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Watson, Dean R., Hill, Andrew P. and Madigan, Daniel J. (2021) Can Psychological Skills Training Reduce Perfectionistic Cognitions in Athletes? In: The International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP), 1 October 2021, Online. (Unpublished)

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# CAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING REDUCE PERFECTIONISTIC COGNITIONS IN ATHLETES?

Dean Watson; HCPC, CPsychol, AFBPsS



# Outline

- Perfectionism
- Introduction
- Method
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Practical implications



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# PERFECTIONISM



## The Dimensions of Perfectionism

Randy O. Frost,<sup>1</sup> Patricia Marten, Cathleen Lahart,  
and Robin Rosenblate

Smith College

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*Perfectionism is a major diagnostic criterion for one DSM-III diagnosis, and it has been hypothesized to play a major role in a wide variety of psychopathologies. Yet there is no precise definition of, and there is a paucity of research on, this construct. Based on what has been theorized about perfectionism, a multidimensional measure was developed and several hypotheses regarding the nature of perfectionism were tested in four separate studies. The major dimension of this measure was excessive concern over making mistakes. Five other dimensions were identified, including high personal standards, the perception of high parental expectations, the perception of high parental criticism, the doubting of the quality of one's actions, and a preference for order and organization. Perfectionism and certain of its subscales were correlated with a wide variety of psychopathological symptoms. There was also an association between perfectionism and procrastination. Several subscales of the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS), personal standards and organization, were associated with positive achievement striving and work habits. The MPS was highly correlated with one of the existing measures of perfectionism. Two other existing measures were only moderately correlated with the MPS and with each other. Future studies of perfectionism should take into account the multidimensional nature of the construct.*

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**KEY WORDS:** perfectionism; perfectionistic thinking; personal standards; self-evaluation.

In 1983 Asher Pacht devoted his APA Distinguished Professional Contribution Award address to the topic of perfectionism (Pacht, 1984). In it he argued that perfectionism is a widespread and extremely debilitating problem. He linked it

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Perfectionism is a personality characteristic that includes setting exceedingly high standards of performance and tendencies for overly critical evaluations of one's behavior



# Hewitt & Flett (1991)

## Multidimensional Perfectionism

### Self-oriented perfectionism

- Demanding perfection from the self; harsh self-criticism

### Other-oriented perfectionism

- Demanding perfection from other people; critical of others' achievements

### Socially-prescribed perfectionism

- Belief that other people demand perfection from oneself; Others are critical of you



# Not All Perfectionism Cognitions Are Multidimensional: Evidence for the Perfectionism Cognitions Inventory–10

Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment  
2020, Vol. 38(1) 15–25  
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DOI: 10.1177/0734282919881075  
journals.sagepub.com/home/jpa



Andrew P. Hill<sup>1</sup>  and Tracy Donachie<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The measurement of perfectionistic cognitions has recently caused disagreement among researchers. Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, and Gray proposed that perfectionistic cognitions are unidimensional. However, after re-examining the factor structure of the instrument used to measure perfectionistic automatic thoughts (Perfectionism Cognitions Inventory [PCI]), Stoeber, Kobori, and Tanno argued that perfectionistic cognitions are multidimensional. Researchers are now faced with a dilemma: Should they adopt a multidimensional approach derived from the analysis of the underpinning structure of the instrument or should theory take precedence and the instrument be revised? In considering these two alternatives, in this instance, we advocate the latter strategy. In accord, in the current study, we assess the factor structure of the PCI with the intention of creating a unidimensional version of the instrument. In doing so, we provide evidence to support the use of a new shorter version of the PCI. Unlike the original PCI, the Perfectionism Cognitions Inventory–10 (PCI-10) has a unidimensional structure that replicates across independent samples. The PCI-10 and the original PCI are also highly correlated. Based on this evidence, we propose that the PCI-10 provides a short, psychometrically sound, instrument to measure perfectionistic cognitions in the unidimensional manner it was intended.

