



Perfectionism Hurts Relationships

Is perfectionism hurting your relationships? If you yourself know you struggle with perfectionism, there is a good chance that this character trait is also hurting the people around you. Perfectionism manifests itself in relationships in the following five ways:

Discontentment with the relationship. Perfectionists aren't contented people. They have high expectations for the relationship and are vocal about them. Regardless of how well things are going, they aren't truly satisfied because after all, it could be better. This discontentment feels personal to the other person because it will feel like a personal failure, even though the source of the discontentment is really the perfectionist's unreachable standards

Hypercriticism of other people. People who are perfectionists are hypercritical because they expect things to be perfect. "Perfect" is relative and the mark tends to be moved, so no matter how much people do, it never really is quite enough. It is said that a critical person is even more critical of themselves, but that is little solace when someone is being critiqued and always falling short. It is exasperating and disheartening to never be good enough for someone whose opinion you value.

Shaming others' mistakes. Shaming communicates the message that the person who made the mistake is a mistake. It makes the person feel bad about themselves rather than just bad about what they did. Criticism that attacks the person with labels, name-calling, negative assumptions, and over-reaching conclusions about one's character, feel shaming. Perfectionists shame because they believe that in order to be good enough, people need to be perfect.

A push for others to achieve. It isn't surprising that high achievers are often perfectionists. They push themselves and others hard. Self-worth is linked to achievement and the self-worth of the perfectionist is also often linked to how well his/her spouse, children, family, and employees do.

Conditional love and acceptance. Unconditional love and acceptance convey the message that, regardless of what someone does or doesn't do, he/she will be loved and accepted. Conditional love means that love is given when and only when certain conditions are met. Perfectionists offer conditional love and acceptance because they give these things when they are satisfied with the other person, and since they are rarely satisfied, everything feels conditional.

Perfectionism isn't good for relationships. It prevents the other person from feeling approved, loved, and accepted. It lowers the self-worth of others and makes other people afraid to be themselves.

If your high standards are hurting any of your relationships, take note of how Jesus treated people. Even though He truly was perfect, He offered grace, acceptance, forgiveness, and unconditional love to those that weren't. He conveyed the message that each person had great value even though the person's actions fell short. When the people in your life aren't perfect, treat them like Jesus would.

By Karla Downing

Relationship Prayer

God,

Help me to recognize when my perfectionistic standards are hurting the people around me. Help me offer grace, acceptance, forgiveness, and unconditional love instead of being rigid and harsh.

Relationship Challenge

- ❖ Are you a perfectionist?
- ❖ How is your perfectionism hurting your relationships?
- ❖ Identify how you can let go of the perfectionism in your key relationships.

Scripture Meditation

1 Peter 4:8

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

Colossians 3:12-13

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.”

If you have any questions you would like to ask Karla, please feel free to email her at karla@changemyrelationship.com.

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