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This picture makes me both happy and mildly infuriated at the same time



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PERFECTIONISM - Let's learn about it!

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Perfectionism Defined

According to the American Psychological Association, **perfectionism** is defined as:

“the tendency to demand of others or of oneself an extremely high or even flawless level of performance, in excess of what is required by the situation. It is associated with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health problems.”

<https://dictionary.apa.org/perfectionism>

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- High standards for yourself.
- High standards for others (and feel they often don't live up to them).
- You're critical of others.
- You feel others have unrealistic expectations of you.
- You're concerned about errors or mistakes.
- You're goal driven.
- You never feel satisfied; there's always more to do or accomplish.
- You're sensitive to criticism and try to avoid it.
- You're detail oriented.
- You're highly self-critical.
- You're critical of others.
- You're afraid of disappointing people.
- Your expectations are often unrealistic, leading to disappointment or frustration.
- You're always busy.
- You rarely take a sick day.
- You crave organization, lists, planners, charts, and data.
- You try to avoid making mistakes, and you see them as bad.
- You dwell on your mistakes and imperfections.
- You base your worth as a person on your accomplishments.
- Even when you succeed, you feel like it's not enough or that you could have done better.
- You'd rather do things yourself than have someone else do them "wrong."

Martin, 2019

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- Sometimes it takes you a long time to finish things, because you redo, check, and try to make them perfect.
- You worry a lot about what people think of you and you try to avoid conflicts.
- You procrastinate or don't start things, because you don't think you can do them perfectly.
- People have judged you harshly in the past.
- You're afraid to fail.
- You feel angry or resentful.
- You feel defective or flawed.
- A change of plans can be upsetting to you.
- You ruminate or overthink things.
- You have stress-related health problems such as headaches, gastrointestinal problems, or high blood pressure.
- You play it safe.
- You don't like to try new things, especially when there's a chance of embarrassment, incompetence, or not being as good as everyone else.
- You're a workaholic, putting in long hours and missing out on leisure activities because you have to work.
- You have a hard time relaxing.
- You have insomnia or trouble sleeping.

Martin, 2019

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Characteristics of Perfectionism

- Setting extremely high, inflexible standards for performance and raising standards over time
- Intense fear of failure or mistakes, including social mistakes and not being liked
- Persistent, demoralizing self-criticism and never feeling good enough
- Avoiding certain situations, places, or people so you can avoid feelings of failure and self-criticism
- Bigger problems appearing because of avoidance

Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kemp, 2021

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Is it a personality trait or a learned behavior?

If you see it as **personality trait**, then may believe it will affect you your whole life...

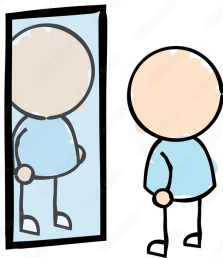
However, if you see it as a learned behavior, then it's something you can change and influence!

Owens & Slade, 2008

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TYPES OF PERFECTIONISM

Self-Oriented Perfectionism



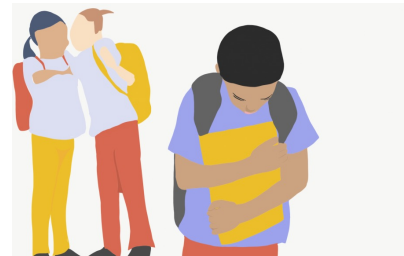
Self-imposed expectation of perfection and you're self-critical