## Keywords

questionnaire, survey, psychometrics

Perfectionism has typically been studied as a personality trait. However, perfectionism can also be studied in terms of individual differences in the frequency with which people experience perfectionistic cognitions. Perfectionistic cognitions are automatic ruminative thoughts and images involving the need to be perfect (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Gray, 1998). As described by Flett et al., perfectionistic cognitions can be understood in context of theories of rumination and as a form of end-state thinking. That is, they are a set of thoughts that occur following failure to reach important goals and when attention shifts toward the self and personal discrepancies (Martin & Tesser, 1989). As such, perfectionistic cognitions are expected to be common among those who

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Perfectionistic cognitions are automatic ruminative thoughts and images involving the need to be perfect



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**INTRODUCTION**



De Petrillo, Kaufman,  
Glass, and Arnkoff (2009)



Mindful Sport  
Performance Enhancement



↓ Parental-criticism and  
worry

Kaufman, Glass, and  
Arnkoff (2009)



Mindful Sport  
Performance Enhancement



↓ Consequences of  
perfectionism



Mosewich, Crocker,  
Kowalski, and DeLongis  
(2013)



Self-compassion



↓ Self-criticism, rumination  
and CM

Donachie and Hill (2020)



Self-help book



↓ Perfectionistic  
cognitions and anxiety



- Higher levels of socially-prescribed perfectionism is related to more negative experiences of sport (Mallinson-Howard, Hill, & Hall, 2019)
- Perfectionistic cognitions have been found to be related to anxiety, anger, and dejection (Donachie, Hill, & Madigan, 2019)
- PST Can help athletes regulate their emotions and stay focused (Dohme, Bloom, Piggott, & Backhouse, 2019)



How effective is PST in reducing perfectionistic cognitions?



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# METHOD





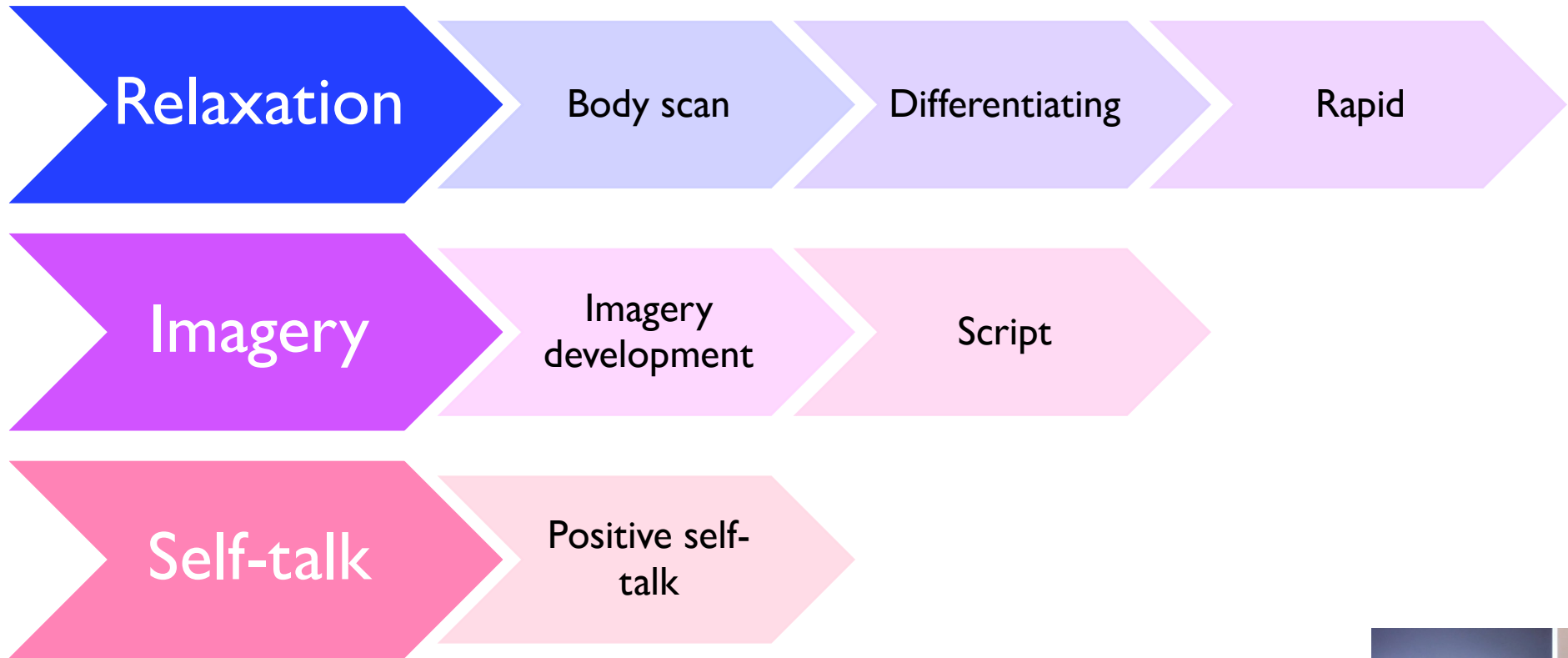
- Two phases of recruitment
- Elevated levels of perfectionism
- 3 male and 2 female international basketball players (M age = 21.8, SD = 3.5)
- Average training hours a week = 17.2





