectionism</b> |  |
| <i>Area of life</i>   | <i>What will have happened in this area?</i> |
| My social life  |  |
| My work/education   |  |
| My emotional health   |  |
| My relationship with my partner                               |  |
| My relationship with close friends                            |  |
| My relationship with family                                   |  |

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of reducing perfectionism?**

**Advantages**

**Disadvantages**

**What are the advantages and disadvantages of not reducing perfectionism?**

**Advantages**

**Disadvantages**

## JK Rowling's advice for pursuing excellence

As you listen, write down JK Rowling's ten tips for pursuing excellence in your own words. Asterix which tips you liked best, and say why.

| #  | Tip                                     | In My Own Words .... |
|----|---|----------------------|
| 1  | Failure helps you discover yourself     |                      |
| 2  | Take action on your ideas               |                      |
| 3  | You will be criticized                  |                      |
| 4  | Remember where you started              |                      |
| 5  | Believe                                 |                      |
| 6  | There is always trepidation             |                      |
| 7  | Life is not a checklist of achievements |                      |
| 8  | Persevere                               |                      |
| 9  | Dreams can happen                       |                      |
| 10 | We have the power to imagine better     |                      |

## Poster or meme

Choose your favourite message about pursuing excellence in a healthy way - turn this idea into a poster/meme. You can draw or print from your computer. Get as creative as you like!

Here are some comments from famous and highly successful people about making mistakes...

It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default



*JK Rowling: author of the Harry Potter books*

I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying.

*Michael Jordan:  
basketballer*



*Robert F Kennedy:  
US attorney general, brother of JFK*

Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly

I have not failed, I've just found 10 000 ways that won't work.



*Thomas Edison: Inventor of a whole lot of stuff, including the light bulb*

Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm

*Winston  
Churchill*



*British Prime Minister*

Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently

*Henry Ford:*

*Developed and manufactured the first automobile that middle-class Americans could afford*



# Productivity Experiment

How would you rate your productivity with study before starting this experiment i.e., in the previous week?

|      |      |      |       |            |
|------|------|------|-------|------------|
| Poor | Fine | Good | Great | Excellent! |
|------|------|------|-------|------------|

| Day                 | What helped me get to sleep? | How much sleep did I get? | Which of my 5 things for myself did I do today? | What was one mistake I made today and what did I learn from it?     | What was one success I had today and how did I celebrate it? |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>e.g., Monday</i> | <i>Avoided caffeine</i>      | <i>8 hours</i>            | <i>Played guitar</i>                            | <i>Didn't know answer in class; know what I need to brush up on</i> | <i>Completed assignment; rang and shared with friend</i>     |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |
|                     |                              |                           |   |   |  |

How would you rate your productivity with study at the end of this week?

|      |      |      |       |            |
|------|------|------|-------|------------|
| Poor | Fine | Good | Great | Excellent! |
|------|------|------|-------|------------|

## Ask an expert: How do I sleep better?

Professor Michael Gradisar is a sleep expert from Flinders University. Here are his quick tips for improving your sleep.



- Stop using your phones at least two hours before bed (swap to other devices), and at least an hour before bed, turn off video games, YouTube and social media. Try a movie, book or watch TV instead.
- Lower the brightness on your phone and computer screens at night. Apple's nightshift is one way to do this.
- If you find it hard to wind down, try a mindfulness exercise like one from the Smiling Mind app, or a 15-minute body scan exercise from Insight Timer.
- Try to sleep the same amount every night (8 hours). An extra or less hour, every now and then, is fine – but any more can confuse your body clock.
- If you need to get up during the night try to avoid turning on bright lights and hop back into bed quickly.
- Avoid caffeine at least six hours before you go to bed.





