



You're Perfect, With All Your Mistakes

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The Navajo women traditionally have woven a mistake into their beautiful rugs, to show that they are not competing with God. Are *you* competing with God?

Perfectionism is a curse for many of us. Negative consequences of the need for perfection include low self-esteem, guilt, pessimism, depression, rigidity, obsessive/compulsive behavior and lack of motivation. We have to change our thoughts in order to change our perfectionist behavior.

I remember in my early 20s, when I ended a relationship with someone to whom I was engaged, I explained to my boyfriend that after much agonizing reflection, I didn't think we would be good life partners, and I didn't want to make the mistake of getting married when I honestly didn't think it would last forever. He said to me, "You're so afraid of making a mistake, that you're making one!"

That boyfriend's words have stayed with me over time. I will never fully know if leaving him was a "mistake," but leaving that relationship allowed me to meet someone with whom I communicate in a much more healthy way, and we've been married for 20 wonderful years. And still my ex-boyfriend's words do hold importance and are instructive.

Sometimes we do fear making a mistake, and in the process of trying to be perfect we do ourselves a disservice. When you decide to do nothing, for instance, in fear of making a poor decision, you are still making a decision. To do nothing is your decision. And it can have as negative an impact as if you just went ahead and made the poor decision you feared. When we make decisions based on fear, we often take a very safe route, and our progress toward our goal is much slower because of this risk-averse approach. When we make decisions based on our passion, we are fueled by determination and tend to take more risks to get where we want to go, thus getting there faster.

In my view, there is perfection in *not* being perfect. Because true perfection does not exist for human beings, "perfect" or being the best you can be, dictates that mistakes are necessary. When we are operating at our very best, and are truly centered, we may make fewer mistakes than when we are living unbalanced lives, but mistakes will still happen. It's the very nature of being fallible human beings. It's how we learn and grow.

If you feel that perfectionism is a challenge for you, what can you do, like the Navajo women, to purposefully allow yourself to *not* be perfect? Here are some things you might try, as offered by psychologist James J Messina on the Web site Livestrong.com:

- Recognize that the human condition is one of failings, weakness, deviations, imperfections and mistakes; it is acceptable to be human.
- Accept that the ideal is only a guideline or goal to be worked toward, not to be achieved 100 percent.
- Set realistic and flexible time frames for the achievement of a goal.
- Develop an ability to use "thought stopping" techniques whenever you find yourself mentally scolding yourself for not being "good enough."
- Enjoy success and achievement with a healthy self-pride, and eliminate the need for self-deprecation or false humility.
- Reward yourself for your progress, to reinforce your efforts to change even when progress is slight or doesn't meet up to your idealistic expectations.
- Love yourself; and tell yourself often that you deserve good things.
- Be open to the idea that you will be successful in your efforts to change, even if you are not "first," "the best," "the model," "the star pupil" or "the finest."
- Tell yourself that the important thing is to be going in a positive direction.