

# Perfectionism: What's So Bad About Being So Good

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# Stats about Perfectionism

- 66% of college students in one study said they were perfectionists (Merrell, et al., 2008)
- 21% of men and 26% of women seeking counseling at a college counseling center reported that perfectionism was “quite distressing” or “extremely distressing” to them (Ashby, et al., 2012)
- 92% of people consider themselves a perfectionist in at least one domain of life (Stoeber, et al., 2013)



# Perfectionism Defined

- Perfectionism is a personality characteristic defined by striving for flawlessness and setting exceedingly high standards for performance accompanied by tendencies for overly critical self-evaluation and concerns about negative evaluations by others (Stoeber, Hoyle, Last, 2013, p. 178).



# Maladaptive vs. Adaptive Perfectionism

Maladaptive Perfectionist	Adaptive Perfectionist
Higher levels of depression; poor coping skills	Positive affect; good coping skills
Higher levels of self-criticism; low self-esteem	Higher levels of assertiveness and life direction
Excessively worried about making mistakes; fear of evaluation by someone else	Higher levels of self-efficacy in career decision-making
A chronic sense of inadequacy when it comes to achieving goals	Able to enjoy a “job well done”; able to recognize and rejoice in their skill

(Ashby, Noble, and Gnilka  
2012)

(Merrell, Hannah, Van Arsdale,  
Buman, and Rice, 2008)

# Recommendations

- Engage in “Vitality Producing Activities” (i.e., activities that will add meaning to your life, whatever they may be).
- Practice Time Management Strategies:
  - a) Set clear timelines and behavioral limits when working
  - b) Breaking tasks up into smaller components helps people stay focused on the task as opposed to the *outcome*
- Set Realistic and “Kinder” Goals
- Engage in Behavior Experiments; at the heart of perfectionism is a fear of the possible consequences of being imperfect.
- Increase Exercise



# Some Recommendations

- Challenge Negative Thoughts

“Doing well isn’t good enough, I have to do better!”

“If I don’t get an A, I don’t deserve to be here”

“If I get it wrong – they will think badly of me”

“If I don’t do the best I will let them (parents, teachers, others) down and they won’t approve of me”

“I have to do an excellent essay or else they’ll know I’m a fraud”



# References

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