

Top Tips for Managing Perfectionism

Manage Last Minute Meltdowns

Know your child's early warning signs. When your child starts to show signs of anxiety and stress, encourage them to take a short break - a short break can short-circuit their anxiety. Stress can be contagious so stay calm - your child's anxiety may worsen if they see your stress.

Focus on Effort not Outcome

Reward effort rather than achievements. For example, reward your child for finishing home-based work *before* it's due, or reward your child more for studying than for their final exam mark. Breaking tasks down into small chunks will also help you to reward effort. Focus on process goals and the steps that need to be taken to finish a task rather than an outcome (i.e. the end mark).

Focus On Task Completion Not Perfection

If your child has procrastinated and left their task until the last minute, focus on completing the project instead of finishing it perfectly. Help your child prioritise what *has* to be done, what they would *like* to get done, and what they can leave out to get the task finished in time.

Establish a Homework Routine

Set up a homework space free from distractions and a time each day to do homework. Make sure you're nearby during homework time so you can re-direct your child back to their homework if they get distracted. Help your child break tasks down and set goals for their homework time each day so that they don't feel overwhelmed by large tasks

Avoid "Saving" Your Child

Doing your child's assignment for them or requesting an extension will prevent your child from learning how to cope with their perfectionism. Avoid helping your child unnecessarily – your child might think you don't believe they're capable of completing their homework. Also avoid always checking your child's answers; it's important that they see homework as an opportunity to practice what they're learning rather than something that has to be done perfectly.

Help Your Child Achieve Balance

When setting school work goals help your child to understand what expectations are realistic given other factors like time limitations. Help your child to balance their homework with after-school activities, time with family and friends, etc. Make sure your child has enough sleep and don't allow this to be compromised by extending homework time.

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TOP TIPS

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Perfectionism

Most people assume that striving for perfection and setting high goals is a good thing, but that's not always true.

Perfectionism can drive kids to excel at school or in sports, but unless their perfectionism is healthy perfectionism, they won't derive satisfaction or a sense of fulfillment from their achievements.

Signs of unhealthy perfectionism are:

- A tendency to become anxious, upset, or angry about mistakes
- Chronic procrastination and difficulty completing tasks
- A low threshold for frustration and giving up easily
- Fear of embarrassment
- Overly cautious and taking longer than needed to complete tasks
- Re-doing work to get it just right
- Meltdowns when things don't go perfectly or as expected
- Refusal to try new things (and risk making a mistake)

There's a difference between completing tasks to the very best of your ability and an unhealthy commitment to perfection.

Use these tips to manage your child's perfectionism. If your child's drive for perfectionism is causing them stress or affecting their self-esteem, consider seeking the advice of a child clinical psychologist.