- Single Case Research Design
- 4 weeklong PST intervention
- Staggered
- PCI-10, SEQ, ALE, Performance satisfaction





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# FINDINGS



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**Perfectionistic Cognitions**

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<b>Pre (<math>M \pm SD</math>)</b>	<b>Post (<math>M \pm SD</math>)</b>	<b>Effect size (<math>d</math>)</b>	<b>% Change</b>
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2.1 $\pm$ 0.26	1.81 $\pm$ 0.34	0.37	-14
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1.25 $\pm$ 0.24	1.59 $\pm$ 0.23	0.49	27
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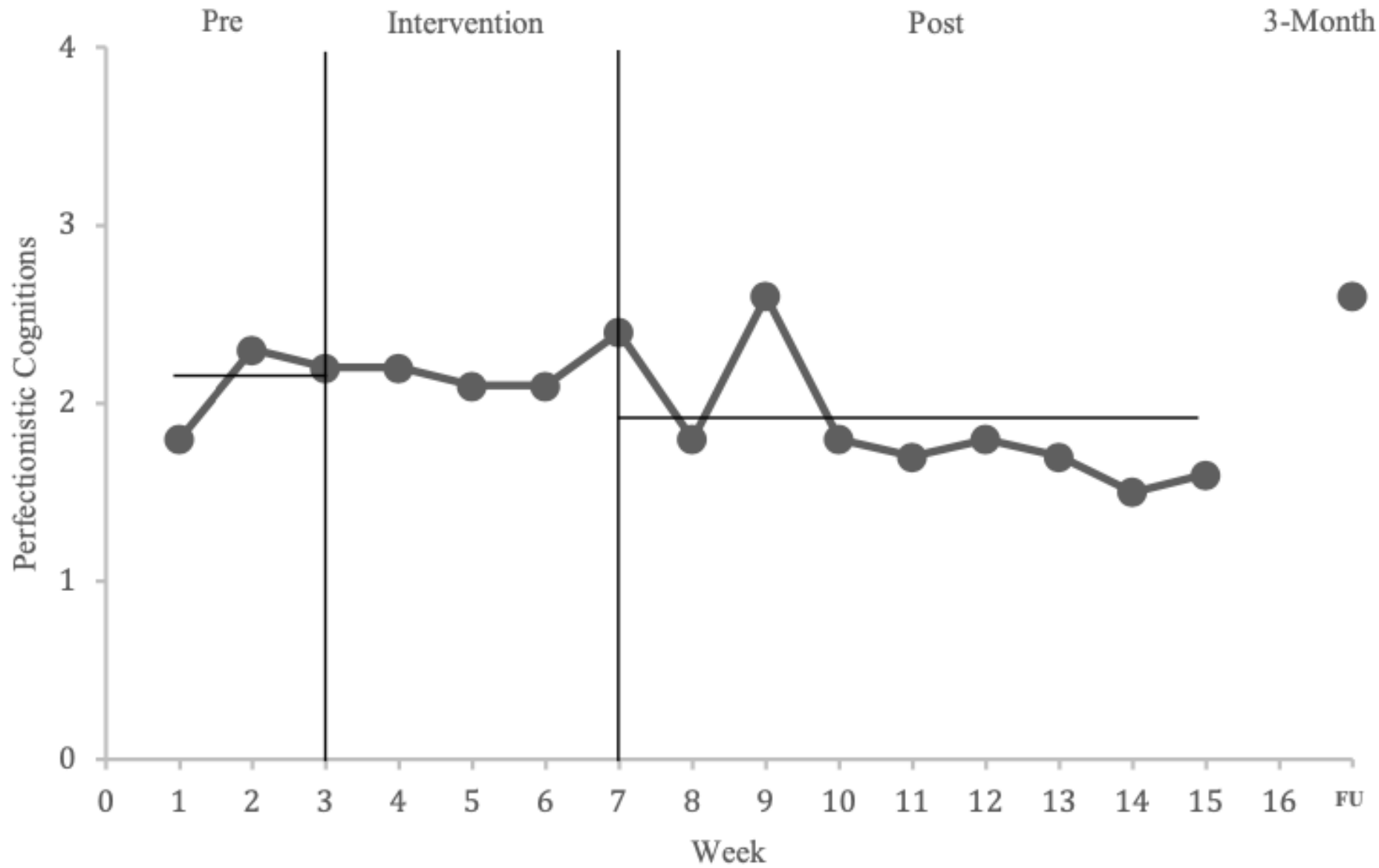
