



Suggestions for coping with perfectionism.

Perfectionism may not sound like too much of a problem in a school atmosphere - after all, parents and teachers want children to develop strong work ethics, sound study habits and achieve their best results. The problem is, perfectionism can lead students away from these healthy developments and can add to students' stress levels. When a student becomes upset over a score of 98 out of 100, or can't handle coming in 2nd out of a class of 30, etc., schoolwork will often suffer as a result. Perfectionism of this degree usually results from a fear of failure, rejection or disapproval, or insecurity about meeting a given standard. Students feeling these pressures quickly fall into obsessive and extended work patterns.

So - how can such patterns and thought processes be avoided?

- 1. Separate Work From Personal Feelings:** This is a huge hurdle for many students. For them, an evaluation of their work often feels like an evaluation of them personally, and the pressure of making that evaluation positive can lead to perfectionism. Students need to be reminded to treat work feedback as evaluation for a specific assignment and nothing more.
- 2. Set Incremental Goals:** Many students tend to set unattainable, or at least extremely difficult, goals. Instead, students should focus on setting goals based on past achievements. If a student gets an 85 on an exam, the goal for the next one should not be a 100 - it should be an 87. Incremental goals are more reasonable, and most long-term improvement occurs gradually.
- 3. Recognize Stress:** This can be easier said than done, but it's crucial in battling perfectionism. Students need to become more aware when they're stressing over a project (spending unnecessary extra hours, re-writing pages exhaustively, etc.). Learning to recognize stress can help students to reevaluate work methods.
- 4. Explore Efficient Work Methods:** Often, newer or easier work methods can assist in efficiency. Students shouldn't get lazy but should allow certain technologies to make work easier. That might mean using Notion for note-making, or it may mean working collaboratively in Google Docs with another student to study for a test - whatever the case, perfectionists can often find their workloads lessened by these steps.



- 5. Put Things In Perspective** - It's crucial for students to have proper perspective on schoolwork. Being able to stop and think about the worst-case scenario can help students to realize that an individual assignment - while important - should not be a source of unnecessary stress or excessive workload.
- 6. Ask For Guidelines:** Encourage students to ask teachers how long they should spend on a homework task or an assignment, so they have an idea whether it is a 2 hour or 22 hour task!
- 7. Record Time Taken:** Have students record for a week or two what they do every day in their home learning and how long it took. This can help parents and teachers identify bottlenecks in subjects or types of tasks.

Ultimately, dealing with perfectionism can be a long and tricky process. But implementing these habits and thought processes can help students to develop a healthier approach to schoolwork.

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