Other-Oriented Perfectionism



You expect perfection from others and tend to be hyper-critical

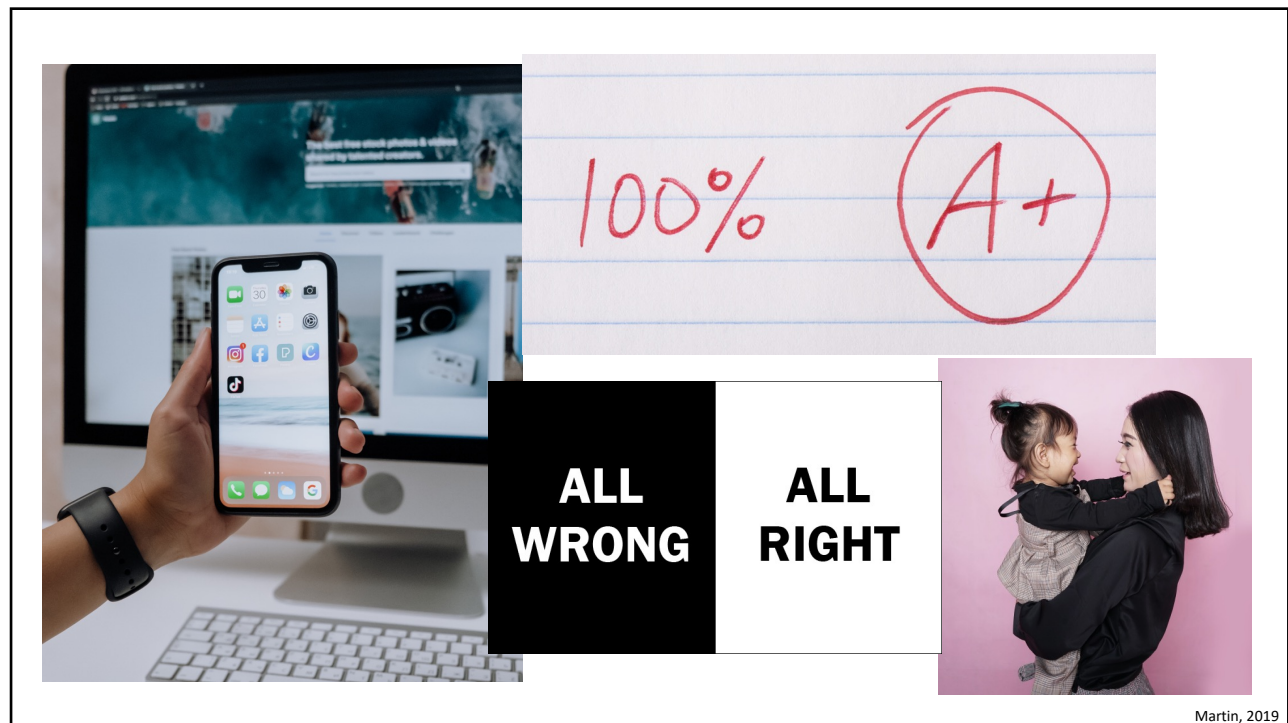
Socially Prescribed Perfectionism



Belief that others have perfectionistic expectations of you and they judge you

Hewitt & Flett 1991

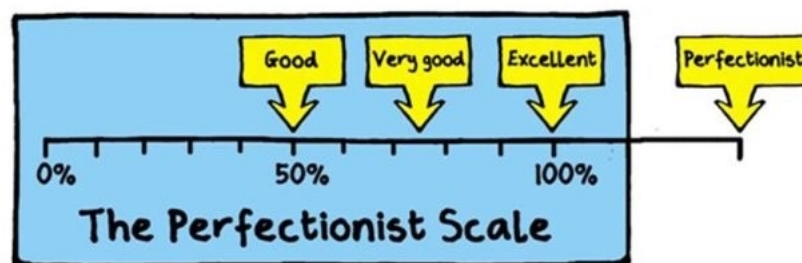
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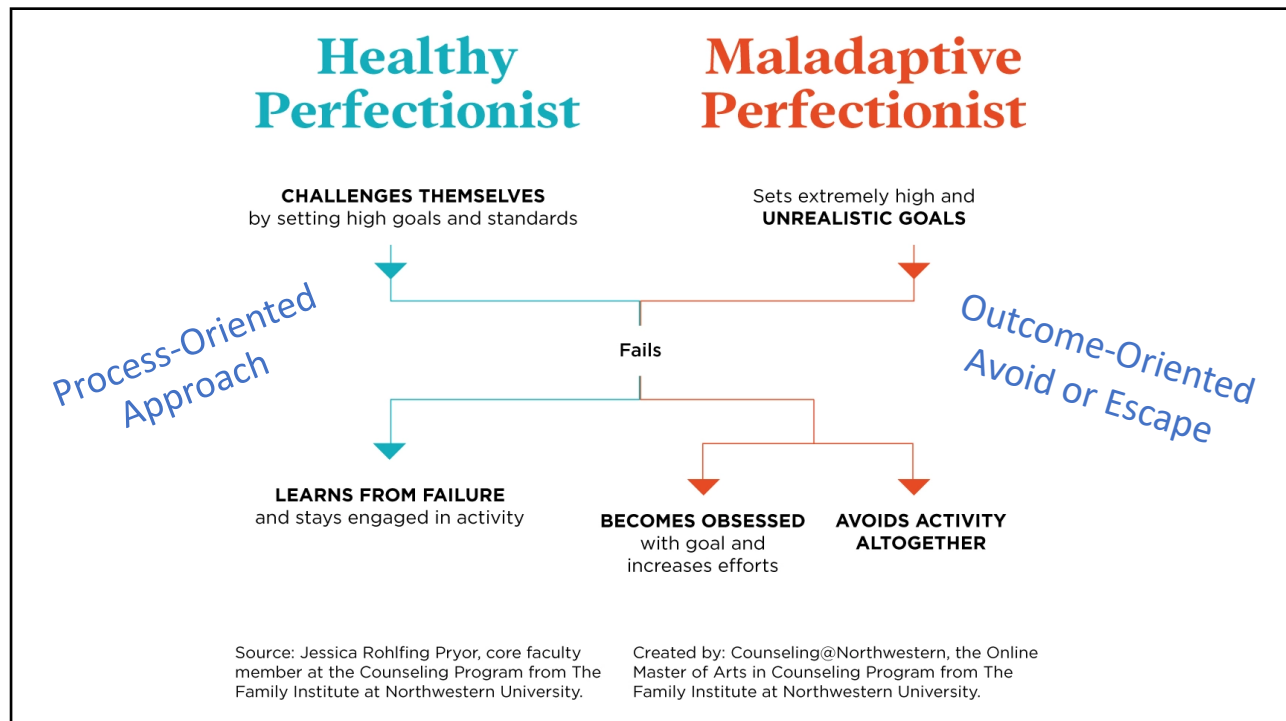
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Striving for Excellence vs. Perfection

"Perfection is not attainable, but **if we chase perfection we can catch excellence**"
 ~ Vince Lombardi



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Costs of Perfectionism

- Stress, worry, anxiety
- Negative thinking and self-talk
- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Missed opportunities – avoid trying new or exciting things
- Relationships suffer – overly critical, isolate self, compromise personal values to please others, etc.
- Decreased productivity – procrastination trap!
(Procrastinate because feel overwhelmed, caught in perfectionistic thinking, fearful)

Kemp, 2021; Martin, 2019

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PERFECTIONISM IS NOT A DISORDER...



...However, people who struggle with perfectionism can have emotion-based disorders!
If they do have one, it's in addition to (but separate from) perfectionism

Greenspon, 2007

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When to seek professional support...

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Perfection can overlap with many mental health disorders

- Anxiety/Panic Disorders
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Depression
- Procrastination
- Addiction
- Eating Disorders/Food problems
- Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Kemp, 2021

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Frequency: number of times behavior(s) occur

Duration: length of time behavior(s) lasts

Intensity: amount of energy expended on the behavior(s)



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Anxiety

High degree of overlap between perfectionism, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Social Anxiety Disorder... be on the look out for:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder** Greenston, I.S. 2007 *(goes on for 6 months or longer)*
 - Worry, more days than not, about making mistakes or a number different activities or events, in several different areas of your life
 - Worry feels uncontrollable and interferes with your day-to-day-living
- **Social Anxiety Disorder** *(goes on for 6 months or longer)*
 - Persistent worry about how you perform in social situations
 - Constantly worry about people not liking you, and constantly watch your behavior in social situations
 - Avoid social situations all together because you feel so anxious
 - Fear and anxiety is disproportionate to the actual situation

Kemp, 2021

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessions: persistent and recurrent thoughts, sensations, images, or urges experienced by an individual. They are viewed as intrusive and unwanted, and cause significant anxiety.

