

Overcoming Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a behavioural pattern that is created with an intent to protect you. But this need to be perfect around people causes you to be stiff, rigid and inflexible. And it causes big anxiety.

This perfectionism pattern consists of a bunch of impossible standards (beliefs) regarding social interaction.

Here are some examples:

- I have to be approved of by everyone all the time
- I must be the most liked
- I should never show any weakness

And this pattern is there as a result of a bunch of fears and negative limiting beliefs picked up throughout life as a result of messages from your childhood and negative life experiences.

Examples of fears and beliefs:

- I'm afraid to look foolish
- I have to be the best, or else I won't be liked
- Everyone must approve of me

As you use the tapping to get rid of the underlying fears and beliefs (which were learned from past experiences) the pattern will weaken and will likely dissolve on its own.

Where Does It Come From

Like most patterns, this usually comes from early childhood. Often from your relationship with your parents. The pattern serves a purpose.

It's either helped you avoid pain (hurt, sadness, insecurity) or it helped you gain pleasure (approval, love, acceptance). Or both.

Your parents may have been highly critical. And they may have flipped out at you making mistakes. Or showed disappointment at slight imperfection. You could've been a straight A student, and a B would cause your folks to be disappointed in you. This was painful.

You may have learned here that mistakes are not allowed, or dangerous. Or you may have learned "I can't do anything right". Or "if it's not perfect it's failure".

It doesn't have to be massive trauma that happened, it can have been subtle. Like the subtle look of disapproval from your dad when you showed up with a B on your report card.

It's not about the severity of the trauma, but the meaning you have made out of what happened. This is what created the beliefs that feed the perfectionism pattern.

It's about the messages that you received over and over.

It's also possible that your mom or dad may have behaved like everything had to be perfect all the time. They may have been irritable and reactive. This puts massive pressure on you as a child, and you pick up on their beliefs. And it causes you to feel and believe "I'm not good enough" or "it's never good enough" or "I'm never good enough".

This is painful.

It can also have developed as a result of your environment.

When there is a chaotic environment growing up (parents fighting, death in the family, grandparents who came to live in, trouble with one of your siblings, being teased in school, a parent with alcoholism, etc) that involves a lot of stress, doing everything perfect in an attempt to control the chaos can develop.

"If I do everything right, behave well, don't show any emotions, don't demand anything, and make no mistakes then there won't be as much trouble".

Or, if you were not getting the attention you wanted, the perfectionism pattern may be there to have you "overachieve to finally get recognition and approval and acceptance".

Here the perfectionism pattern brings is aimed to gain pleasure.

The driving fuel (belief) behind the behaviour of perfectionism here is:
"I'm not good enough as I am".

Follow the steps below to start eliminating the pattern.

Taking Action

We're first going to uncover the beliefs and fears, and then we're going to get to the root of these and clear them up.

To uncover the fears and beliefs, answer the below questions, complete the sentences, and write down your answers.

Questions:

1. What's the upside to being perfect? What does it get you? How does it keep you safe? How does it protect you?

Example answers:

It keeps me safe from looking foolish
Thanks to it I'm not under attack (scrutiny, ridicule, etc.)
It protects me from failing
It protects me from humiliation

2. What is the downside if you let go of your perfectionism? What do you perceive as dangerous or uncomfortable when you do let go? What are the perceived negative consequences? What do you fear might happen when this pattern is no longer protecting you?

Example answers:

I might cry in public
They might see a weakness in me and hurt me
I'll get into trouble
I'll look insecure

3. Who would you be if you let go of this facade?

Example answer:

I'd have to be myself, and they won't accept me

4. Finish this sentence: I have to be perfect, or else...

Example answers:

I won't be loved
Someone will reject me
I'll be vulnerable and then someone will hurt me
Everyone will abandon of me

5. Finish this sentence: If I'm not perfect, then they will...

Example answers:

Reject me

Make fun of me

Humiliate me

take advantage of my weakness

Once you have your answers written down let's get rid of the roots of these fears and beliefs so you can move past them. Once you release the fears and beliefs you no longer need the behaviour of perfectionism.

