Pushing Past Perfectionism

Wellness Workshop

Student Wellness Services
Acknowledging the Land and the People

We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes

the Blackfoot Confederacy (the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut’ina First Nation, the Stoney Nakoda (the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations), and Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

The University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is “Moh’kins’tsis.”
Learning Objectives

• Explore perfectionism and shame
• Learn about fixed vs. growth mindsets
• Build a self-compassion practice as an antidote to perfectionism and shame
“When perfectionism is driving us, shame is riding shotgun and fear is that annoying backseat driver.”

Brene Brown
Perfectionism vs. Striving for Excellence

Choose Excellence
Not Perfection
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perfectionism</th>
<th>Excellence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impossibly high standards that can never be met</td>
<td>High standards that can be met with effort, practice, and persistence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mistakes are failures and must be avoided</td>
<td>Mistakes are normal and help us learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Only value the outcome</td>
<td>Value the process, not just the outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rigid; there's only one right way to do things</td>
<td>Flexible; goals can be adjusted</td>
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LiveWellwithSharonMartin.com
Learning to Recognize Perfectionism

• Do I have trouble meeting my own standards?
• Do I often feel frustrated, depressed, anxious, or angry while trying to meet my standards?
• Have I been told that my standards are too high?
• Do my standards get in my own way? For example, do they make it difficult for me to meet deadlines, finish a task, trust others, or do anything spontaneously?

“The compulsive need to achieve and accomplish one’s goals, with no allowance for falling short of one’s ideals” (Neff, 2011)
What is Perfectionism?

• Perfectionism is:
  • Aimed at minimizing or avoiding feeling of **blame, judgment, and shame**
  • Protective; **shields self-esteem** from any vulnerability
  • Other-focused – seeking approval and acceptance

• Perfectionism is not:
  • the same as striving to be your best
  • self-improvement
1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can’t change very much.

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2. You can learn new things, but you can’t really change how intelligent you are.

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3. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.

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4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

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5. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.

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6. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.

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7. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.

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8. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.

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Growth vs. Fixed Mindset

**Fixed Mindset**
- Intelligence is static
- Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...
  - Avoid challenges
  - Give up easily
  - See effort as fruitless or worse
  - Ignore useful negative feedback
  - Feel threatened by the success of others

**Growth Mindset**
- Intelligence can be developed
- Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...
  - Embrace challenges
  - Persist in the face of setbacks
  - See effort as the path to mastery
  - Learn from criticism
  - Find lessons and inspiration in the success of others

**As a result**, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential. All this confirms a deterministic view of the world.

**As a result**, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement. All this gives them a greater sense of free will.
You go in for an evaluation with your supervisor and you receive negative feedback. Your supervisor thinks you aren’t putting in enough effort, or you’re making too many mistakes, or that you’re simply not competent enough to handle your current project.

- What is an example of a fixed mindset thought or statement? Growth mindset?
Defining Self-Esteem

“Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value, or how much we like ourselves.” (Neff, 2017)

What kind of thoughts, feelings, or behaviours do you think result in low self-esteem?

- Perfectionism
- Approval-seeking
- Narcissism
- Self-serving attribution bias
- Reactive anger
- Hide or refute shortcomings
- Social comparison

Defining Self-Esteem

What are examples of things that would raise or maintain your self-esteem?

- Recognize what you're good at
- Build positive relationships
- Learn to be assertive
- Start saying "no"
- Give yourself a challenge
Self-Compassion

(a.k.a. shame resilience)

...being open to and moved by one’s own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, nonjudgmental attitude toward one’s inadequacies and failure, and recognizing that one’s own experience is part of the common human experience

(Neff, 2003, p. 224)
What is Shame?
“In contrast to self-esteem, self-compassion is not based on self-evaluations. People feel compassion for themselves because all human beings deserve compassion and understanding, not because they possess some particular set of traits (pretty, smart, talented, and so on).” (Neff, K. 2017)
Question 1:
What is an example of something you learned how to do, or perhaps something you discovered about yourself, as a result of previously making a mistake or failing at something?

Question 2:
Is there someone who you’ve watched embrace their own vulnerability, make mistakes, and keep growing?
SKILL 1: Develop your own self-compassion mantra
Practicing Self-Compassion

SKILL 2: Compassionate Imagery
Compassion Into Action

In the coming week:

1. Practice your own self-compassion mantra

2. Practice compassionate imagery
Thank you! Questions?

Check out our other wellness workshops:
• Healthy Thinking
• Motivation & Time Management
• Boosting Self-Compassion
• Managing Stress and Anxiety

For the most up-to-date information on our resources and services, visit our website!

https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services
Earn the Conflict Management Digital Badge

Conflict management is a key skill for relationship building and achieving success.

Increase your confidence in your ability to manage conflicts at school, work and in other parts of your lives. Training within the Conflict Management Digital Badge includes learning about conflict styles, navigating conflict in relationships, and intercultural communication.

Get a virtual LinkedIn badge to show your skill development in this area!
References and Resources

• Anxiety Canada. How to overcome perfectionism
• Brene Brown: TED Talks, *Daring Greatly, The Gifts of Imperfection*,
• self-compassion.org
  • http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/
• Positive Psychology. The Mindset Survey
• Practice mindfulness: UCalgary Groups