

Parent Talk

NOVEMBER 2025

Understanding Perfectionism

We often think about perfectionism as a character trait which involves being an overachiever or highly focused on small details. While these things can still be true, perfectionism in the clinical world is often deeply related to conditions such as OCD and can have profound impacts. In this newsletter, we'll dive into some of the negative aspects of perfectionism and how to know when it goes beyond just being a part of someone's personality.

Clinical Perfectionism

Perfectionism in the clinical sense is different than a mere personality trait in that it goes beyond just a preference. Someone who self-identifies as a perfectionist may have preferences for things being a certain way or goes about doing things in ways that they prefer, but it typically doesn't cause significant mental distress when things don't go according to plan. Someone with clinical perfectionism has to do things according to their plan or preferences, and if they don't, it can cause them significant distress with impacts to daily functioning.



How It Impacts Someone

One of the ways perfectionism can impact someone is an inability to move past something. If a plan goes awry, clinical perfectionists will typically be unable to be flexible and will experience intense anxiety until their plan is back in place. In their minds, there is a "right" way of doing things and any deviations from that can cause intense levels of stress and worry. This can cause them not only to be rigid in their own lives but attempt to control the behavior of others as well to fit into their plan. This can have serious impacts on romantic and social relationships.



The Opposite Effect

Often, clinical perfectionists have a goal of succeeding or demonstrating capability, particularly at school or work. However, because they can get so caught up in their anxiety around things fitting their definition of "perfect", they can often actually end up not succeeding. In many cases, clinical perfectionists will spend so much time focusing on small details that they end up missing deadlines or will get too overwhelmed to finish a project. Additionally, they can get so anxious over appearing imperfect that they may hide mistakes at any cost, even lying to co-workers, friends, and family.



How To Get Help

Treating clinical perfectionism starts with accepting that there is a difference between perfectionism as a personality trait and perfectionism as a mental health condition. Many clinical perfectionists may have trouble admitting they have a problem because that means admitting they are not perfect and need help. If someone is struggling, try gently highlighting some of the ways their perfectionism is impacting their life and emphasize that it's okay to seek help and doesn't make them a failure.



Need more help?

Resources at The Baker Center are just a click away



Therapy & Treatment Services

CENTER FOR EFFECTIVE THERAPY →



Special Education

MANVILLE SCHOOL →



Therapeutic Summer Camp

CAMP BAKER →



College Preparation

NEXT STEP →

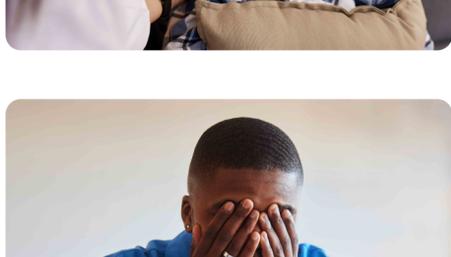
Featured Resources



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Awareness, Diagnosis, and Treatments

In this seminar, we'll provide psychoeducation about OCD, diagnosis, and effective treatments.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Defining Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: What Is It Really and What Does It Mean to Have OCD?

OCD, or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, is defined as a cycle of obsessions and compulsions that are so extreme that it consumes at least an hour of the individual's time every day and causes intensive distress or disrupts the completion of daily living tasks or important activities that the person values.

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Treating Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Effective Approaches for Kids and Teens

Kids and adults of all genders and ages can have OCD. The onset age of OCD is different for every individual, but we see the most common onset of symptoms during teenage or early adulthood years. Even so, no one can be "too young" or "too old" to be diagnosed with OCD, the primary factor in diagnosis is the presentation of symptoms and worries and whether they meet criteria at any age.

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