



B E I N G

P E R F E C T

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PERFECTIONISM IS...

1. Relentless striving for extremely high standards that are personally demanding. Typically, to an outsider the standards are considered to be unreasonable given the circumstances.
2. The tendency to judge one's self-worth largely on one's ability to achieve high standards.
3. Experiencing negative consequences of setting such demanding standards, yet continuing to go for them despite the huge cost.

PERFECTIONISM BEHAVIOURS

Children with perfectionistic tendencies will exhibit a number of behaviours, including the following:

- Excessive organizing and checking
- List making
- Correcting others
- Chronic fear of embarrassment or humiliation
- Reassurance seeking
- Frequent catastrophic reactions or meltdowns when things don't go perfectly or as expected

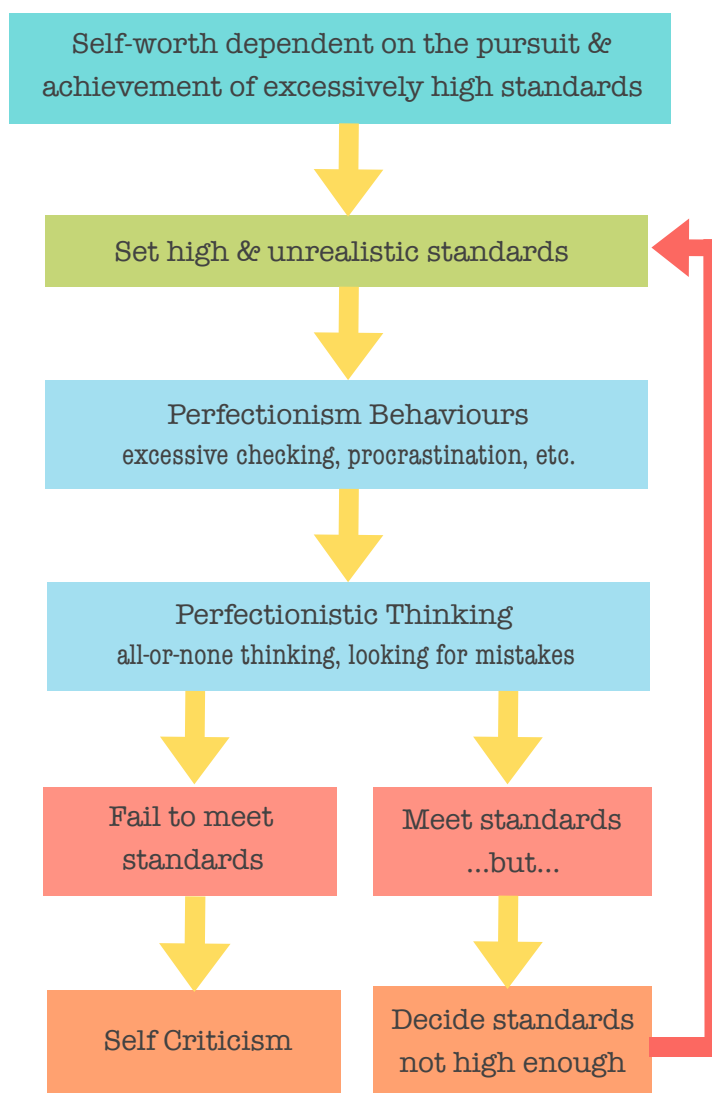
When perfectionists fear that they will not be able to reach their high standards, they may avoid tasks due to a fear of failure. Avoidance behaviours include:

- Procrastination
- Giving up easily
- Indecisiveness
- Refusal to try new things and risk failure

PERFECTIONISTIC THINKING

- All-or-none thinking: seeing only extremes
- Paying attention to mistakes and using them as evidence that they are not achieving
- Putting unrealistic expectations on self and others
- Blowing things out of proportion

CYCLE OF PERFECTIONISM



REDUCING PERFECT BEHAVIOURS

MODEL APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR.

Setting high standards for yourself, whether it be in your parenting, career, or sporting achievements can have big benefits for children, however, be mindful of modelling frustration or a fear of failure.

Children learn about developing resilience, perseverance, enjoyment of a challenge and their own strengths and weaknesses from watching you as a parents set goals and cope when things don't go to plan. Showing your children you have a "try your best" attitude and the enjoyment and learning that it brings will help them navigate and cope with their own challenges in life.

BREAK DOWN GOALS. Help your child break their goals down into more achievable goals, like completing smaller amounts of homework at more regular intervals for example.

PROBLEM SOLVING BEHAVIOUR. Problem solving capabilities are learnt and important in the development of children's resilience-skills. Help children define the 'problem' they have and explore and test out possible solutions. Over time, children will be better equipped to confront problems and hurdles with greater flexibility and be better able to generate a range of possible solutions rather than feeling overwhelmed as soon as an issue is presented.

COMMUNICATE. Talk openly about your own mistakes and encourage teachers and coaches to do the same. Model making mistakes and your own coping reactions in response. Encourage enjoyment of activities and make this a focus with your child. Set limits on things which need to be limited, such as how long your child spends on their homework, and use words of encouragement for effort as opposed to achievement.

CHALLENGE DISTORTED AND UNHELPFUL THINKING.

One factor which appears to perpetuate anxiety and avoidance frequently associated with perfectionism is the distorted and unhelpful ways in which they think. Helping children develop more helpful and realistic self-talk is the key. Some key questions to ask children are:

- What evidence do you have for your fear or negative thought being true?
- What is helpful about your negative thought and what is unhelpful about it?
- What is the worst that could happen if your feared outcome occurred and how terrible is this on a scale of life events?
- What could be more realistic and helpful to say to yourself?

Challenging children's cognitive distortions and replacing them with more realistic and helpful self talk is central to children understanding and knowing they are not defined by their mistakes and realizing how unhelpful rigid patterns of thinking can be.

TALK MEDALS. Use the language of olympic medals (gold, silver, bronze) to help your child understand that s/he can't always get gold. Help them set realistic goals and "go for bronze" once in a while.

HELP CULTIVATE A 'GROWTH MINDSET'.

Children should be encouraged to move away from thinking in rigid and fixed ways about talents, intelligence and personalities (e.g., "I am no good at hockey", "I am going to fail") to a flexible mindset focused on the possibilities of growth, benefits of effort, and development through perseverance and support. Help your child see that the most rewarding talents or accomplishments are those that are earned after practice and effort. Wanting to be perfect right away means that your child will never really get to feel the satisfaction of hard work and accomplishing goals.