

## Tips to deal with perfectionism

A certain amount of perfectionism can be motivating and lead to a healthy work ethic—too much, however, can cause stress and frustration, particularly when your self-esteem is based purely on your own success. This document contains a number of tips for moderating your perfectionism.

### Contemplate the pros and cons of extreme perfectionism:

- First, think of the benefits. Meticulous work usually leads to fewer errors and mistakes, and can also produce an excellent product that results in praise. Perfectionism can also give you a sense of control and security.
- However, too much perfectionism has its downsides. As a default setting, it can be exhausting and time-consuming, hindering the flexibility of your work. You may be putting yourself under continuous pressure to achieve difficult goals, and this can negatively impact your self-esteem. Your focus is always on your own strengths and weaknesses. This can cause depression and increased fear of failure.

### Be aware of your limits:

- If your perfectionism is causing you to overwork yourself, this is a sign that you are exceeding your own limits. To avoid long-term negative effects on your physical and mental health, it is important to recognize and respect these limits. Do not view them as a weakness but rather the competence to interpret your own signals.

### Make conscious decisions:

- Depending on the current situation, different levels of perfectionism may be appropriate. Make a conscious decision in each individual case about how much effort is necessary and worthwhile—do a kind of cost-benefit analysis.

### Keep your thoughts in check and develop alternatives:

- Extreme perfectionism is often combined with fear of failure. Be aware of these kinds of thoughts and check to see if they are truly appropriate and helpful to the situation. Would you put the same expectations on others that you have on yourself?
- Try to develop new perspectives—what would you recommend to a friend who was constantly putting themselves under pressure? Practice using these perspectives on yourself in situations where you are struggling with perfectionism.

### Do experiments:

- Use everyday situations to experiment with less perfectionistic behavior. For example, you could try only running half of your normal jogging route, writing a report in bullet points if there are no format specifications, or not doing extra cleaning before visitors arrive if your apartment is already orderly.

### Give yourself time:

- Try to accept that these experiments will cause you to feel uncomfortable at first. It is difficult to break habits, and it will take time before you notice a positive effect.

### Reward yourself:

- Every small step in the right direction should be rewarded. The reward may be a fun activity or simply thinking to yourself, “Good job!”

### Try out the motto “There is some work that must be done, but don’t forget to have some fun”:

- Remind yourself why you enjoy doing things—what fascinates you about your major, why you do this kind of exercise in particular, etc. This will help bring more joy back to your activities.