

10 Tips for Moving From Perfection to Progress

Perfectionism can be both a strength and a weakness. On one hand, it shows that we care about what we are doing, have high standards and strive for excellence. On the other hand, it can be a source of fear and self-rejection – affirming that we are never good enough. Pursuing perfection may also mean that making mistakes is viewed as a weakness as opposed to an opportunity for learning and progress.

1. **Build Awareness:** Get curious and identify when the perfectionism tendencies appear – e.g., certain situations or people. Ask yourself, “Who am I trying to impress?”
2. **Understand Your Hidden Motivation:** Understand what is driving the need to be perfect (e.g., acceptance, happiness). Once you bring light to this, it will have a diminishing affect.
3. **Adjust Your Expectations:** Set yourself up for success, not failure. Ask yourself, “What would 95% look like?”
4. **Evaluate Your Choices:** Learn to evaluate the cost/benefit of putting more time and energy into making something “perfect” (recall the Law of Diminishing Return). Ask yourself, “What is the cost and potential benefit of my pursuing perfection?”
5. **Document Your Accomplishments:** Keep a journal or running word document (daily or at least weekly) that captures all your accomplishments – both personal and professional.
6. **Change Your Language:** Be aware of your self-talk and consciously change the way in which you speak to/about yourself and to others.
7. **Notice Your “Shoulds”:** Be aware of the times you think or say, “should” or something similar that creates an unreasonable expectation.
8. **Be Objective:** Get in the habit of stepping back, taking an objective point of view and putting mistakes into perspective. Ask yourself, “What can I learn from this mistake?” or “What impact will this mistake have one year from now?”
9. **Be Your Own Mentor:** When a mistake has occurred, consider the advice you would give yourself as mentor or parent.
10. **Forgive Others’ Mistakes:** Ease up on others if you tend to expect perfection from them.

“The thing that is really hard, and really amazing, is giving up on being perfect and beginning the work of becoming yourself.” -- Anna Quindlen, Writer

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