2.20 $\pm$ 0.16	2.63 $\pm$ 0.15	0.77	20
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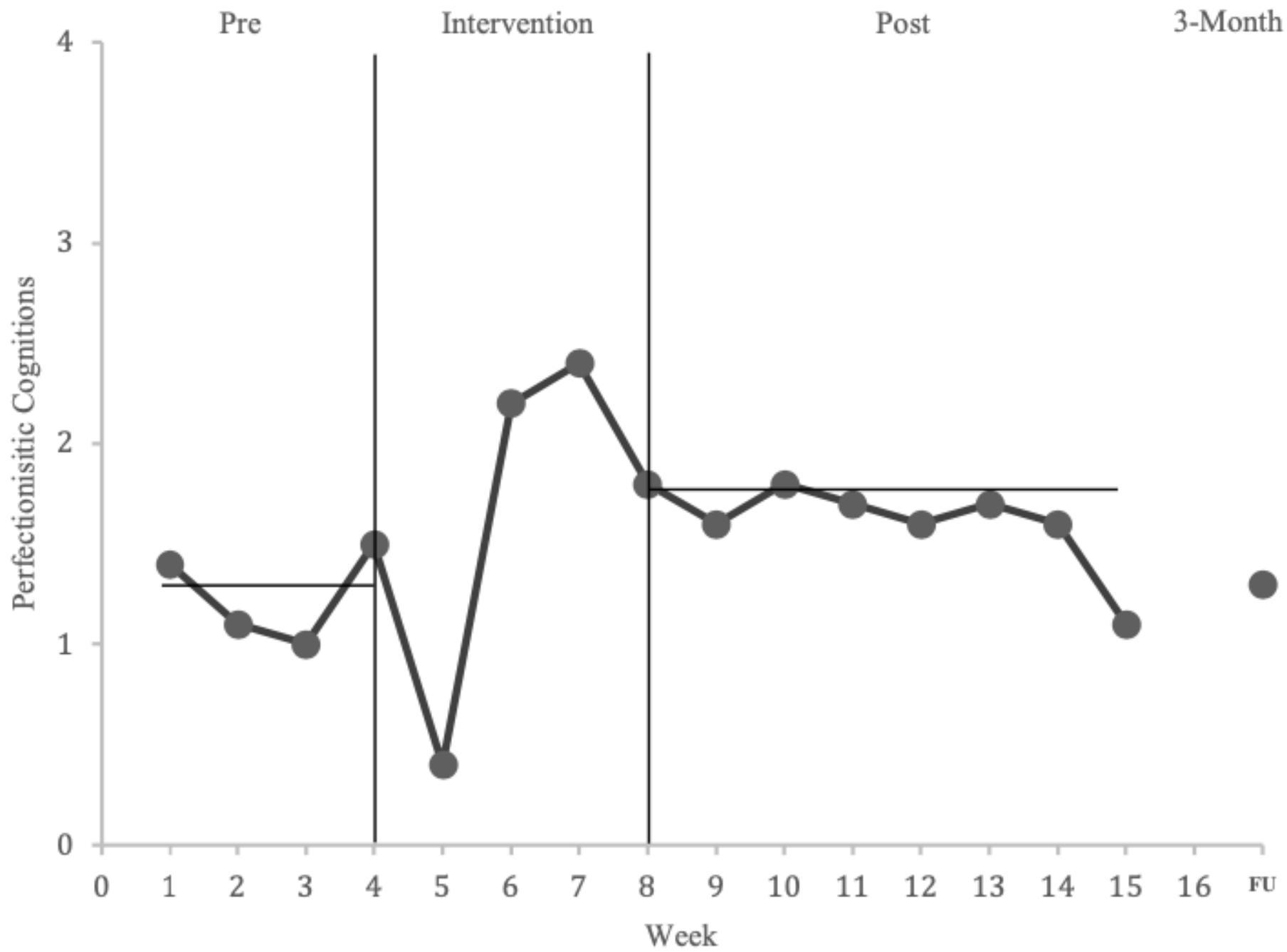
2.90 $\pm$ 0.30	2.34 $\pm$ 0.18	0.81	-19
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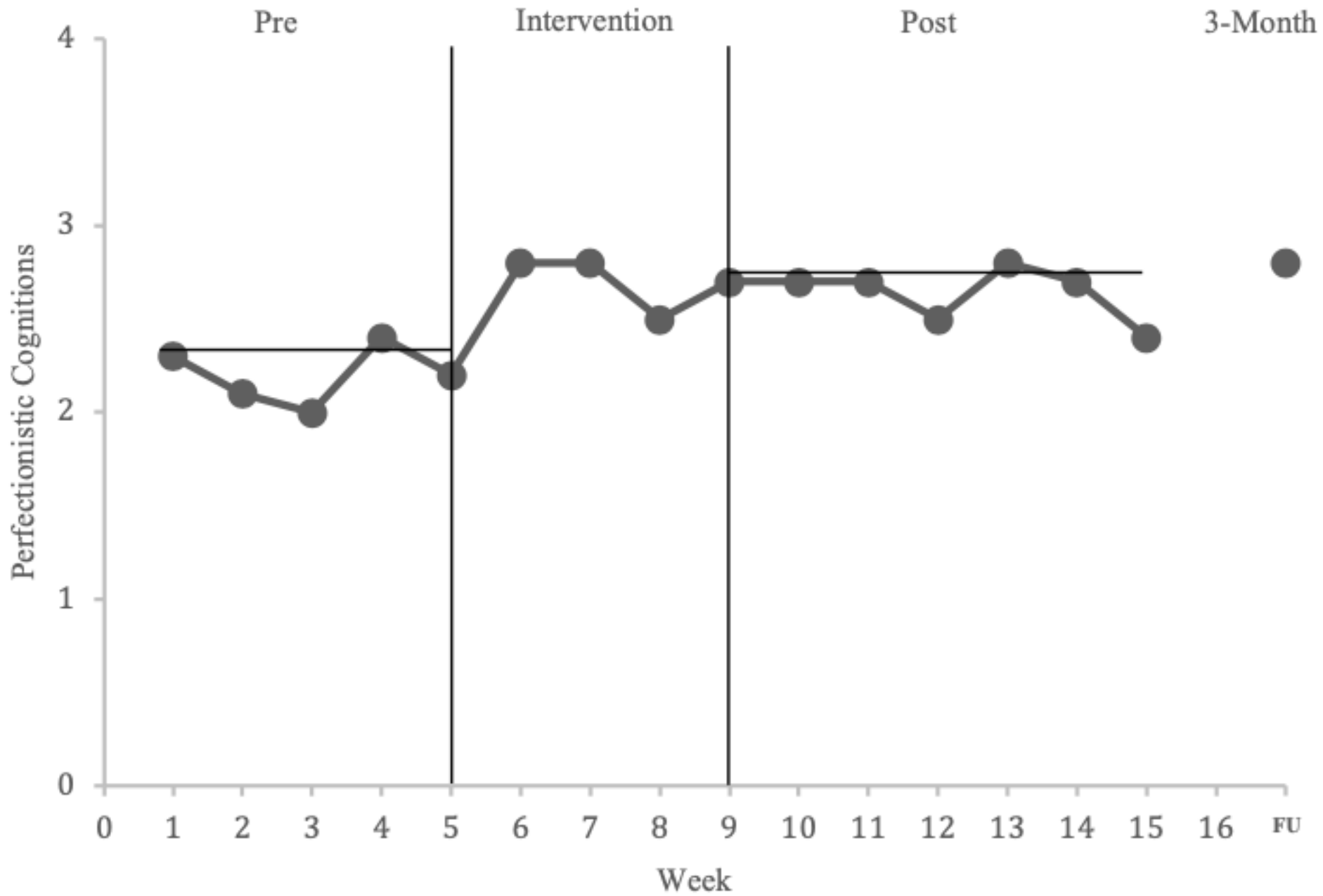
