

Counseling Corner

Whiteford Elementary School

LESSER-KNOWN SYMPTOMS OF PERFECTIONISM



Supporting Children with Perfectionism

Perfectionism entails establishing extremely high, and occasionally unattainable, standards for oneself, leading to self-criticism when they are not met. This behavior can greatly affect children's happiness and educational achievements. Parents and caregivers have a vital role in guiding their children through perfectionism. It is crucial to foster a supportive and welcoming atmosphere at home. Try to avoid making remarks that fuel perfectionism, such as, "You do this perfectly," "You always have all the answers," "No one can do this like you can," or "We couldn't do this without you." Although these statements are typically well-intended, this only strengthens a perfectionist's belief that everything must be perfect or they will let others down. Parents and caregivers should attentively listen to their children's worries and acknowledge their emotions without criticism. Teaching coping mechanisms like deep breathing or mindfulness practices can assist children in handling perfectionism and anxiety. Overall, we can empower the next generation to strive for progress, not perfection. Continue reading to see how we can do this!

1 Promote a Healthy Perspective on Failure

Promoting a healthy perspective on failure is an important step. Parents and caregivers can reframe mistakes as valuable learning opportunities and emphasize that no one is perfect. Teaching children to embrace imperfections and view mistakes and setbacks as a natural part of growth can help them develop a more realistic and empathetic attitude towards themselves. By helping children see that making mistakes is a normal part of learning and growth, parents and caregivers can instill resilience and self-compassion in them. Emphasizing that failure is not a reflection of their worth but rather a stepping stone towards success can cultivate a healthy relationship with setbacks. As children internalize the belief that mistakes are lessons in disguise, they become more willing to take risks, learn from failures, and persevere when faced with obstacles. Ultimately, nurturing a positive outlook on failure can equip children with the mindset and skills needed to navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

2 Foster a Growth Mindset

Another important strategy is to promote a growth mindset by highlighting the importance of effort and progress over perfection. By encouraging children to set achievable goals and praising their progress, you can enhance their self-esteem and resilience. Emphasizing a growth mindset where challenges are seen as opportunities for growth can empower children to face obstacles with optimism. When children recognize that their skills can improve through hard work and commitment, they are more likely to persist when confronted with difficulties. Additionally, by instilling the belief that errors and mistakes can provide valuable lessons, children can develop resilience and perseverance. As they witness their hard work paying off and their abilities advancing, they gain confidence and become more open to embracing new challenges. Ultimately, fostering a growth mindset not only supports children in academic achievements but also prepares them with essential life skills for their future.



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3 Set a Positive Example

Parents can model healthy behaviors by embracing mistakes, showing resilience, and emphasizing self-care. Encouraging hobbies that promote creativity and relaxation helps children find balance and reduce the pressure for perfection. Activities like painting, playing music, or spending time in nature offer outlets for self-expression and stress relief. Creating an environment where mistakes are opportunities for growth teaches resilience and perseverance. Prioritizing self-care instills the importance of looking after oneself and taking time to recharge when needed. By modeling healthy behaviors and valuing personal growth, parents empower children to face life's challenges with confidence. Ultimately, leading by example helps children become confident individuals ready to thrive in all areas of life.

perfectionism in a nutshell



unrealistically high expectations of self



always criticizing and judging oneself



never feeling good enough, lovable, or worthy



can't relax or take a break



not asking for help or delegating



people-pleasing and codependency

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PERFECTIONISM MYTHS



Perfectionists are confident



They think highly of themselves



They never get anything wrong



They never struggle with motivation



They love control



Their high standards are just the norm

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In the end, children who fear failure may avoid trying new things and taking healthy risks. They tend to be sensitive to criticism and can be judgmental towards others. The key is to assist children in overcoming perfectionism through encouragement, understanding, and healthy modeling.

To challenge your child's thinking in regards to perfectionism, you can ask questions or make statements, such as:

- "What is the worst thing that could happen? How likely is it that the worst thing will happen?"
- "Mistakes are opportunities to grow. Let's explore this together."
- "What can we do differently next time?"
- "You're doing your best, and your best is enough."
- "What is a better way to think about this?"
- "I see you're putting pressure on yourself. Let's talk about this."
- "How can we make this task less overwhelming for you?"
- "Everyone has their strengths and areas to improve -- that's what makes us unique."
- "I'm proud of you for working hard."
- "All that matters is that you're doing your best."
- "Perfect is for dreaming; progress is for doing."

