

Perfectionism: Managing Unrealistic Expectations with CBT Techniques

Onebright explores the motivation behind perfection and how managing unrealistic expectations is crucial for promoting positive mental health.



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- While striving for excellence is admirable, perfectionism can lead to immense pressure, anxiety, and persistent fear of failure. Research suggests that self-critical perfectionism is more likely to lead to negative emotions, such as distress, avoidance, anxiety, and self-condemnation.

About Onebright: <https://onebright.com/>

Perfectionism is relatively common, with varying degrees of intensity. Approximately [20-35%](#) of the general population displays perfectionistic tendencies to some extent, steadily increasing over the past 50 years.

Levels of perfectionism in society have increased over time. Between the late 1980s and the early 2010s, researchers observed a significant increase in socially prescribed perfectionism, which involves perceiving high expectations from others and a fear of negative evaluation. This suggests that societal and cultural factors may contribute to the rise of perfectionism in recent years.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) offers practical techniques to manage perfectionism by challenging unrealistic expectations and fostering a healthier mindset.

Understanding Perfectionism

Striving for an idealised 'perfect' outcome is a personality trait or mindset characterised by an unrelenting pursuit of flawlessness and an excessive concern for meeting exceedingly high standards.

Those grappling with perfectionism often set unrealistic expectations for themselves, fearing that any deviation from these ideals will result in failure or judgment from others. This unyielding

quest for flawlessness can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and diminished self-esteem.

The impact of Perfectionism on an individual

Contrary to popular belief, perfectionism is not always a positive trait. In fact, research has linked perfectionism to various adverse outcomes, including increased stress levels, burnout, and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Perfectionists tend to be excessively self-critical, constantly seeking external validation, and prone to experiencing a profound sense of failure even when they achieve remarkable success.

What is the root cause of perfectionism?

Various factors can influence the root cause of perfectionism, and it is often a complex interplay of multiple influences, including personal factors and traits, environmental and societal pressures and early experiences in childhood.

The root cause of perfectionism can vary from person to person, and it may be a combination of these three factors or involve additional individual circumstances. Understanding the underlying causes through the help of a therapist can help address and manage perfectionism effectively.

CBT Techniques to Manage Perfectionism

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a widely recognised therapeutic approach that can help individuals challenge and reframe maladaptive thought patterns and behaviours. Here are five CBT techniques that can assist in managing perfectionism:

Recognise and Challenge Unrealistic Expectations

Perfectionists often hold themselves to unattainable standards. Individuals can develop a more balanced and realistic perspective by identifying and challenging these unrealistic expectations. CBT encourages individuals to question their thoughts and explore evidence contradicting perfectionist beliefs.

Reframe Negative Self-Talk

Perfectionists tend to engage in negative self-talk, berating themselves for perceived failures or shortcomings. CBT emphasises replacing negative self-talk with more compassionate and realistic self-statements. Recognising achievements, focusing on progress over perfection, and practising self-compassion are all crucial steps towards overcoming perfectionism.

Set Realistic Goals

Setting excessively high goals is a common tendency among perfectionists, which can lead to disappointment and perpetuate a cycle of self-criticism. CBT encourages individuals to set more realistic and attainable goals, breaking them down into smaller, manageable steps. This allows for a sense of accomplishment and sustained motivation along the way.

Embrace Imperfection and Mistakes

The fear of making mistakes is common among perfectionists, as they perceive errors as personal failures. CBT teaches individuals to look at these thoughts without judgement, challenging their validity and exploring alternative perspectives. Embracing imperfection allows for greater resilience, adaptability, and a healthier outlook on success.

Practice Self-Care and Stress Management

CBT techniques emphasise the importance of self-care activities, such as engaging in hobbies, practising mindfulness, and incorporating relaxation techniques into daily routines. These strategies help manage stress levels and promote overall well-being.

Perfectionism and the Link to Procrastination

Research has shown that perfectionists may delay starting or completing tasks because they fear failing to meet their high standards. This delay can lead to increased stress and further reinforce perfectionistic tendencies.

Initiating work can bring about uncomfortable feelings about more preparation or uncertainty about meeting expectations. Learning CBT techniques to manage perfectionist tendencies can help individuals overcome their fear of failure and enhance productivity.

Seeking therapy for perfectionism

Talk therapy, specifically CBT, is especially useful in treating perfectionism because it targets and addresses the underlying thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours associated with perfectionistic tendencies.

Perfectionism, while driven by a desire for excellence, can harm an individual's mental well-being and overall quality of life. By employing CBT techniques, individuals can challenge and manage unrealistic expectations. Remember, perfection is an illusion, and personal growth comes from accepting ourselves and striving for progress rather than an unattainable ideal.

Talk to the team at [CBT London](#) Onebright team to learn practical ways to manage anxiety, develop self-compassion, and foster a more balanced emotional response to setbacks and perceived failures.

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