Compulsions: ritualistic and/or repetitive mental acts or behaviors carried out by an individual to relieve anxiety caused by obsessions. Used as an attempt to prevent, ignore, or reduce anxiety, distress, or a dreaded outcome. Often unrealistic and/or excessive, and the individual feels driven or compelled to perform them.

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Increase Anxiety

Obsessions: persistent and recurrent thoughts, sensations, images, or urges experienced by an individual. They are viewed as intrusive and unwanted, and cause significant anxiety.

Decrease Anxiety

Compulsions: ritualistic and/or repetitive mental acts or behaviors carried out by an individual to relieve anxiety caused by obsessions. Used as an attempt to prevent, ignore, or reduce anxiety, distress, or a dreaded outcome. Often unrealistic and/or excessive, and the individual feels driven or compelled to perform them.

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Potential warning signs for obsessions or compulsions are:

- They are time-consuming (e.g., take more than 1 hour per day) or cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning
- Symptoms are not due to the effects of a substance (e.g., medication, drug abuse) or some other medical condition
- Concerns aren't better explained by the symptoms of another mental health disorder (e.g., generalized anxiety, body dysmorphia, hair pulling or skin picking, etc.)

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Depression

Potential signs of depression: (2 weeks or more)

- Feel persistently sad, irritable, overwhelmed, miserable, guilty, or disappointed
- Lacking confidence
- Having feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness
- Experiencing low motivation and energy levels; feeling tired all the time
- Avoiding going out and/or withdrawing from friends and pleasurable activities
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feel that life is not worth living ***PLEASE IMMEDIATELY SEEK HELP WITH THIS***

Kemp, 2021

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Eating Disorders/Body Image

Warning signs for potential eating disorder:

- Constant worry about body shape, size, weight, and/or physical features
- Preoccupied with food/calories and feeling like it's "taking over" your life
- Restricting the amount of food you eat to change your body shape or eating excessively in a way that feels out of control
- Behaviors/habits to prevent weight gain like dieting, vomiting, use of laxatives, and/or excessive exercise
- Worry and unhelpful habits related to these things gets worse over time

Kemp, 2021

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STRATEGIES

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Bad Goals:

- Zero Anxiety
- Full Control of Thoughts
- Eliminate Discomfort
- Complete Protection
- Follow Fear

Good Goals:

- Moderate Anxiety
- Acceptance of Thoughts
- Tolerate Discomfort
- Safe/Good Enough
- Follow Values

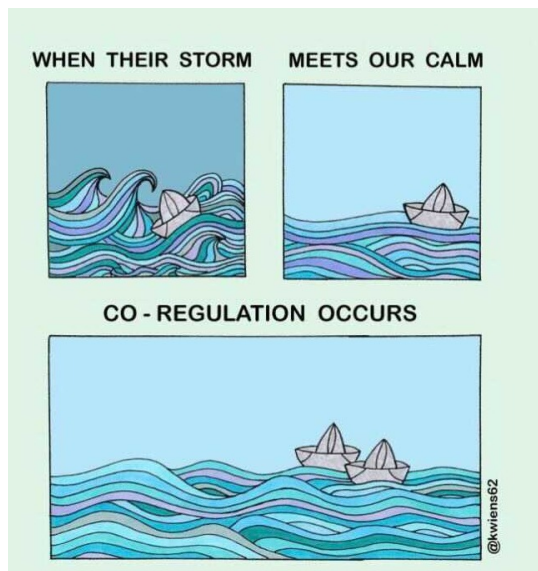
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WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT MY CHILD OR STUDENTS?

