



Overcome Perfectionism & Procrastination *Worksheets*

LET GO OF SELF-CRITICISM, GET
THINGS DONE, AND BUILD SELF-
COMPASSION



INEFFABLE LIVING

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What Perfectionism Really Is?

Perfectionism is the drive to achieve more and be more.

Perfectionism is often perceived as a strength and a way to accomplish great things and avoid criticism.

However, because perfectionism creates standards that are unrealistic and unattainable, it can lead to stress and anxiety, damage your self-esteem and leave you feeling disconnected and unworthy.

Perfectionism gets in the way of living your life to the fullest.

Perfectionism pushes you to set impossibly high standards for yourself and sometimes for others. Anything less than perfect is unacceptable.

You believe that you should get it right from the very first try and that you should never make mistakes or show any flaws.

When you don't live up to your expectations, you may end great distress. What's intended to be a way to avoid pain, ends up the very thing that causes it.

Eventually, perfectionism turns into a burden rather than an asset.

Journaling Prompts: Overcome Perfectionism

1. Read the following traits of perfectionism and check the ones that you think describe you:

- You set exceptionally high standards for yourself.
- You're highly self-critical.
- You never feel you did enough; there's always more to do.
- You base your self-worth and value on your accomplishments.
- You have high standards for others and are critical of them when they don't live up to these standards.
- You feel others have unrealistic expectations of you.
- You're afraid of disappointing people.
- You're concerned about making mistakes.
- You're sensitive to criticism and work hard to avoid it.
- You dwell on your mistakes and imperfections.
- You procrastinate or don't start things especially when you don't think you can do them perfectly.
- You play it safe and don't like trying new things, especially when there is a chance of failure.
- You have trouble being happy for others' success.
- You want to feel in control at all times.

2. Read the following definition of overt and covert perfectionism. Which type of perfectionism do you identify most with?

Overt Perfectionism

Overt or visible perfectionists are born with perfectionist tendencies.

They are more likely to enjoy order and structure from an early age, which is perfectly healthy.

It becomes unhealthy when the child also develops insecurity as a response to painful life experiences, the perfectionism tendencies can intensify and become a coping mechanism the child uses to deal with not feeling loved or good enough, leading to a lifetime pattern of perfectionism.

Overt perfectionists are usually aware of their compulsive behavior. They may have a desire to loosen up, but it's difficult for them to let go of control.

Covert Perfectionism

Covert, or “closet,” perfectionists are not easy to identify.

Their perfectionism tendencies can be more pronounced in their thinking than in specific behaviors.

They may struggle with intrusive thoughts like “I should be perfect,” but their actions rarely correlate.

Their perfectionism is a well-kept secret.

Covert perfectionists struggle with negative self-talk, defeatist thinking, and in some cases, self-loathing. The slightest failure or misstep can cause them to lapse into depression.

3. What messages did your parents or caregivers give you that formed the roots of your identity and self-esteem?

4. Did you have demanding parents? If so, what connections can you make between how you were parented and your perfectionism?

5. What happened when you made mistakes as a child? Were you encouraged to learn or were you treated as a failure?

6. What did people expect of you as a child?

7. What happened when you met those expectations?

8. What were the consequences of not meeting expectations?

9. Why do you think you developed perfectionist traits?

10. What messages did you get from your culture or media about success?

11. How do you feel when you work less?

12. When you encounter setbacks, how do you typically feel and respond?

13. How does the stress of perfectionism impact your health? Do you experience symptoms, like trouble sleeping, headaches, muscles tension, gastrointestinal issues, anxiety, short temper?

14. What do you do for fun? Do you tend to turn your hobbies into a competitive or perfectionist endeavor?

15. How do you play it safe in your life? Are there things that you quit or opportunities that you've passed up because you didn't have the assurance that you'll do well at them?

16. Do you worry about what your loved ones would think if they saw your imperfect self?

17. Has perfectionism been a barrier to deep connection and intimacy with others?
How have your relationships suffered as a result?

18. Which of these common perfectionist fears do you identify with?

- fear of failure
- fear of success
- fear of rejection
- fear of judgment
- fear of embarrassing yourself
- fear of not being understood
- fear of not being liked
- fear of being alone
- fear of criticism
- fear of trying new things
- fear of not being good enough

19. How do these fears impact you?

20. Over the years, has criticizing yourself made you feel better or worse about yourself?

21. What do you say to yourself when you make a mistake, don't live up to expectations, or feel not good enough? Do you tend to be accepting or judgmental?

22. How do you think acknowledging your struggles and responding to them with compassion and encouragement could be motivating?

