Perfectionism and Good Enough

Replace impossible standards with responsible, realistic expectations

What perfectionism does

Perfectionism is more than wanting to do well. It ties worth, safety, or acceptance to avoiding mistakes and meeting an extreme standard. It can create overpreparing, procrastination, excessive checking, difficulty finishing, and harsh self-criticism.

“Good enough” does not mean careless. It means matching effort to the real importance of the task, accepting human limits, and completing work at a responsible standard.

Signs perfectionism may be running the task

- [ ] I delay starting because I may not do it perfectly.
- [ ] I spend much more time than the task requires.
- [ ] I notice flaws before I notice what worked.
- [ ] A small mistake makes the entire effort feel ruined.
- [ ] I avoid feedback or feel defensive about it.
- [ ] My standards are stricter for me than for others.

A current task or situation where perfectionism is showing up:

Pressure right now: 0 = flexible 10 = nothing feels good enough

Find the Hidden Rule

Perfectionism often operates through rigid, unspoken demands

Listen for must, should, always, and never

A perfectionistic rule may sound responsible while quietly requiring the impossible. Naming the rule makes it easier to evaluate.

The rule I am placing on myself:

What I predict will happen if I do not meet it:

Where I may have learned or reinforced this standard:

Test the rule

- [ ] Is this standard specific and achievable?
- [ ] Does it allow learning, limits, and changing circumstances?
- [ ] Would I require this of someone I respect?
- [ ] Does the extra effort meaningfully improve the outcome?

Define Good Enough

Choose the standard before anxiety moves the goalposts

Match the standard to the task

Consider the task’s purpose, risk, audience, deadline, and consequences. Some tasks require precision. Many require competence, clarity, and completion.

What is the actual purpose of this task?

What is genuinely required for a responsible result?

What am I adding mainly to reduce anxiety or earn approval?

What observable point will mean the task is complete?

Respond to Mistakes Differently

A mistake is information, not a total judgment of your worth

Review one mistake or feared imperfection

What happened, stated without exaggeration or labels?

What did I tell myself this meant about me?

What was the actual impact, and what can be repaired?

What can I learn, adjust, or practice next time?

Use accurate language

Try: “I did not meet my preferred standard in this part. That is different from being a failure. I can repair what matters and carry the learning forward.”

Practice Flexible Standards

Build tolerance for completion, feedback, and uncertainty

Choose one behavioral experiment

- [ ] Submit or share something after one planned review.
- [ ] Set a time limit and stop when it ends.
- [ ] Ask for feedback before the work feels perfect.
- [ ] Leave a low-stakes task at “good enough.”
- [ ] Notice an imperfection without fixing it immediately.

The experiment I will try:

What I predict will happen:

Afterward, what actually happened and what did I learn?

My Good Enough Plan

Use this page when perfectionism begins taking over

1 Name the perfectionistic demand

What impossible or excessive rule is showing up?

2 Define the responsible standard

What does good enough look like here?

3 Set a stopping point

What time, review, or completion limit will I use?

4 Finish and learn

What will I do next, and what feedback will I carry forward?

This worksheet is for education and reflection and does not replace individualized mental health care.