



Perfectionism: The "Good Enough" Experiment

An explainer and behavioural experiment worksheet · Created by Simar Gill Lowther, MACP, RP (CRPO)

© 2026 Insightful Journey Inc. All rights reserved. Free for personal use. Not for resale or redistribution.

At a glance

- Perfectionism isn't the same as high standards. It's when your worth depends on never falling short.
- It is linked with stress, burnout, procrastination, anxiety, and depression.
- Small experiments with "good enough" can show your brain that imperfection is survivable.

Healthy striving vs. perfectionism

Healthy striving	Perfectionism
"I want to do this well."	"It must be flawless or it's a failure."
Mistakes are part of learning	Mistakes feel like proof I'm not good enough
Satisfaction when finished	Relief, then moving the goalposts
Flexible standards	Rigid, all-or-nothing rules
Self-worth is steady	Self-worth rises and falls with performance

Why perfectionism leads to procrastination

When the bar is impossibly high, starting a task means facing the risk of falling short. Putting it off protects you from that discomfort, at least for now. That is why many perfectionists are also chronic procrastinators.

What the research says

Perfectionism is a transdiagnostic process, meaning it contributes to many different problems, including anxiety, depression, and eating concerns (Egan, Wade & Shafran, 2011).

A meta-analysis of over 40,000 young people found that perfectionism has increased significantly since the late 1980s (Curran & Hill, 2019).

Tool: My "Good Enough" Experiment

A behavioural experiment tests a belief by trying something new and seeing what actually happens.

Experiment step	My answer
1. The task (e.g., sending an email without re-reading it three times):	
2. My perfectionist rule:	
3. What I predict will happen if I do it "good enough" (and how strongly I believe it, 0–100%):	
4. What "good enough" will look like (80% effort):	
5. What actually happened:	
6. How strongly I now believe my prediction (0–100%):	
7. What I learned:	

Strategies to try

- **Set time limits.** Give tasks a fixed amount of time, then stop.
- **Make a deliberate small mistake.** Send a text with a typo, or wear mismatched socks, and notice that life goes on.
- **Celebrate completion.** Focus on "done" rather than "perfect."
- **Notice "should" language.** Swap "I should" for "I'd like to" and see how it feels.
- **Separate worth from output.** Your value as a person doesn't depend on your performance.

Strategies you may not have heard of

These less common, evidence-informed techniques go beyond the usual advice. Try one at a time and notice what works for you.

- **Draw your self-worth pie.** Draw a circle and divide it by what your self-worth depends on. If achievement takes up most of it, brainstorm ways to grow the other slices, like relationships, values, and hobbies.
- **Aim for a deliberate B+.** Choose a low-stakes task and intentionally complete it to a "B+" standard. Notice the outcome.
- **Do a cost-benefit audit.** List what perfectionism gives you, and what it costs you, in time, sleep, relationships, and joy.

- **Ask, "Would I judge a friend this way?"** Perfectionists often hold double standards: generous with others, harsh with themselves.

Journal prompts

Take your time with these. Write freely; there are no right answers.

Where in my life do I hold the highest standards? Where did they come from?

What do I fear would happen if I were "average" at something?

What has perfectionism cost me?

What would I try if I didn't need to be good at it?

When to reach out for support

If perfectionism is causing stress, burnout, procrastination, or harsh self-criticism, CBT for perfectionism and compassion-focused approaches can help you keep your high standards without the suffering.

Insightful Journey Inc. offers therapy in person in Oshawa and virtually across Ontario, in English, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu. Direct billing available.

[Book a free consultation](#) · 647-982-2527 (call, text, or WhatsApp)

In crisis? Call or text 9-8-8, or call 911.

This resource is for education and self-reflection. It is not a diagnostic tool and is not a substitute for professional assessment or care.

References

Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin*, 145(4), 410–429.

Egan, S. J., Wade, T. D., & Shafran, R. (2011). Perfectionism as a transdiagnostic process: A clinical review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 31(2), 203–212.

Usage Notice

© 2026 Insightful Journey Inc. All rights reserved.

This resource is intended for personal growth and education purposes only. No part of this publication may be copied, reproduced, shared, or distributed in any form, digital or printed, without prior written consent from Insightful Journey Inc.

This material is the intellectual property of Insightful Journey Inc. and may not be modified, resold, or integrated into other programs or publications.

For permissions or clinical use inquiries, please contact: info@insightfuljourney.ca

Insightful Journey Inc. | www.insightfuljourney.ca