

# A Student's Guide to Managing Perfectionism

## What is perfectionism?

Perfectionism is a personality trait that includes having unrealistic expectations for ourselves and other people, as well as thinking negatively when those expectations aren't met.

Everyone has perfectionism to some degree. Some people have high levels of perfectionism. Other people have low levels of perfectionism. Most of us are somewhere in between.

It can feature in lots of different areas of our lives, like at university when dealing with your academic work and grades.

## What are the consequences of perfectionism?

Perfectionism is not a mental health condition. Lots of people will be perfectionistic and not experience any problems. However, it can make people more likely to develop mental health and wellbeing issues.

Some students think wanting to do things perfectly will make their university work better and improve their grades. However, research shows that it is more likely to make students more anxious and worried.

Feeling like you never do anything well, or your work is never good enough, can be really disheartening and impact your self-esteem.

## What should you do if you feel your perfectionism is a problem?

If you feel your perfectionism is having a negative impact on yourself or others, there are things you can do.

You can speak to student services at your university. They are a good first point of call and will advise you on what type of support would be best given the issues you are having.

If you are experiencing mental health issues related to perfectionism (or other things), you should seek the support of a mental health professional, starting with your local GP. You will be able to register with a GP near your university if you haven't already done so.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about perfectionism and some of the techniques people use to help manage it, you can take a look at the books below.

Kemp, J. (2021). *The ACT workbook for perfectionism: Build your best (imperfect) life using powerful Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and self-compassion skills*. New Harbinger Publications.

Martin, S. (2019). *The CBT workbook for perfectionism: Evidence-based skills to help you let go of self-criticism, build self-esteem, and find Balance*. New Harbinger Publications.

Ong, C. W., & Twohig, M. P. (2022). *The anxious perfectionist: How to manage perfectionism-driven anxiety using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. New Harbinger Publications.