

# Perfectionism in the Gifted Child

facilitated by Lisa Van Gemert

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### Types of Perfectionists (Adelson and Wilson)

- Academic Achievers
- Aggravated Accuracy Assessors
- Risk Evaders: all or nothing
- Controlling Image Managers: I could have it if I wanted to
- Procrastinating Perfectionists: if it stays in my mind, I can't fail

### Consequences of Perfectionism:

- neglect of other interests
- fear
- underachievement
- decreased social acceptance
- extrinsic motivation
- low self-esteem
- anxiety
- limited social interaction
- limited risk taking
- negative thinking
- stress

### Healthy high standards manifest:

- mastery orientation
- capability of relaxing
- based on personal standards
- pleasure from working hard

### Unhealthy perfectionism:

- based on external evaluation
- motivated by low self-esteem
- unsatisfied with high level of effort
- incapable of relaxing

**Big Idea: Excellent is good enough**

**Strategy: 1 – 5**

**Big Idea: It's the journey, and it always was**

**Big Idea: Don't be your own worst enemy.**

**Mindset (Carol Dweck)**

**Perseverance (polar explorers)**

**Grit (Angela Duckworth)**

**Strategy: Role of Goal Disengagement**

**Strategy: Teach how to avoid self-talk mistakes**

**Strategy: Teach how to avoid illogical beliefs**

**Strategy: Ask questions (don't tell).**

**Strategy: Model strategies to deal with stress**

**Big Idea: Just do it**

**Big Idea: Be a Weeble and a Bozo**

**Big Idea: Failure is a perfectly acceptable option**

**Strategy: Fail Forward**

**Strategy: The Power of a 99**

**Strategy: Amish mistake**

**Strategy: provide support in dealing with failure**

**Practice predictions:**

**Strategy: just jump**

**Strategy: Is it my problem or does it belong to someone else?**

**Barbara Clark's Model for problem resolution**

1. What happened?
2. What is the problem?
3. What are you doing to solve the problem?
4. Is it working?
5. What are you willing to do differently?
6. Repeat 3, 4, & 5 as necessary
7. Would you like to hear what other kids have tried? Would you be willing to...?

**Resources:**

**Books:**

- *Letting Go of Perfect: Overcoming Perfectionism in Kids* by Jill Adelson Ph.D.
- *Too Perfect: When Being in Control Gets Out of Control* by Jeannette Dewyze
- *What to Do When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough: The Real Deal on Perfectionism: A Guide for Kids* by Thomas S. Greenspon Ph.D.
- *Freeing Our Families From Perfectionism* by Thomas S. Greenspon



**Miscellaneous:**

Make motivational posters here: <http://bighugelabs.com/motivator.php>

Post about Perfectionism on: <http://bit.ly/perfectionismlvg>

Movie: *Meet the Robinsons* (Disney, 2007)

Study on resilience in children: <http://bit.ly/kidsresil>

“You've Gotta Know When to Fold 'Em: Goal Disengagement and Systemic Inflammation in Adolescence.” Gregory Miller and Carsten Wrosch. *Psychological Science*. September 2007, vol 18 no. 9, 773-777.

**Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There is a crack in everything,  
That's how the light gets in.**

**Leonard Cohen “Anthem”**

## ITHAKA

As you set out for Ithaka  
hope the voyage is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:  
you'll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope the voyage is a long one.  
May there be many a summer morning when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you come into harbors seen for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind—  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you are destined for.  
But do not hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,  
so you are old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you would not have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

(C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems*. Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Edited by George Savidis. Revised Edition. Princeton University Press, 1992)