



Forget Perfection

What's so great about being perfect?

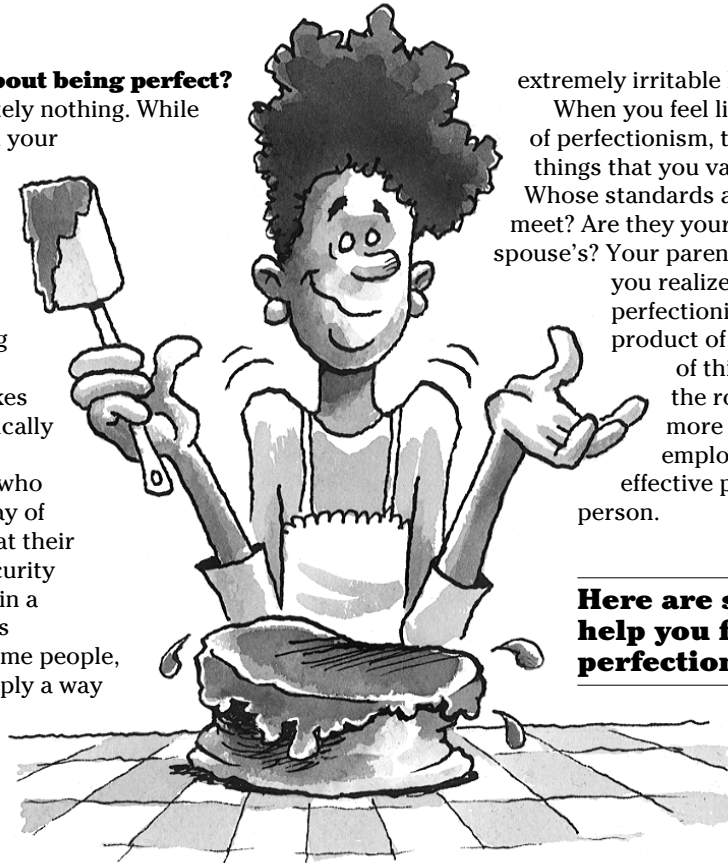
The truth is: absolutely nothing. While it's admirable to put your best efforts into your work and parenting responsibilities, it's simply impossible to be perfect at everything you do.

Perfectionism makes people set unrealistically high standards for themselves. People who get caught in this way of thinking may feel that their self-worth or job security depends on turning in a consistently spotless performance. For some people, perfectionism is simply a way of coping that they learned as children, a behavior they've never questioned.

There's a great irony to perfectionism.

Instead of increasing your sense of competency and self-esteem, perfectionist thinking actually prevents you from succeeding. For example, administrative assistant Tony Bly frequently procrastinates about starting projects because he fears making mistakes. His procrastination often leads to missed deadlines and results in blows to his self-esteem.

Perfectionism also can increase your stress levels and take its toll on your physical and emotional health. Sales manager Martha Sanchez has very high standards about work and parenting. She won't let a report leave her desk without reviewing it a dozen times. Lately, she's been spending hours on the job worrying about her daughter's new child care arrangements. Her concentration is faltering and she's given up her lunch-time walks in order to catch up on her work. Martha is ready to explode. Her children and coworkers have noticed that she's



extremely irritable lately.

When you feel like you're in the grip of perfectionism, take stock of the things that you value most in life. Whose standards are you trying to meet? Are they your employer's? Your spouse's? Your parents'? Yours? Once you realize that your perfectionist standards are the product of an unrealistic way of thinking, you'll be on the road to becoming a more productive employee, a more effective parent and a happier person.

Here are some ideas to help you fight perfectionist thinking...

- ✓ Some tasks deserve meticulous preparation and execution, but most projects can be completed on time with a more realistic amount of effort.
- ✓ You'll have more satisfying relationships with others when you let yourself make mistakes. People tend to resent others who behave as if they always have to be perfect.
- ✓ Things always take longer than planned. Having quality work completed on time is usually better than striving for perfection and completing the project behind schedule.
- ✓ Your knowledge and skills increase more rapidly if you view your mistakes as a learning experience.
- ✓ There's no such thing as a perfect world.