



Better than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love

By Elizabeth Lombardo

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Perfectionists exist in every walk of life. While outwardly they appear to be very accomplished, they are often unhappy and unfulfilled. Perfectionists strive toward unattainable goals, and their behaviors can wreak havoc on both their physical health and their psychological well-being.

Timely and transformative, *Better than Perfect* by Dr. Elizabeth Lombardo offers step-by-step instructions for perfectionists to find balance and freedom. The book defines perfectionism in easy-to-understand terms, offers simple assessment tools, and shares case studies of Lombardo's patients to highlight the condition. Also included are practical exercises and suggestions for behavioral changes, including seven ways to overcome perfectionism that range from choosing passion over perfection to remembering you're more than what you do.

With the ultimate goal of helping readers achieve happiness and prosperity without the stress of making sure things are "perfect," *Better than Perfect* is a fundamental guide for all perfectionists seeking new, fulfilled, and empowered lives.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Dr. Lombardo's strategies will help you get out of your own way to create the life you want—one that's filled with happiness and success. I highly recommend *Better than Perfect*!"

—**Marci Shimoff**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Happy for No Reason*, *Love For No Reason*, and *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*

"At *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, I met many transformational speakers and authors, and I can say with assurance that Dr. Lombardo's path to change is a phenomenal one. Let her show you how to get out of your own way, and get the most out of life!"

—**Candi Carter**, CEO of New Chapter Entertainment and former Senior Producer of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*

"With the goal of helping people "before they need the couch," clinical psychologist Lombardo explains how to combat perfectionism and stop striving for unattainable goals. She instructs using the acronym PERFECT: Postmortem your past; Evaluate your expectations; Reinforce new roads; Fail forward; Eliminate extremes; Create, don't compare; and Transcend. In each category she provides insights, case studies, and worksheets to help readers draw up and practice realistic expectations in order to achieve fulfilled and empowered lives. Verdict: A solid starting point for those who suffer from perfectionist tendencies." —*Library Journal*

About the Author

Dr. Elizabeth Lombardo started her professional career as a physical therapist after getting her master's degree at Duke University. It was then that she realized that every goal we have—whether it is related to our bodies, relationships, jobs, or lives—requires a significant mental edge in order to achieve it.

In her quest to help people actualize their dreams, Lombardo went back to school to get her PhD in clinical psychology. Wanting to help people "before they need a couch," she now coaches, consults, and speaks to groups about how to achieve their desired results.

Lombardo is a highly sought-after speaker and media consultant who has been honored by giving a prestigious TEDx talk. She is frequently interviewed by today's top media outlets, including *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Money* magazine, *Health*, *USA Today*, MSNBC, CNN, and National Public Radio. She has made multiple appearances on *The Today Show*, has a monthly column in *Better Homes & Gardens*, and is a contributor to *The Huffington Post*.

Lombardo is also the author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*. She lives in the Chicago area with her husband and two children.

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Excerpted from "**Chapter 1: What is Perfectionism?**"

When I tell people that I'm writing a book about perfectionism, I usually get one of three responses:

1. I *need* that!
2. My wife/boss/sister/father *needs* that!
3. I am not a perfectionist.

The first group is predictably small, but self-selected and honest. The second group is much larger—everyone seems to know someone *else* who suffers from perfectionism. But the third group is by far the largest. No one, it seems, wants to be seen or see himself as a perfectionist. But all this changes when I explain what I mean by perfectionism. At that point, people in the last group inevitably say, “Wait, that’s me!”

Why? Because as I mentioned earlier, even if you don’t view yourself as a perfectionist, you may have some behaviors or tendencies associated with perfectionism. And it’s likely that these traits have proved to be counterproductive or even damaging to your quality of life—your well-being, your sense of yourself, and the relationships you value the most.

As a recovering perfectionist, I’m here to tell you that perfectionism doesn’t mean perfect. Far from it. Perfectionism is defined as “a tendency to set standards that are unreasonably high and to measure an individual’s worth in terms of his ability to meet these standards.” In reality, it is deeper than that. Let’s look a little more closely at the features that perfectionists often exhibit. See if you can see yourself in any or all of these characteristics:

Perfectionists have extremely **high standards** that are nearly impossible to achieve on a consistent basis, and they experience serious distress when those standards aren’t met. This extreme mindset often carries over into unrealistic expectations of others.

