

Perfectionism and Procrastination: A Double - Edged Sword

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Ten Top Signs You Are a Perfectionist

1. You can't stop thinking about a mistake you made.
2. You are intensely competitive and can't stand doing worse than others.
3. You either want to do something "just right" or not at all.
4. You demand perfection from other people.
5. You won't ask for help if asking can be perceived as a flaw or weakness.
6. You will persist at a task long after other people have quit.
7. You are a fault-finder who must correct other people when they are wrong.
8. You are highly aware of other people's demands and expectations.
9. You are very self-conscious about making mistakes in front of other people.
10. You noticed the error in the title of this list.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS CAN HELP PERFECTIONISTS

1. Help kids to understand that they can feel satisfied when they feel they've done **their best**; not necessarily **the best**. Praise statements which are enthusiastic but more **moderate** convey values which children can achieve, for example, excellent is better than perfect, and you're a good thinker is better than you're brilliant.
2. Explain that children may not be learning if all their work is perfect, that **mistakes are an important part of challenge**. Search for quotes about mistakes and post them around the house and in notebooks, etc.
3. Teach **appropriate, realistic self-evaluation**, and encourage children to learn to take criticism from adults and other students. Teach them how to criticize others sensitively and constructively. Discuss personal snapshots that occur with your children.
4. Read **biographies** which demonstrate how successful people experienced and learned from failures. Emphasize their failure and rejection experiences as well as their successes. Help children to identify with the feelings of those eminent persons as they must have felt when they experienced their rejections.
5. **Share your own mistakes** and model the lessons learned from mistakes. Even try to laugh at your own mistakes. Humor helps.
6. Have children keep a "**perfectionism diary**" where they can share their fears, frustrations, emotions, and observations and look back in reflection.
7. Teach children **routines, habits, and organization**, but help them to understand that their habits should not be so rigid that they can't change them. Purposefully break routines so your children are not enslaved by them. For example, if they make their beds daily, insist that they skip that chore on days when you're in a

hurry. If you read to them at night and it's late, insist they go to sleep without reading. Occasional breaks in routines will model flexibility.

8. Teach kids **creative problem-solving strategies** and how to brainstorm for ideas that will keep their self-criticism from interfering with their productivity.
9. Be a **model of healthy excellence**. Take pride in the quality of your work but don't hide your mistakes or be constantly self-critical. Congratulate yourself when you've done a good job by letting children know that your own accomplishments give you satisfaction. Also congratulate yourself by taking breaks and doing something fun that you enjoy that serves as a reward for meeting a goal.
10. Sit down with children that are perfectionists and discuss **what it means to be a perfectionist**. Children who understand themselves are more self-accepting and feel more empowered to take charge.