### Thought Record

1. Think about a recent time when you were upset. Record the event (A) and the beliefs (B) that were going through your mind about the event that resulted in the emotional consequences (C).
2. Identify any thinking errors that may be present (see thinking errors handouts)
3. Challenge the unhelpful beliefs (D) and evaluate the outcome (E).

| A - Activating Event                                     | B - Beliefs  | C - Consequences                        | D - Disputation   | E – Evaluate outcome |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------|
| What was the event, situation, thought, image or memory? | What went through my mind? What does it say about me as a person? Am I using unhelpful thinking styles?<br>Rate 0 - 100% | What was I feeling?<br><br>Rate 0 -100% | What would a friend say?<br><br>Is there another way of viewing this thought? | How do I feel now?   |
|  |  |   |   |                      |

## Challenging perfectionism beliefs through surveys

1. The purpose of this worksheet is to help you use surveys to challenge your perfectionism beliefs. The aim of a survey is to find out information about a belief that you hold. Think of a belief that you hold that would be useful to challenge, then design a question to ask others.
2. Once you have the responses draw conclusions about what the range of responses are and what you can conclude as a result.

### Examples:

**Belief: I make more mistakes than other people at work:** This survey would be given to people who are successful in your workplace.

#### Survey Questions:

1. How many mistakes have you made at work in the past month?
2. Can you give examples of the mistakes you have made at work?
3. Do you think others at work make similar mistakes?
4. What is your opinion of others who make mistakes at work?

**Belief: I am more prone to make serious mistakes compared to others at work:** This survey would be given to people who are successful in your workplace.

#### Survey Questions:

1. How many mistakes have you made at work in the past year?
2. How many of these mistakes were serious?
3. What examples do you have of serious mistakes you have made at work?
4. What were the negative consequences of your serious mistakes?
5. What is the worst consequence you have ever had due to serious mistakes?

**Belief: I should be available for work calls all times of the day and night even on holiday:** This survey could be given to people in your workplace.

#### Survey questions:

1. How often do you take your work phone away with you on holiday?
2. What do you think of people who do take their work phone away on holiday?
3. What do you think of people who do not take their work phone away on holiday?
4. Do you answer your work phone at night and on weekends?
5. What do you think of people who do answer their work phone at night and on weekends?
6. What do you think of people who do not answer their work phone at night and on weekends?

**Belief: I am a failure because I didn't get that job:** This survey could be given your friends.

#### Survey questions:

1. Have you ever not got a job that you have interviewed for?
2. If so, what did you think of yourself for not getting the job?
3. What do you think of others who do not get jobs that they have applied for?
4. Do you think that someone is a failure if they do not get a job they apply for?

**Belief: The way to better myself is to constantly keep striving:** This survey could be given to people at work and friends.

#### Survey questions:

1. Do you think that successful people have time off and rest time away from work?
2. Do you think successful people strive all of the time and don't let themselves have time off?
3. Do you think it is important to constantly push yourself in order to keep achieving?
4. Have you had any examples in your life where constantly striving resulted in you being less successful?

**Belief: Successful people do not read trashy magazines:** This survey could be given to anyone who you think is successful, either at work or amongst friends.

**Survey questions:**

1. Do you read gossip magazines?
2. What do you think of others who read gossip magazines?
3. Do you think reading magazines is a waste of time?

**Construct your own survey:**

**Belief:**

**Survey questions:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

**Conclusions:**

## Behavioral Experiment Record Sheet

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**Belief to be tested (Rate degree of belief (0-100%):**

**Is there an alternative belief? (Rate degree of belief 0-100% if applicable):**

**Experiment that will test the belief. Specify what you will do in detail including when, where and how:**

**Specify the prediction precisely (specify behaviors and rate intensity of beliefs and emotions):**

**What problems might occur and how will you overcome them?**

**Experiment – what did you actually do?**

**Results – what happened?**

**Re-rate the predictions made: What can you conclude? Re-rate the belief you were testing and the alternative belief (if you had one):**

**Reflection (including plans for any follow-up experiments):**

### Diary of positive comments and lack of negative comments

Think of recent situations where people have commented on your performance, for example this might be at work, at home, or with friends. Then record this evidence as follows:

1. Record positive comments and evidence regarding performance.
2. Record lack of negative evidence regarding performance.

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| Area | Positive evidence | Lack of negative evidence |
|------|-------------------|---------------------------|
|------|-------------------|---------------------------|

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# Research spotlight:

## The effects of self-criticism and self-oriented perfectionism on goal pursuit

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (2011).

