

Is being a perfectionist stressing you out?

Have others called you a “perfectionist”? Do you get worried or anxious about needing to be perfect all the time? Do you often set standards that are difficult or even impossible to meet?

Wanting to do things well can be good for you in your personal and work life. But sometimes, it gets taken to an extreme.

Although you may think this behavior is harmless, the American Psychological Association says it’s often not. An unhealthy level of perfectionism can cause depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health conditions. The key is to know whether your attitude is a healthy one or whether it’s causing you stress, says the Harvard Medical School.

Healthy perfectionism involves:

- Setting high standards that are achievable and make you feel good
- Doing things that you enjoy and that you do well
- Knowing your priorities and values, and spending your time on them
- Doing things that pay off for you in the end, rather than things that cost you too much time, energy and frustration



By contrast, unhealthy attitudes of perfectionism may include:

- Regularly setting goals that aren’t realistic for you
- Feeling overly competitive and that you have to win at everything
- Feeling that mistakes are a disaster and must never happen
- Trying to do something over and over that isn’t possible for you to do

If you find that you have unhealthy perfectionism and it’s interfering with your life, it may be time to speak with your doctor. Perfectionism can be a sign of a mental health issue that needs treatment from a professional counselor. Many people may also benefit from self-help or support groups, as well as stress management techniques. The National Institute of Mental Health has resources on its website that may help you get started. Visit www.nimh.nih.gov.