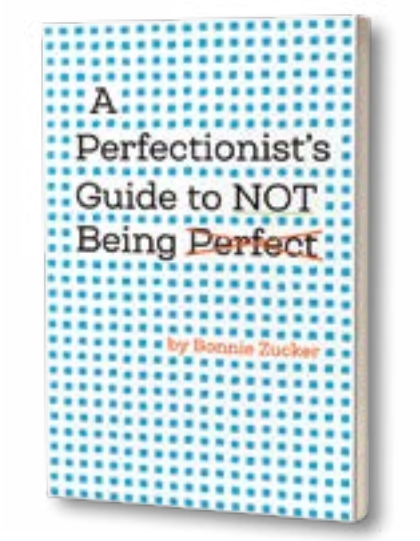
AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Managing Perfectionism: A Guide for Teens



It's hard for teens to be happy when they've created a very narrow window of what defines success. The goal of *A Perfectionist's Guide to Not Being Perfect* by Bonnie Zucker, PsyD is to encourage teens to maintain their desire to achieve without striving to always be perfect and to appreciate and love who they are just as they are, not for what they do or accomplish. Finding a balance between work and play is key. Challenging perfectionism is about the pursuit of happiness.

Here's an excerpt from Chapter 1: What is Perfectionism and Why Change It?

Being a perfectionist means refusing to accept anything less than perfect, and it's a disadvantage (not an advantage).

- People tend to see it as a personality trait that is characterized by creating and working toward excessively high, unrealistic standards that are often impossible to meet. It can cause stress, anxiety, eating disorders, and depression, and it prevents you from trying new things and feeling good about yourself.

Perfectionism makes you feel like a failure and see only one path to being successful in life (even though there are many paths!).

- Perfectionists think their achievements define who they are and are a measure of what they are worth.
- Perfectionism is often about gaining the approval of others, or wanting to be accepted and admired by them, and avoiding judgment or blame. The focus is on what others think, rather than what you think.

Perfectionism and striving for excellence are not the same thing.

- Perfectionists often have a hard time with "good enough," thinking of it as doing the bare minimum. But good enough often is enough, and allowing yourself to sometimes do a good enough job lets you have a more balanced life. The goal is to have positive striving for excellence without perfectionism and its negative consequences.

Perfectionism can manifest in many ways.

- General — wanting things to be a certain way, rigidity/inflexibility, closed to change.
- Academic — requiring top grades / All As.
- Sports performance — requiring excelling at sports: always starting, being the best player, etc.
- Body image — strictly pursuing a certain body type, often thin and toned or lean and muscular.
- Relationships — holding others to high standards and not being forgiving or flexible if others make mistakes or do things in a different way. Judging others.
- People-pleasing — prioritizing what others think of you, saying "yes" and being agreeable even when it's not your preference. Putting others' needs and preferences above your own.

No matter the type or cause of your perfectionism, you can work to change it!

This Article's Author

Bonnie Zucker, PsyD, is a licensed psychologist in private practice. She received her undergraduate degree from George Washington University, her master's degree from the University of Baltimore, and her doctoral degree from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology in Chicago. Dr. Zucker specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders and is the author of *Something Very Sad Happened: A Toddler's Guide to Understanding Death*, *Anxiety-Free Kids*, *Take Control of OCD*, and co-author of *Resilience Builder Program for Children & Adolescents* and two relaxation CDs. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her husband and two sons, Isaac and Todd.

A Perfectionist's Guide to Not Being Perfect

It's hard for teens to be happy when they've created a very narrow window of what defines success. The goal of this helpful book is to encourage teens to maintain their desire to achieve without striving to always be perfect and to appreciate and love who they are just as they are, not for what they do or accomplish.