Powers TA, Koestner R, Zuroff DC, Milyavskaya M, Gorin AA.

Self-Compassion is associated with:

- Successful goal pursuit
- Resilience when goals are not met
- Less procrastination and fear of academic failure
- Intrinsic motivation: goals based on mastery and not performance

### THREE STUDIES

Of university students pursuing valued goals in either weight loss, music or academic performance.

**Self-criticism** was shown to be significantly **negatively** related to goal progress **across all three goals**.

**Having high expectations and working to full potential** resulted in more goal progress.

**Self-criticism** was associated with rumination and procrastination which may have focused the self-critic on potential failure, negative evaluation from others, and loss of self-esteem.

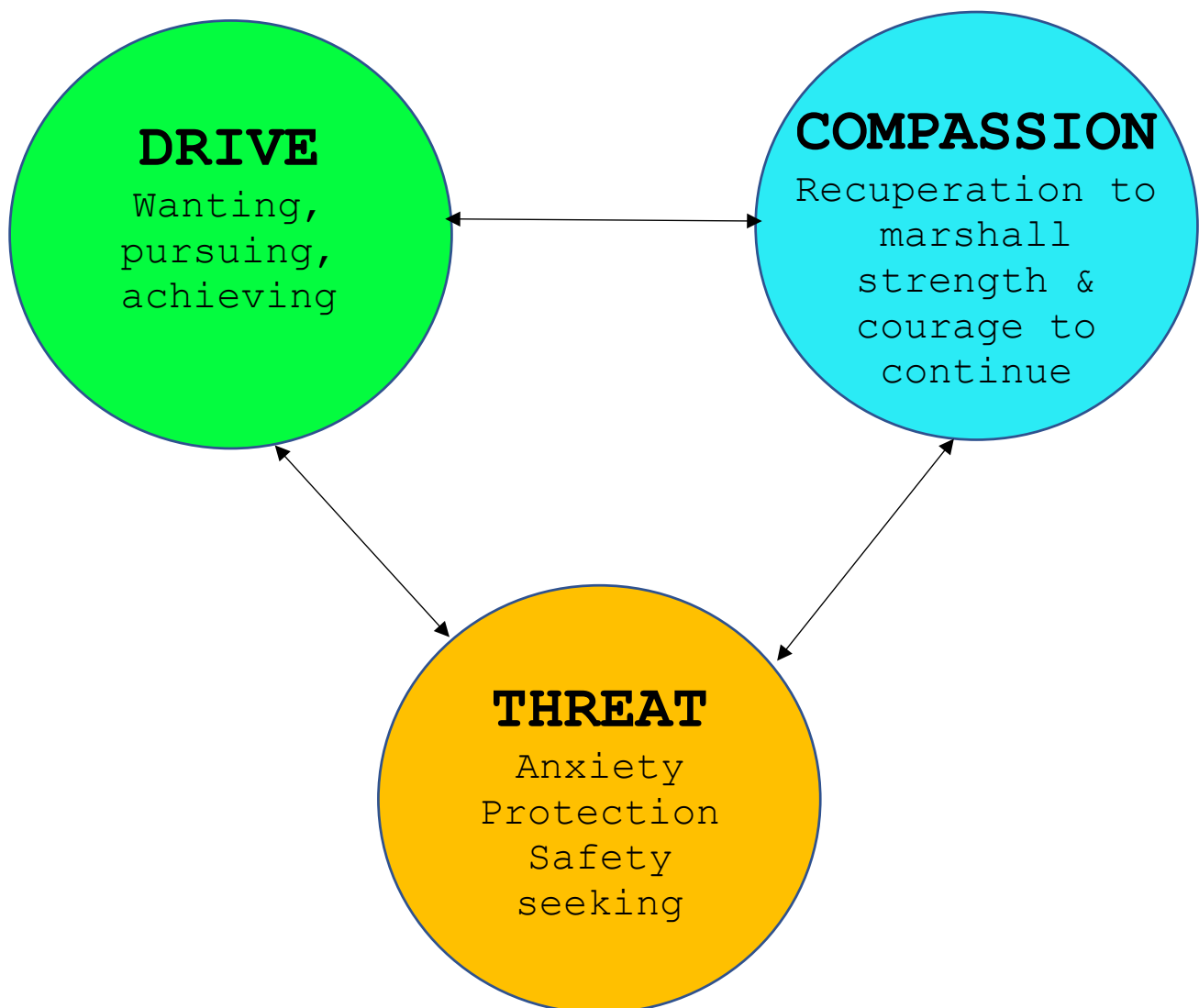
*“self-compassionate people have less fear of failure, and when they do fail, are more likely to try again...”*

