

How to Be Your Best Self? Embrace Your Imperfection

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To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself. — Thich Nhat Hanh

Do you feel [burnt out from trying to be perfect](#), multitask and accomplish more things than humanly possible in a day? The perfectionist in you wants to do it all, but your body and mind are telling you they are exhausted. How do you embrace yourself as you are and reduce the pressure you put on yourself, while maintaining your high standards, work ethic and deriving more joy from life?

Because we put so much pressure on ourselves to constantly strive toward perfection, we often end up losing out on recognizing the small wins that we have throughout our day. That feeling of defeat lessens our ability to appreciate what is around us. Instead of spending our evenings decompressing, or making the time to spend with our loved ones, we are so focused on doing better tomorrow that we may rarely be entirely present. Moreover, perfectionist tendencies have been associated with [anxiety](#), [depression](#), [insomnia](#), [self-harm](#), and [aggressive behavior](#). How can we avoid this? How can we stop focusing on perfection, and embrace our true selves?

Here are six ways to make friends with imperfection for a happier, more fulfilled life.

1. Be mindful

The next time you feel OCD about that upcoming project, or ashamed for not doing the best job at work, don't beat yourself up. Instead, be [mindful](#) of the situation.

Observe it, as it is, without judgment. Focus on a teachable moment you can gain insight from. Embrace it, love it and be present with it. Then move forward without the weight of the label, or hanging on to a certain title that validates or supports the perfectionist inside you.

2. Ask yourself, "Did I do my best?"

When thinking about perfection, it's all about the context. Instead of focusing on your personal goal, or measuring yourself up to a perfect score, ask yourself, "Did I do the best I can?" There are many things that are out of our control, and many forces that we cannot influence. Why not take a moment to appreciate our effort and give ourselves constructive criticism?

Rather than thinking about how you measure up to somebody else's standards, think, "Is there anything I would do differently next time?" "How were my actions influenced?" "Was I reactive or mindful when making choices?" "Was I efficient?"

Adjusting your personal metrics for success will allow you to feel more accomplished, and help you break free of constantly trying to reach an unattainable goal. It will also help you in your personal and professional growth by not allowing your own guilt or shame about an "imperfect job" to get in the way of productive self-assessment and movement forward.

3. Detach from the result

Being driven to create results is a positive trait, but only when we are not measuring our self-worth against those results. Instead of focusing so much on the outcome, my goal is to attach myself to the effort I put in, do the best I can, and then detach from the result. This is not easy, but I believe we can train ourselves not to be reactive to events that are not in our complete power (read, most things in life).

To do this, engage in activities that promote mindfulness and connectedness to yourself and your loved ones. Go for a yoga class, do breathing exercises, meditate, exercise or connect with a friend or family member. Any healthy, positive activity that will get you out of the negative thought pattern of harping on results will help you achieve this.

4. Work toward acceptance

If you often feel that your best isn't enough, it's time to start working on self-acceptance. "As humans we all have imperfections," says therapist [Dr. Alisa Hoffman](#). "In fact, those are what make us interesting and different from one another. Accepting and appreciating those imperfections is just as important as emphasizing our strengths."

It is in self-compassion that we grow. Try to practice self-acceptance, and allow yourself to get to know and understand the many parts of you. Don't try to shut certain parts away. When we do that, these negative parts often come back screaming even louder.

The more we are in tune with what's going on with our bodies, minds and our environment, the more we are likely to make decisions from a quiet place, and realize the opportunities in front of us. The more we accept things that we cannot change in the moment, the faster and lighter we will move forward.

5. Consider seeking help

According to a [study](#), the self-critical tendency in perfectionists is associated with development of depression, anxiety and eating disorders. Where does the high self-criticism stem from? Likely the universal need to feel accepted and loved. A researcher and psychologist at the University of British Columbia, [Dr. Paul Hewitt](#), states in an [interview](#) that in treating perfectionists, he works on their need to be accepted and cared for, as these are the main drivers of their perfectionist tendencies. Generally, cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches are used when treating perfectionists, says [Dr. Hoffman](#).

6. Play

If you are skipping playtime, you are actually doing your brain an injustice. In her book, "[Overwhelmed](#)," Brigid Schulte argues that regularly scheduled playtime should go beyond our childhood. There is an overwhelming body of research on how play promotes creativity, joy and enriches our minds.

So the next time you come home from a long, hard day at work, and your kids or pets leave their toys out or make a mess, practice letting go. It's okay not to have everything in a pristine condition all the time. Instead, join them down there on the floor for some much needed playtime. For all of you.