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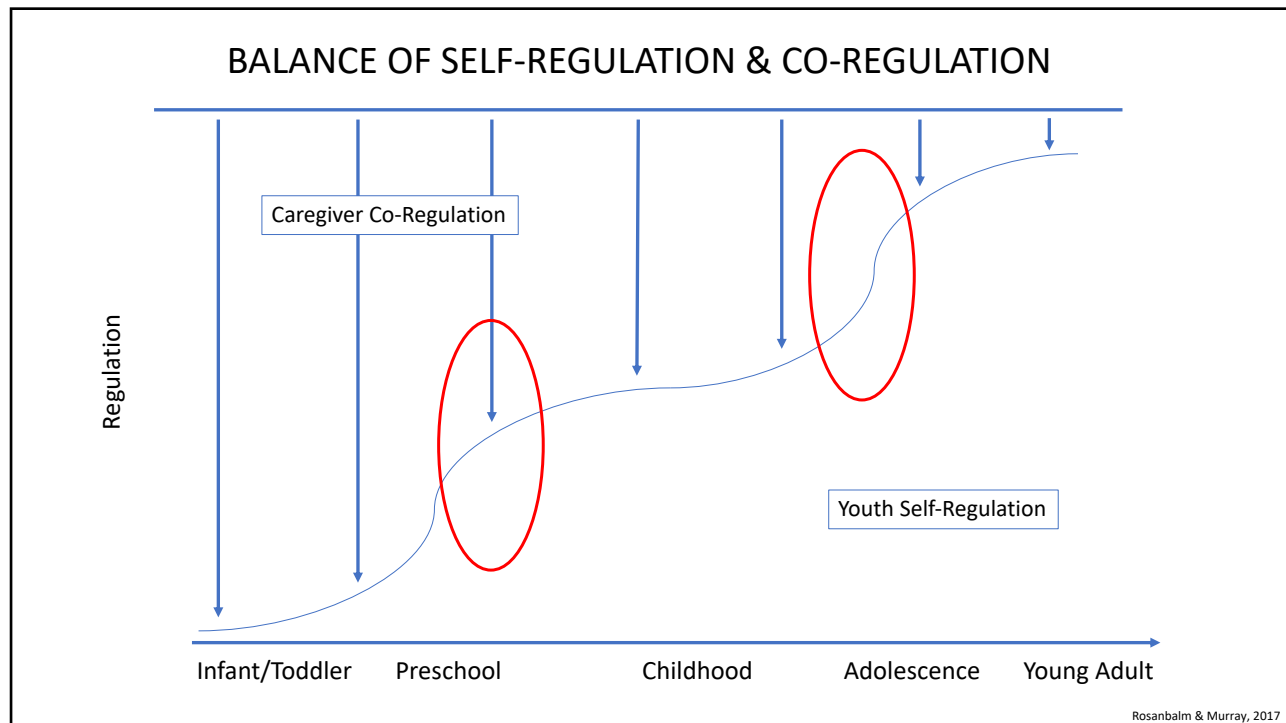
AS A PARENT OR TEACHER, REMAIN CALM!



- ☐ Children are not born with the ability to self-regulate!
- ☐ We can model and teach this by co-regulation.
- ☐ **Co-regulation** is when one person's dysregulated nervous system is met by another person's calm nervous system, which as a result begins to calm or regulate the "storm."
- ☐ Think of it as sharing a moment of connection!
- ☐ Great news... you already now how to do this!

<https://www.exceptionallives.org/blog/improving-behavior-child-with-disabilities>

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ADULT CHECKLIST

Ask yourself, are the cues I'm providing the child/teen supporting CALM?

- ✓ **Presence** – not distracted or multi-tasking
- ✓ **Tone of voice** – volume of voice appropriate for child's needs, warmth and use of caring tone, inflection and prosody
- ✓ **Facial Expression** - showing safety and engagement in facial expression
- ✓ **Pacing and timing** – approaching and pacing with child based on their immediate needs
- ✓ **Posture** – relaxed posture and inviting gestures

“PEOPLE WILL FORGET
WHAT YOU SAID, PEOPLE
WILL FORGET WHAT YOU
DID, BUT PEOPLE WILL
NEVER FORGET HOW YOU
MADE THEM FEEL”

~ Maya Angelou

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**ACKNOWLEDGE &
VALIDATE FEELINGS
BEFORE YOU
PROBLEM-SOLVE**

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Empathize to Neutralize...