23. What does courage to be imperfect mean to you?

Courage in the face of perfectionism takes many forms:

- Taking chances and trying something new
- Tolerating mistakes
- Sharing our mistakes rather than hide
- Accepting our imperfections
- Allowing safe people to see our imperfections
- Asking for what we need

24. Can you think of a time when you faced perfectionism with courage and resisted being driven by fear?

25. Try being grateful for your imperfections! How have your mistakes helped you learn, grow, and become who you are today?

26. How does gratitude change the way you feel about those mistakes and imperfections?

Exercise: Overcome Perfectionism

1. Make a list of the benefits and pitfalls of perfectionism. Rate each benefit and pitfall on a scale of 1 to 5 according to its overall impact on your life.

Benefits of Being a Perfectionist		Pitfalls of Being a Perfectionist	
Total: .. points		Total: .. points	

2. Start doing and enjoying imperfect things

Write down ideas of imperfect activities you can do more of. The following is a list of some examples you can inspire from or add your own:

- Play old music and dance without worrying about how you look.
- Play crazy games with a friend for fun, not competition.
- Watch children’s movies or read children’s books.
- Schedule “breathing breaks” several times during the day. Take a few deep breaths or do something enjoyable for a minute.
- Choose a list of self-care activities and do one every day.
- Deliberately leave something unfinished every day.
- Simplify and do one thing at a time.

3. Use positive affirmations

You may find it helpful to remind yourself of the following statements, each time you start to get hung up on perfectionism. You can choose from the following affirmations or add some of your own:

- I am supposed to make mistakes—I was made that way.
- It's great to do well at things, but it's unrealistic to expect that I have to be the best at everything.
- No one can be good at everything, and sometimes it's really fun to try and learn something new.
- Everyone makes mistakes. It's part of the learning process, and I need to face these mistakes and learn from them.
- My humanness makes it easier for others to love me and reach out to me.
- What I'm doing is good enough.

4. Identify Your Strengths

Use the following list to identify at least five of your strengths:

a lifelong learner - a team player - able to keep things in perspective - adaptable - appreciative of the small things - attentive to detail - authentic - brave - creative - confident - consistent - curious - determined - disciplined - empathetic - energetic - focused - hardworking - honest - hopeful - humorous - independent - generous - gracious - kind - loyal - open-minded - organized - patient - playful - positive - practical - prudent - self-aware - spiritual - spontaneous - responsible - thoughtful

If you have trouble identifying your strengths, try answering the following questions:

- What strengths have contributed to your successes?

- What activities or roles do you enjoy?

- Which of your personality traits reflect your values?

- What strengths do your friends and family see in you?

5. Practice Self-Compassion

1. Identify a situation in which you were self-critical.

2. What pain did you experience?

3. Do other people make this type of mistake? Are you the only one who has done these things?

4. What would you say to someone else who is in the same situation?

5. Now try giving yourself the same compassionate response that you'd give a friend.

6. How does it feel to show yourself compassion in a difficult time?

6. Overcome Anger Related to Perfectionism

Sometimes we are angry at ourselves because we haven't lived up to our expectations, and sometimes we're angry at others for the same reason.

Perfectionist thinking that focuses on the negatives about ourselves and others, contains absolutes (nobody, only, always), and unmet expectations (should, must) can fuel our anger.

Write down perfectionist thoughts that tend to trigger your anger. The following are some examples:

- I should excel at everything.
- I should achieve all my goals.
- I should never make a mistake.
- I should always have the right answer.
- I should always eat healthfully.
- I should always dress perfectly
- I should never hurt other people's feelings.
- I should never be late or forgetful.
- My partner should be affectionate.
- My family should be happy.
- Life should be fair.
- There's no excuse for mistakes.
- People always let me down. I can't count on anyone.
- If I don't enforce some standards, this whole place will fall apart.
- People who make mistakes are careless, lazy, or inconsiderate.

Situation that triggered your anger	Unmet expectations	Alternative realistic expectations

Challenge Cognitive Distortions

1. Identify Cognitive Distortion

Identifying your cognitive distortions is the first step to challenging them and replacing them with more realistic and helpful thoughts. The following are some of the most common ones:

- *All-or-Nothing Thinking*: You look at things in absolute. If you fall short of a certain goal, you conclude that you are a total failure as a person.
- *Overgeneralization*: You decide that a negative experience, a specific flaw, or a mistake describe your life completely.
- *Mental Filtering*: You focus entirely on the negative aspects of a situation while ignoring the positive aspects. Soon, the whole situation looks negative.

