



Raising Kids Who Have the Courage to be Imperfect

Perfectionism has been defined as “An irrational desire to be perfect along with being overly critical of self and others.” It is akin to having a phobia of making mistakes.

Being perfect is an impossible goal. It is considered a coping mechanism meant to heal and compensate for feelings of inadequacy.

Three Aspects of Perfectionism

1. Socially prescribed – belief that others are judging one harshly. To win approval one must continually display perfection.
2. Self-oriented – one’s worth is tied to achievement. There is no lasting sense of accomplishment. Each new task presents a new stressor
3. Other-oriented – Having unrealistic standards for others

Studies show that since the late 1980’s perfectionism has been on the rise along with a record number of young people with depression and anxiety. It’s believed these trends are connected.

Why has Perfectionism Increased?

1. Cultural shifts: Rise of meritocracy in society (Individual achievement valued more than social interest)
2. Global economic uncertainty
3. Social Media
4. Parental expectations
5. Extra-curricular Activities
6. Competitive social environments

Negative Impacts of Perfectionism

- Increased Anxiety
- Chronic Depression
- Procrastination
- Difficulty making decisions/avoidance of new things
- Low self-esteem
- Eating disorders/body dysmorphia

Helpful Parenting Approaches

Avoid:

- Emphasizing the importance of achievements & success
- Evaluating or labeling child (Don't teach child to be concerned about what others think of him)
- Evaluating others in front of child
- Framing mistakes as sources of shame or embarrassment

DO:

- Encourage by focusing on effort & improvement
- Frame all mistakes as learning opportunities
- Help child lower standards & set reasonable goals
- Teach child there are always alternative outcomes
- Help child modify perfectionistic thinking
- Work to reduce stress in their lives

Karen Skinulis, R.P.
Ontario Parenting Education Centre
94 Westbury Court
Richmond Hill, L4S 2L3
www.practicalparenting.ca
parenttalk.ca@gmail.com
905-508-5240
416-909-0664