

## Perfectionism - by CasSandra Calin

Many of the clients I'm having conversations with lately are **struggling** with perfectionism. What's interesting about that is that they only base their own evaluation of themselves (as perfect or not) on a few areas of their life. Here are some of the pitfalls of perfectionism. In addition to the usual narratives of "take it easy on yourself" and "nobody's perfect", it's helpful to break down the ways in which not only does perfectionism harm you, it just generally doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

1. We only pick a few areas of our lives to evaluate ourselves by.
  - a. If I'm in school and I tell myself that I need to get all As because I've internalized the idea that I have to be perfect, I'm really only striving for perfection in one area of my life. I might be performing at a C or D level when it comes to taking care of myself, or being a good friend, or resting, but, for some reason, I've decided it's not important to strive for excellence in those areas of my life.
2. Failure is an opportunity to learn.
  - a. If you haven't failed lately in some area of your life, that might be a warning sign. Failure can be an indicator of growth, self-awareness, grace, trying new things, learning, or bravery. If you are not allowing yourself to fail, that may mean you are only engaging in things that feel very safe and familiar, or that you aren't giving yourself room to grow and learn. Can you imagine if you already knew how to do everything perfectly at this point in your life? Where's the sense of adventure!
3. Ultimately, if we explore our fears of failure or perfectionism, we can learn important things about our larger fears and insecurities.
  - a. Is the pressure to perform perfectly in the workplace connected to fears of financial instability? Do you feel like the relationships you have with others are conditional, and they will abandon or reject you if you make a mistake? Is your fear of failure as a parent a response to what you went through as a child? Are you pushing yourself to be perfect in school because you hope it will win you approval or acceptance among peers or professors? Rather than trying to satisfy our perfectionistic tendencies, we can get to know them - ask questions about where they come from and what purpose they have.