Examples of mind filtering could go along these lines: “How can I feel good for the rest of the day now that I have been criticized?” or, “How can I enjoy my life when my children have problems?” or, “How can I enjoy my meal when the steak is burnt?”

- *Discounting the Positive*: You tell yourself that your accomplishments or positive qualities don't count.
- *Fortune Telling*: You make disturbing predictions about your future. This usually triggers feelings of hopelessness and sometimes even leads to suicidal thoughts. If you're feeling down, you may tell yourself that things will never change and that you'll always feel this way.

- *Mind Reading*: You jump to conclusions regarding others' thoughts and feelings without any clear evidence.
- *Magnification and Minimization*: You exaggerate the negative and minimize the positive in a certain situation.
- *Emotional Reasoning*: You turn your feelings into facts. For example: "I feel worthless, I must be worthless," or, "I feel like I'm on the verge of a nervous breakdown, so I must be in real danger."
- *Labeling*: You try to capture the "essence" of yourself or someone else with a label. It is an extreme form of overgeneralization. For example, you might call yourself "stupid" or "loser" instead of saying, "I made a mistake."
- *Magical thinking*: You think everything will be better when..... (you're thinner, smarter, richer; when you are in a relationship, when you get a new job, and so on).
- *Should statements*: You judge yourself and criticize yourself for what you should be doing.

Cognitive Distortion	Your Examples
All-or-Nothing Thinking	
Overgeneralization	
Mental Filtering	
Discounting the Positive	

Fortune Telling	
Mind Reading	
Magnification and Minimization	
Emotional Reasoning	
Labeling	
Magical thinking	
Should statements	

2. Challenging Your Distorted Thoughts

Cognitive reframing is a technique of four-step process that will help you replace your distorted thoughts with more realistic and helpful ones.

Step 1: Notice your negative thoughts.

Step 2: Check for distortions. Which cognitive distortion your negative thought fits? The most important thing is to notice the distorted thought, you don't have to overthink which types it is.

Step 3: Challenge the distortion. Look for evidence to support or refute your negative thought.

You can do this by asking yourself these questions:

- Is this thought helpful?

- Am I overgeneralizing?

- Am I making assumptions?

- Am I assuming the worst?

- Am I confusing a thought with a fact?

- Are there exceptions to these absolutes (always, never)?

- How do I know if this thought is accurate?

- What evidence do I have to support this thought?

- Do I have a trusted friend with whom I can check out this thought?

- Am I blaming myself unnecessarily?

- Is it really in my control?

- Am I making this personal when it isn't?

- Is this a realistic expectation?

- What would I say to a friend in this situation?

- What or who else contributed to this situation?

- Are there other ways that I can think of this situation or myself?

Step 4: Replace the distorted thought with a more realistic and helpful one.

Journaling Prompts: Overcome Procrastination

1. Are there goals, deadlines, or responsibilities that feel overwhelming right now? Write about what feels stressful.

2. What perfectionist thoughts do you have that may contribute to avoidance and procrastination? The following are some examples:

- If it's not perfect, it's not worth doing.
- What if I mess up?
- Mistakes are unacceptable.
- If I can't do it perfectly, why try?
- I'm not good at....
- If it's this hard, I must be incompetent.
- I'll probably embarrass myself.

3. Does procrastination make you feel more stressed? Does it increase your fears of failure, rejection, and criticism? Can you think of a time that this happened?

4. How does procrastinating create more stress and negative feelings for you?

5. What opportunities have you missed by procrastinating?

Exercise: Overcome Procrastination

1. Break down your goal or project into smaller tasks:

Goal: _____

Task 1: _____

Task 2: _____

Task 3: _____

2. Start with the most difficult task

Look at your to-do list and rank order the items from most challenging or unpleasant to easiest or most enjoyable.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

3. Notice whether doing the hardest things first increased your productivity and satisfaction. Will this strategy be useful for you?

4. What tasks take so much of your time unnecessarily due to checking and redoing?

5. Are there tasks that you can apply “done is better than perfect” to? If you’re not sure, ask yourself, How important is this task? Is it more important for this to be done or for it to be done perfectly?

6. What are you worried would happen if you left things imperfect?

7. What are your biggest distractions?

8. How can you do to engage less in these distracting activities?

to-do lists























TO DO LIST

DAILY PLANNER

DATE :

To Do Today



TO-DO LIST



TODAY LIST

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Daily Planner

Date

SCHEDULE

08:00

09:00

10:00

11:00

12:00

13:00

14:00

15:00

16:00

17:00

18:00

NOTES

TO DO LIST