mindhealth FACT SHEET

PERFECTIONISM · WHEN HIGH STANDARDS TURN ON YOU

Perfectionism

Not about high standards: about tying your worth to never falling short.



Impossible standards
Nothing ever feels good enough

Harsh self-judgement
Mistakes feel like proof

The cost
Burnout, stalling, putting things off

01 Striving vs perfectionism

Healthy striving reaches for high standards and can enjoy the effort. Perfectionism is different: your sense of worth rides on the result, so anything less than flawless feels like failure. Success brings brief relief rather than pride, and the bar quietly rises again, so you rarely get to feel "good enough."

02 The hidden costs

Perfectionism often masquerades as a strength, yet it tends to slow us down. Fear of a flawed result fuels procrastination, over-checking and trouble finishing. Mistakes (a normal part of learning) become evidence of not being good enough, which feeds self-criticism, anxiety and eventual burnout. Loosening the grip means separating what you do from who you are.

03 What genuinely helps

- Aiming for "good enough" on purpose, and noticing it's fine
- Treating mistakes as information, not verdicts
- Self-compassion: the real antidote to the inner critic
- Acting before you feel completely "ready"
- Valuing effort and progress over a flawless outcome

A PRACTICAL STORY

From "never enough" to "good enough, and done"



THE TRAP

All-or-nothing



Perfectionism only accepts the far right, so almost everything lands as "failure." Good enough is the healthy zone.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Good enough

1. Decide what "good enough" looks like first
2. Do it, then stop, on purpose
3. Notice the world keeps turning

Done and good beats perfect and never.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If perfectionism is driving anxiety, exhaustion or stalling your life, a psychologist can help you change the pattern. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for rebates.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1991 psychologists Paul Hewitt and Gordon Flett described three kinds of perfectionism: self-oriented, other-oriented and socially prescribed.

Hewitt & Flett, 1991

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

You are worth just as much on your average days as on your very best ones.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta and online, Australia-wide · **Book at mindhealth.com.au**

1300 084 200

MH-CR-213 · v32 · October 2026
© 2026 Mind Health · General information, not medical advice · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0