Perfectionists view many aspects of life in **all-or-nothing** terms, such as “I either get 100 percent correct on the test or I’m a failure.” They view people, experiences, and their own performance as being at one extreme or the other, either “all good” or “all bad.” Unfortunately, that leaves little room for success and lots of room for perceived failure.

One of the most ironic facts of all is, despite the name, perfectionists don’t think they’re perfect at all. In fact, because “perfection” is the only acceptable level of success—and no one is perfect—they instead tend to view themselves as **failures**.

A **conditional view of themselves** is at the core of perfectionism. They equate their self-worth with the achievement of specific, often unattainable goals. In their minds, they are only as good as their last accomplishment.

Perfectionists **beat themselves up** in their drive to be better. Stick a microphone inside their brains and you will hear a lot of self-criticism: “I should have tried harder” or “I am such a loser.” They do this because they want to be better—more successful, more prosperous, more “perfect.” Ironically, though, this negative self-talk often has the opposite effect. It causes more stress and anxiety and brings about less success.

Perfectionists also tend to be **reliant on other people’s praise**, often basing their worth on how others react to them. While it may make them uncomfortable or they may openly minimize what they have done, deep down perfectionists often long to hear how impressed others are with them and their accomplishments. To garner praise, a woman may put aside her own needs and desires. For instance, she may stay up all night working on a project for her boss or skip her favorite “girls’ night out” because the PTA asked for help on that same evening. (Confession: I once skipped going to a wedding of a very good friend, a wedding that

promised to be all kinds of fun, in order to study.)

This focus on, and fear of, **negative evaluation** robs perfectionists of the ability to achieve true happiness and a sense of peace. On the outside, they may appear happy, but underneath that “perfect” shell is a barrage of self-disparaging thoughts. They’ll replay negative past events over and over (and over) for what they didn’t do or shouldn’t have done. And they’ll base their view of their success on the praise of others.

Perfectionists are more **motivated by fear** than by the prospect of fun, especially fear of failure and being seen negatively by others. Their focus tends to be on how to “not fail.” The result is an internal concentration on “What am I doing wrong?” and “What *should* I be doing?” rather than “What am I doing right?” and “What do I *want* to be doing?”

Perfectionists often have **a need for perfectionism**. As such, they are quite fearful of giving it up. They want to excel, to create excellence, to be the best. And they think their perfectionism is the only way they can achieve this. It is true that some of their behavior—the hard work, determination, perseverance, relentlessness, diligence, and striving—*can* assist with this. At the same time, the excessive worry, stress, unrealistic standards, constant pressure, and beating themselves up can actually make them less efficient and successful in the long run. In effect, perfectionism can be **self-defeating**.

Their fear of failure feeds **indecisiveness**. You can see this when perfectionists have a tough time making a decision; they’re scared they’ll choose “incorrectly.” Their all-or-nothing thinking instills a belief that there is one answer that is “right,” while the rest are “wrong.” They don’t want to say the wrong thing (which they view as an indication that they themselves are wrong, bad, and not good enough), and as a result they often avoid saying anything definitive at all. They also fear others will view their decisions as poor or stupid.

There is a great paradox behind all this: While many perfectionists are overachievers, sometimes they show up at the other end of the spectrum as **underachievers**. Some avoid taking on certain tasks with the attitude “I can’t do it perfectly, so why even bother trying?” This looks like procrastination or avoidance. Other times, we can see this attitude in people who are stuck in jobs that are way below their potential because they’re afraid of rising to a new level and “failing.” Or, you might also see it in those who have tried to lose weight in the past and not had lasting results. “Why bother exercising when I can’t keep the weight off?”

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Hubert Drummond:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for people. The book Better than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love was making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The reserve Better than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love is not only giving you far more new information but also for being your friend when you feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship using the book Better than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love. You never sense lose out for everything when you read some books.

Michael Trejo:

The book untitled Better than Perfect: 7 Strategies to Crush Your Inner Critic and Create a Life You Love contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains the girl idea with easy method. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was compiled by famous author. The author will bring you in the new period of time of literary works. It is possible to read this book because you can please read on your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can start their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

Amanda Lara:

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