Releasing the fears and beliefs

By now you have learned how to get rid of a fear or belief. I will give you three examples here on how to address your uncovered fears and beliefs, and then you can take it from there.

Example #1:

You asked yourself the question “What’s the upside of being perfect?”

You answered: It keeps me from looking foolish.

The perfectionism serves a purpose. It is a pattern designed to keep you safe. In this case it keeps you safe from looking foolish. You’re not born with a fear of looking foolish, which means you have learned this somewhere. Somewhere you picked up that looking foolish is bad, or painful.

What you can do (which you have done in previous exercises as well) is imagine looking foolish and tune into the feelings and emotions that show up for you as you imagine looking foolish right now.

As you then feel the embarrassment or shame or whatever it is you feel, you really focus on it, name where you feel it (if you don’t know just guess), what temperature it is (if you don’t know just guess), what color it is (if you don’t know just make it up) and then as you are tuned into it...

... ask yourself “when is the earliest time I can remember feeling that way?”

And this will bring you to a S.E.E. or person, or scene that you can address by tapping on it.

Keep clearing S.E.E.’s (there might be several S.E.E.’s that need to be addressed) until you can imagine looking foolish and be totally calm and at ease.

Then ask yourself if you’re still afraid of looking foolish. If so, tune into the fear and tap on that fear (and clear any resistance to releasing the fear if you need to)

Example #2:

You asked yourself the question: "What is the downside if I let go of my perfectionism?"

You answered: "They might see a weakness in me and hurt me"

Your answer reveals two beliefs (any weakness I have is not OK - if I have a weakness people will hurt me) and this is also something you must have learned somewhere in life.

Since this is likely a fear, create a sentence and rate it 0-10.

"I'm afraid they will see weakness in me and hurt me".

Say it's 8 out of 10.

Since this belief is something you learned, you then simply ask yourself "where did I learn this?" Or, "what evidence do I have that people will hurt me when I show weakness?"

This may bring you back to a S.E.E. or some images or scenes or people where you can aim your tapping at.

Say you found a memory where your dad was critical of you when you didn't do a good job. It was a bit of a vague scene, not a clear memory, around age 6. But as you focused on it and started tapping, more emotions came to the surface, and before you knew it the face of your dad became much clearer.

You tapped and tapped and another memory surfaced around the same theme. You neutralised all of this. After you had done so, you checked back in with the fear.

"I'm afraid they will see weakness in me and hurt me".

Now it's only 4 out of 10.

You focus on imagining people hurting you. You feel a slight hurt. You tune into it. You follow it down to an early memory. You clear that memory. Now you tune back into imagining getting hurt by people. It's flat. No feeling. Neutral.

You now tune back into the fear.

"I'm afraid they will see weakness in me and hurt me".

2 out 10.

You focus on the fear and you tap. Within one round, all the fear is gone.

You check back in with the belief "if I have a weakness people will hurt me" and find that it no longer feels true. It has no charge for you. You might find yourself thinking "if people try to hurt me, they have issues of their own, and I can defend myself".

Example #3

You asked yourself the question “who would I be if I let go of this facade?”

And your answer is “I’d have to be myself and I won’t be accepted”

You turn this into a sentence and rate the fear:

“I’m afraid I won’t be accepted when I’m myself”

7 out of 10.

You then ask yourself “how do I know I won’t be accepted when I am myself?”

And this will likely give you some times in your life where you were not accepted. You go back to these experiences and clear them.

After you have done so, you rate the fear again.

The fear is still high. 7 out of 10. You imagine people not accepting you. You’re OK with it. Flat. Neutral. No emotional response.

Why do you still have the fear?!

Well, you might be afraid of a change in your identity, or you might fear change itself.

Rate:

I’m afraid to change my identity - 7 out of 10

I’m afraid to change - 3 out of 10

You aim your tapping at the fear of changing your identity...

After a round or two of tapping while focused on the fear, you realise that it is not that you’re changing your identity. You’re just unlocking your Self. And the perfect way you were trying to *behave* was not the real you. Now the fear dissolves. Fear of change is gone too.

After you have cleared all the fears and beliefs you were able to find using the above questions and using the wisdom gained from using the system, go through the tapping video