

# PERFECTIONISM...

## is it debilitating my child?

Perfectionism is simply an image we create of how we expect something to happen.

Does your child ever:

- Yell, scream and/or have a tantrum simply because you correct them?
- Have a major meltdown because they did not win a game?
- Tense their whole body when they receive feedback on how they could do something differently?
- Block their ears and yell: "I already know", when being taught a new concept?
- Feel overwhelmed because they were told what they did was wrong?
- Experience a tight chest when tests or performances were happening?
- Feel devastated when judged negatively?
- Feel distressed about leaving the house because their outfit or hair might not be 'perfect'?
- Struggle to make a decision because they might make the wrong choice?
- Only participate in things they already knew they are good at?
- Find it difficult to make a decision (what if it's wrong?)?
- Try to be 'right' all the time and hold back from asking questions in case they are seen as 'wrong' or 'not already knowing'?

A perfectionist mind creates certain expectations:

- I should get 10/10 in my exam!
- I want my hair to be perfect before I leave the house!
- I expect that the person will be on time because that is what they said!
- I need you to know that I know everything already!
- I expect to win or go first every time we play a game!

When these expectations aren't met exactly as expected anxiety can be triggered, which leads to unwanted behaviours.

Perfectionism is contributing to increased cases of low self-esteem, anxiety, stress and is also impacting on learning outcomes and behaviours in the classroom. It also can cause people to 'choose to fail' – that is, choosing not to try at all because they are so concerned that the outcome may not be perfect.

While perfectionism is nothing new, I am noticing it is becoming more common, increasing in intensity and affecting many individuals, their families and society as a whole.

Perfectionism is striving for the impossible – wanting our 'doing' to always be 'perfect'. This is the ultimate trap as seeking acceptance from self and others based on our actions is a guarantee for failure. There is always going to be something we can't do perfectly. While we strive for perfectionism in our doing, we are guaranteeing a state of anxiety, which in turn leads to the use of unwanted behaviours. **sk**

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