**Warren, Smeets, & Neff.**  
**Current Psychiatry, 2016.**

the ugly side of self-criticism



Psychologists believe that to achieve optimal balance and achievement in life, we need three things



**Reflection point:** How big are these circles in your life – is your tripod balanced or has it fallen over?



### Procrastination 1: Understanding areas of procrastination

The purpose of this handout is to consider which areas of your life you procrastinate and to identify examples of your procrastination:

1. Circle your area/s of perfectionism
2. Identify examples of your procrastination

#### Which areas of my life do I procrastinate in?

| Perfectionism area/         | Example                     | My procrastination behaviour |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Eating/shape/weight         | Delay trying clothes on     | _____                        |
| Social performance          | Put off phoning a friend    | _____                        |
| Organization                | Delay writing "to do" lists | _____                        |
| House cleanliness, neatness | Delay starting cleaning     | _____                        |
| Appearance                  | Delay ironing clothes       | _____                        |
| Artistic performance        | Postpone new painting       | _____                        |
| Musical performance         | Postpone violin practice    | _____                        |
| Athletic performance        | Put off training            | _____                        |
| Academic performance        | Ask for extension           | _____                        |
| Work performance            | Delay starting report       | _____                        |
| Intimate relationships      | Put off asking for a date   | _____                        |
| Parenting                   | Delaying choice of school   | _____                        |
| Health, fitness             | Put off going for a walk    | _____                        |
| Entertaining                | Delay cooking for party     | _____                        |

Other perfectionism areas:

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### Procrastination 2: Helpful reminders for procrastination

1. Consider the list of reminders to help decrease procrastination.
2. Write your own list of reminders to help you reduce procrastination and post this list in a prominent place where you work.

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I feel better once I start something.

I feel less anxious once I get going with a task I am putting off.

If I put it off, I will feel worse.

Getting started with a task makes me feel more confident to keep going.

I am not a failure because of procrastinating; if I make a small start, I will feel better.

Procrastination makes me feel anxious, so it's best to not put things off.

**My own helpful reminders for procrastination:**

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### Relapse Prevention: My Action Plan for the Future

The purpose of this handout is to consider what the main messages are that you learned in treatment, what areas you need to look out for in the future regarding perfectionism becoming a problem again and what you need to do in response, and ways to maintain balance in your life by including fun, rest and relaxation.

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In a couple of sentences, what might I say to summarize the main message that I have taken away from treatment?

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In what situations is perfectionism likely to arise in the future? (e.g., what do I need to look out for?)

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What are the most effective strategies that I learned in treatment? (Remember to use these strategies when I get an “attack” of perfectionism in the future!)

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What do I need to do so that I have a balanced life? (i.e., a balance between striving to achieve as well as supporting other areas of my life such as socializing, fun, relaxation, and rest)

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## Final Reflections on Perfectionism

### Consider these quotes about perfectionism;

Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing. *Harriet Braiker*

A man would do nothing if he waited until he could do it so well that no one could find fault. *John Henry Newman*

When you aim for perfection, you discover it's a moving target. *George Fisher*

Perfection has one grave defect: it is apt to be dull. *W. Somerset Maugham*

The pursuit of perfection often impedes improvement. *George Will*

No one is perfect... that's why pencils have erasers. *Author Unknown*

A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing. *George Bernard Shaw*

Be thankful for your mistakes. They will teach you valuable lessons. *Author Unknown*

**Are there any final reflections that you can make regarding perfectionism to help you in the future? For example, what would be your main messages to remind yourself of why striving for perfection is problematic?**

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