3.06 $\pm$ 0.21	3.10 $\pm$ 0.22	0.06	1
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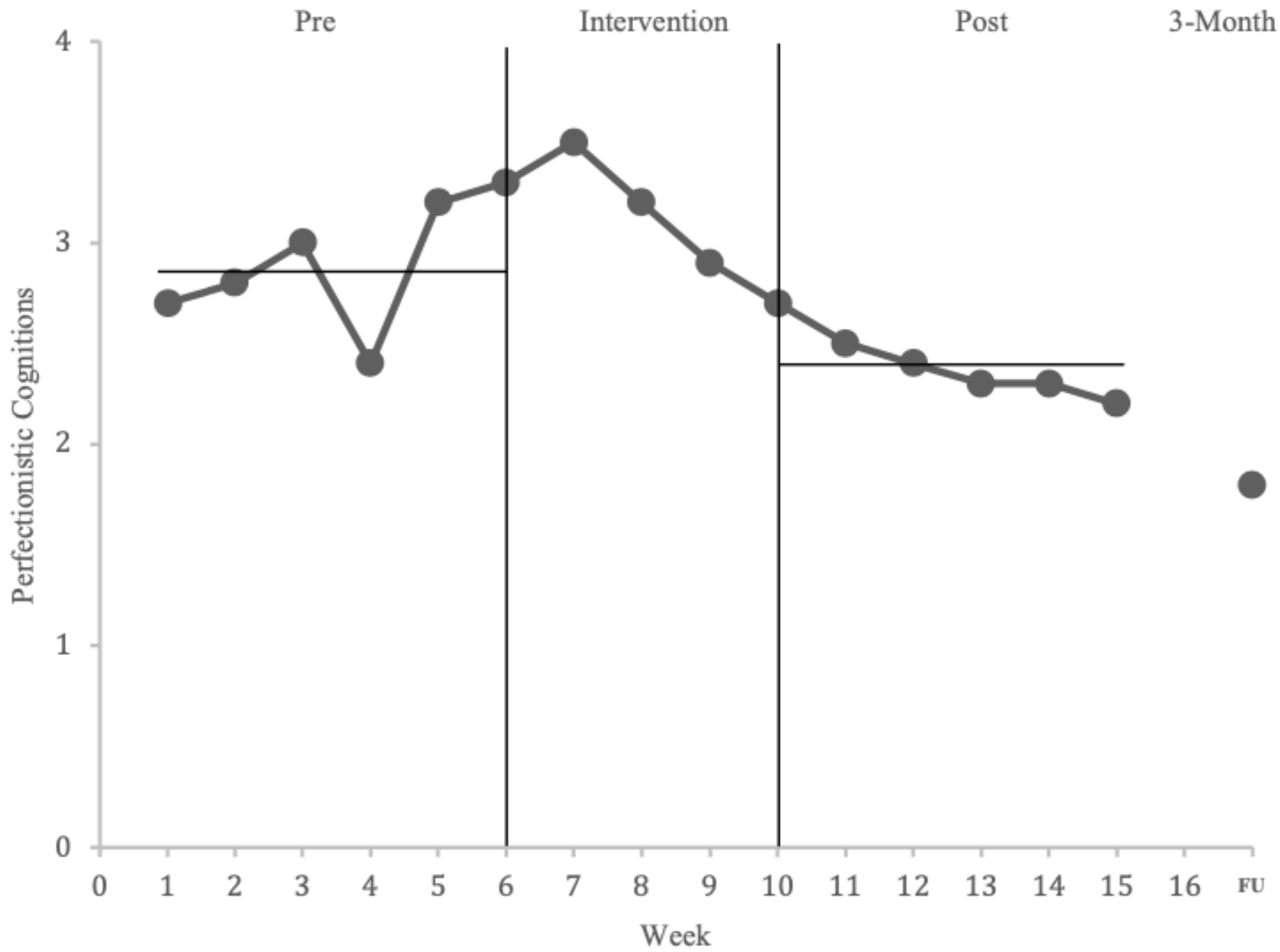
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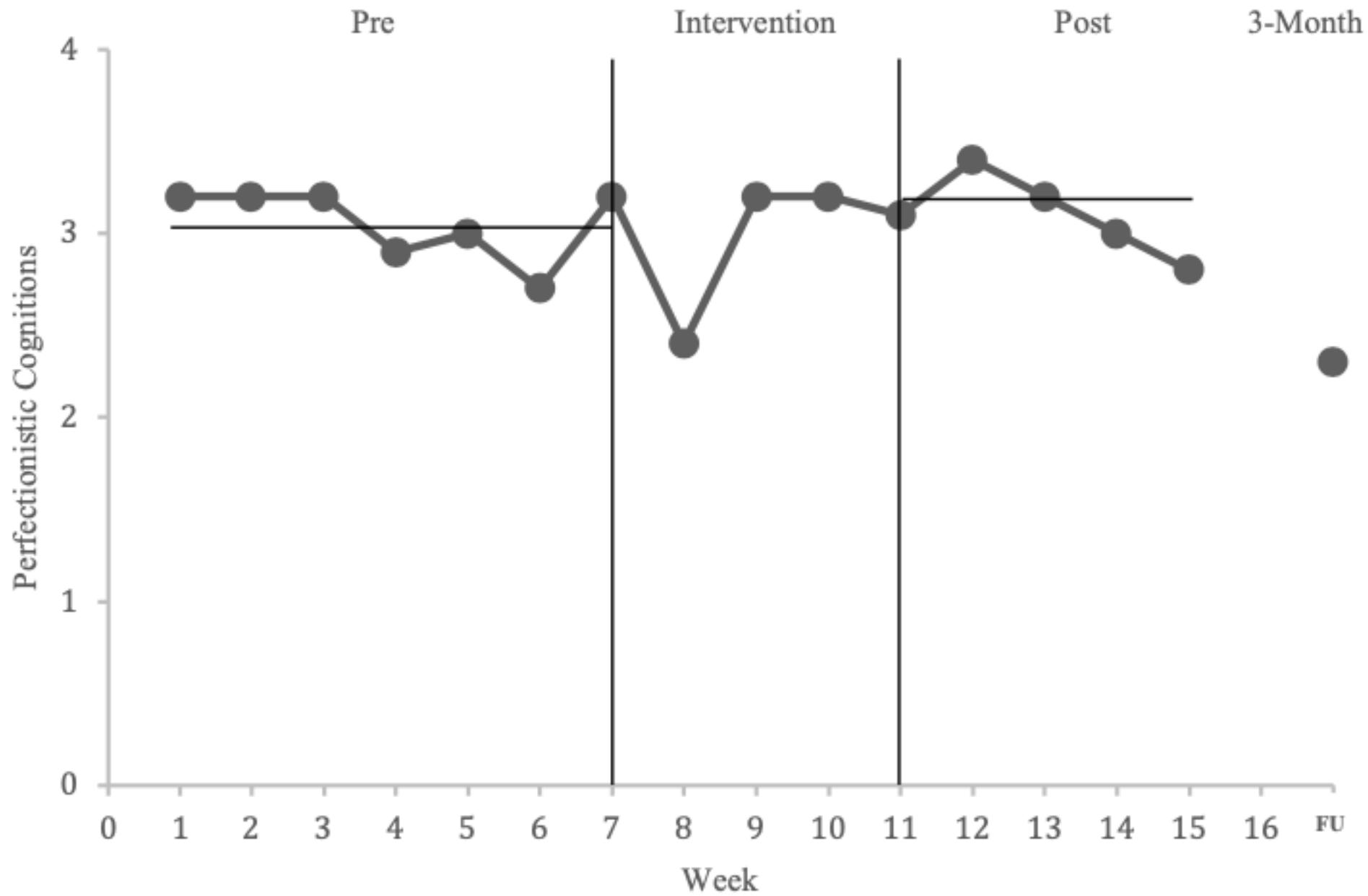