1. "I'm sorry that happened to you."
2. "I can see that it's upsetting."
3. "How frustrating/hurtful/confusing..."
4. "What bothered you the most about...?"

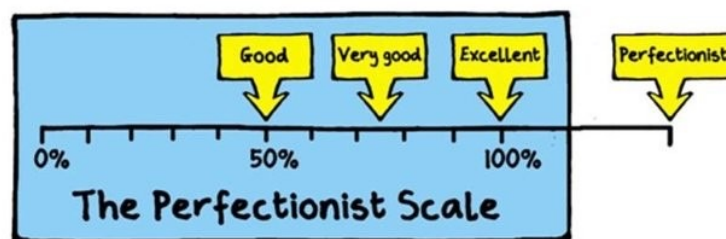
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then, **Involve to Solve!**

5. "What do you want to do about it?"
6. "Do you want suggestions?"
7. "Let's brainstorm some options."
8. **"It will be okay. This feeling is temporary."**

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MINDSET SHIFT – Move from perfection to excellence



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If you are having trouble getting started,
the first step is too big!

1. Use the 5-minute rule
2. "Chunk" tasks into manageable parts
3. Treat yourself with compassion!

Martin, 2019

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SELF-COMPASSION



Silvertant, 2019

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SELF-COMPASSION

- **Self-compassion does NOT undermine your motivation to achieve!!!**
- Self-compassion is NOT a pity party
- Self-compassion does NOT make you weak
- Self-compassion is NOT selfish
- Self-compassion does NOT make you lazy
- Self-compassion is NOT making excuses for bad behavior

Neff & Germer, 2018

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SELF-
CRITICISM
WILL NOT
MOTIVATE
YOU!!!



1. Identify a situation where you were critical of yourself.
2. What was the emotional pain or discomfort you experienced?
3. Are you the only human who has every experienced this? How do you know?
4. What would you say to a friend experiencing the same thing?
5. Now...give yourself the same compassionate response you'd give your friend!

Martin, 2019

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Conversation with Your Inner Child



Ackerman, 2017

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CHALLENGE UNHELPFUL THINKING

- **STEP 1:** Notice when you are being critical of yourself – take note of the tone of voice, words, phrases. etc.
- **STEP 2:** Being to challenge the negative self-talk by “talking back” to the critical voice
- **STEP 3:** Reframe or replace negative or distorted thoughts with more realistic or positive thoughts – put on your compassionate friend or self-compassion hat!

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Ask self, “what are my fears?” and be curious about whether or not they’re accurate!

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

- Is my thought based on a ***fact*** or a ***feeling***?
- What’s my ***evidence for*** this thought?
- What’s my ***evidence against*** this thought?
- How do I ***react*** and/or ***what happens*** when I believe that thought?
- How would I talk to a friend about this to ***help them feel better***?
- What’s the ***worst that could happen***? Could I survive it?
- What’s the ***best that could happen***?
- Will this matter in a ***month***? A ***year***? In ***5 years***?

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Replace negative or distorted thoughts with more realistic or positive thoughts

THINGS TO SAY TO YOURSELF:

- “Thoughts and feelings are like the weather – they come and go.”
- “My worry won’t hurt me – it just doesn’t feel good.”
- “I can feel anxious and still do this.”
- “I will take things one step at a time.”
- “Making a mistake doesn’t mean anything about who I am as a person... it just means I’m human!”
- “Nobody is perfect – mistakes help me learn!”
- “It doesn’t need to be perfect – my best is good enough!”
- “I can ask for help – I am not alone!”
- “My courage will have rewards.”

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EXPRESS THOUGHTS & FEELINGS (TALK ABOUT IT, DRAW OR WRITE, ETC.)

GET THEM MOVING (INCREASED HEART RATE HELPS US CALM DOWN)

ENJOYABLE ACTIVITIES (QUIET MUSIC, READING, GO OUTSIDE, ETC.)

PRACTICE PACED BREATHING (HELPS NERVOUS SYSTEM SETTLE DOWN)

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