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**PRACTICAL  
IMPLICATIONS &  
CONCLUSIONS**





01

Use PST with caution!

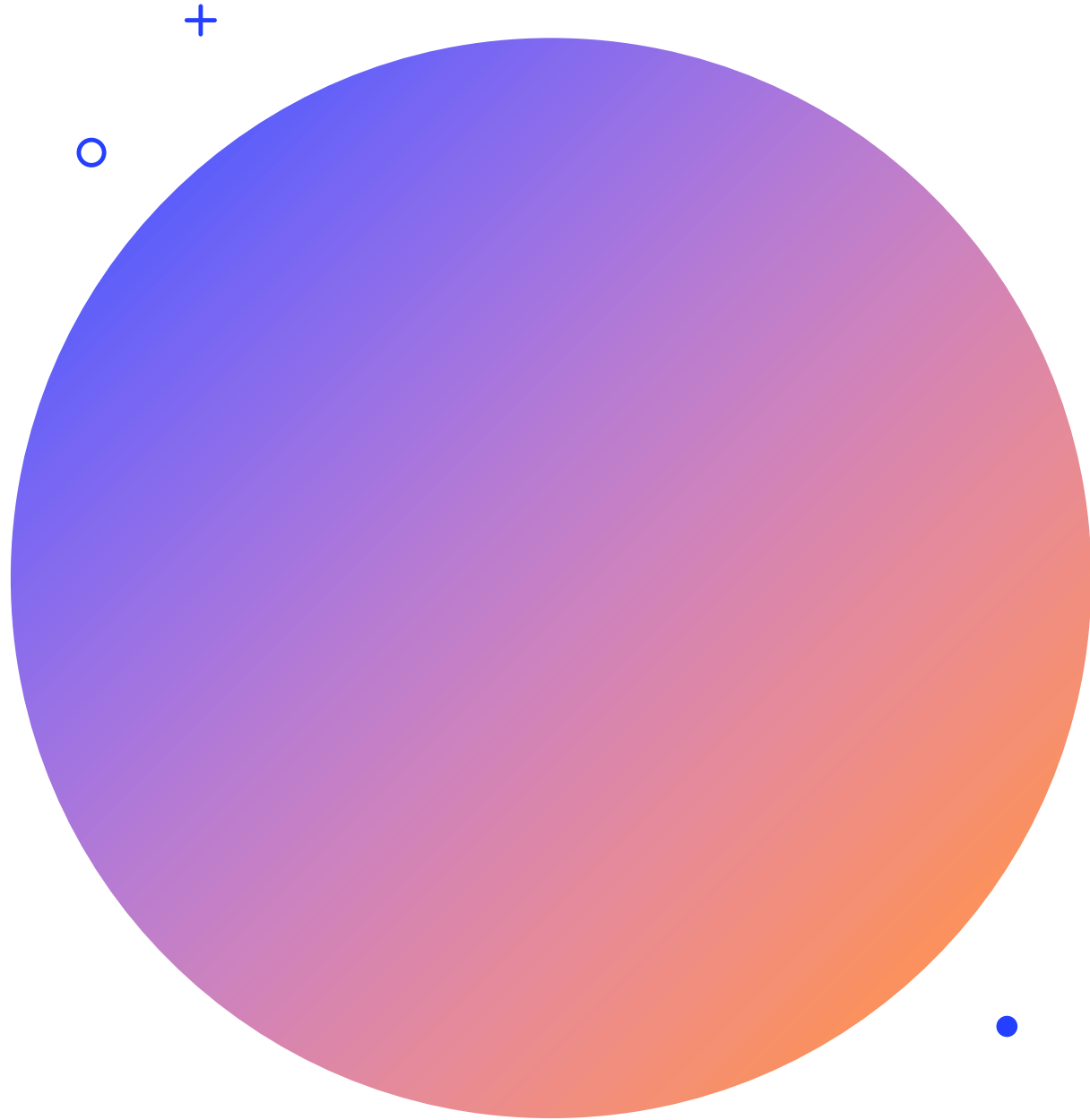
02

Invest in other cognitive-behavioural approaches

03

Build wider support system





- Controlling perfectionistic cognitions is complex
- Attitudes are an important part of any intervention
- We need to know more about the long-term management



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# THANK YOU

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