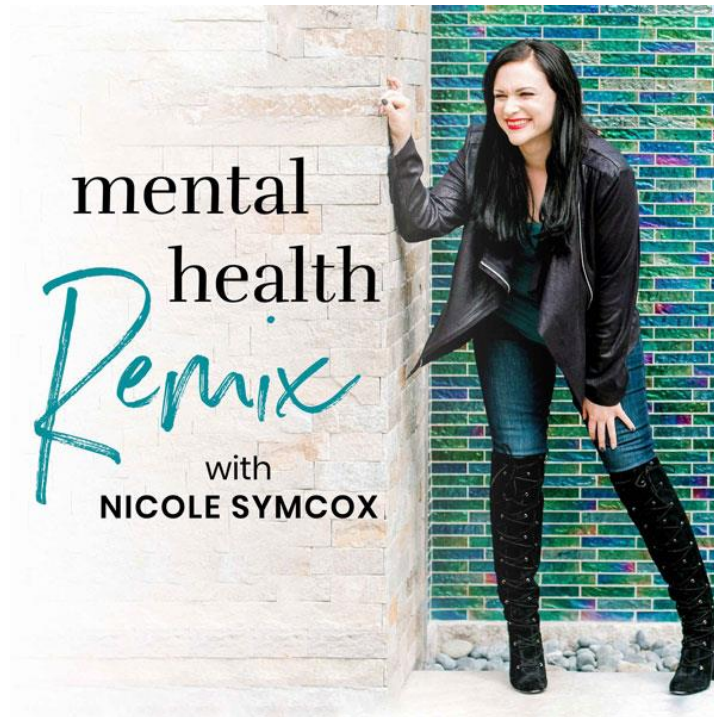


Ep #63: Perfectionism Vs. Good Enough with Integrity



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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What I want to say in this is that I think we need to adopt a little bit more of a good enough with integrity mindset. Like let's start to change the story on perfectionism a little bit. Because if people only love you or only like you for the things that you do, but not for who you are, are those the people that you really want in your life? That's a question to ask yourself.

Maybe the answer is yes. Maybe that's okay with you. You're like I don't really mind that people only like me for the things that I can do. But if that creates loneliness for you or makes you feel sad that the only reason people are interested in you is because of the things that you can do, you may want to consider a different way with perfectionism.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you. Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox.

Hey, hey everyone. Welcome to episode 63. So today, I want to talk a little bit about perfectionism. I'm getting over being sick. So you might hear a little bit of rasp in my voice throughout this episode. Anyways, so I want to jump in and just say that perfectionism is a lot more complicated than what it might look like on the surface, right? On the surface, it just looks like we put an enormous amount of pressure on ourselves to get things right. It feels really important to us to get tasks done in a particular manner.

So it can be really, really frustrating. A lot of people who are perfectionists are also riddled with anxiety. It kind of goes one in one hand. So I want you to just kind of think about if this story is true for you, what is driving your perfectionism? Like what makes you feel that nothing you do is good enough? That you have to work and work and work and push and push and push rather than just offering the world your best with integrity.

So that's sort of where we want to live. Rather than living in perfectionism, we really want to live in this space of neutrality. Of you know what? I do my

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best with integrity. Which means you're putting forth your best effort with everything that you know how to do, but we're not working countless hours, and we're not killing ourselves over it. We're not telling ourselves negative stories constantly and saying this isn't good enough or critiquing. Because the thing about perfectionism is that there's no limit to it.

So, for example, if you're making a video, if you're a perfectionist, it could take you hours to edit maybe like a two minute video. Because you're so hyper focused on every single thing that feels wrong or is slightly off. Then you never put it out to the world. When it turns out that maybe that two minute video would have jumped started your business or would have kickstarted your TikTok and gotten you some followers or whatever.

But with perfectionism it becomes really challenging because we're trying to achieve 100% perfect rather than just best effort. Okay. So what's interesting about perfectionism is it can a lot of times be rooted in trauma. It doesn't have to be, but it can also be connected to anxiety disorders.

Sometimes our anxiety tells us stories that things have to be perfect or people won't like us, or people will reject us, or they'll make fun of us, or they'll think that we're not good at what we do. Whatever the story might be, but anxiety, as we've talked about, is a great storyteller. It likes to tell lots and lots of stories. Perfectionism sort of falls in that category of anxiety telling you a story about a particular way you need to live in the world in order to stay safe.

So sometimes we feel like if things aren't perfect then we feel chaotic inside. We feel like we are only in control when things are being done to the level that we find satisfactory, right. Like I said, perfectionism has no end. So you could be editing this two minute video for the rest of your life if you let perfectionism run your show. But at some point, you have to decide the video's good enough, and I'm just going to post it. And that's going to be that right?

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So finally, usually what leads us to do something like that is we get exhausted, right? Because perfectionism is exhausting. So a lot of that exhaustion comes from all of the anxiety that you're feeling. So if this is you, I just want to normalize this for you. That perfectionism is a real thing. It's a real struggle. And it's a superpower at the same time.

It makes you incredibly capable of doing things, doing things right, and people probably really appreciate your work because it's always done really, really well. So sometimes that can reinforce the perfectionism more and more, right? Because you're getting positive feedback for these things that you're doing.

What I want to say in this is that I think we need to adopt a little bit more of a good enough with integrity mindset. Like let's start to change the story on perfectionism a little bit. Because if people only love you or only like you for the things that you do, but not for who you are, are those the people that you really want in your life? That's a question to ask yourself.

Maybe the answer is yes. Maybe that's okay with you. You're like I don't really mind that people only like me for the things that I can do. But if that creates loneliness for you or makes you feel sad that the only reason people are interested in you is because of the things that you can do, you may want to consider a different way with perfectionism.

So one of the things to consider is where is your perfectionism coming from? Have you always been a perfectionist? So like I said, sometimes this can be rooted in trauma because you may have grown up in a family where if it wasn't perfect, someone got hurt or something bad happened. So you may have developed perfectionism as a coping skill, which is totally valid and makes a lot of sense, right?

Or maybe you were put into dance classes or sports at a very early age. So perfectionism and precision was really not just encouraged but expected of you, right. So I see that a lot in trained athletes. I treat a lot of those in my practice like competitive dancers and athletes that have been trained since

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they were three years old. So sometimes it's a way of life that gets ingrained into you through training and through expectations.

So perfectionism can also be rooted in anxiety. Are you just an anxious person? When you do things perfectly or when your perfectionism comes out, do you just feel more safe in the world? What purpose does this part serve for you?

I would imagine, with perfectionism, it's probably safety and competency, right? As long as things are perfect, nobody can say anything to you, right? So it's kind of this really strong, capable feeling. So what becomes really important is that you unhook from the narrative of other people. Other people are going to like, dislike, comment, not comment, whatever, about all the things that you're doing in the world, right? Like we live in a world of commentary, especially with social media.

I think we need to change the way our brain processes that and step into our own narrative. It's kind of like well, I liked this video, going back to that example. So I put it out because I stand by it, and you guys can hate it, and that's on you. But I did my best with integrity, right?

Same thing with homework. Doing your best job with integrity. There's just going to be some subjects that you struggle with. It's just not all subjects come naturally to people. So you might be really good at math and not so good at English. Like writing may not be your thing, and that's okay. So in those cases, what is the limit? What is good enough with integrity? What is your best effort in that?

I also want to encourage you to think about what makes you uniquely you as a human. What you can do for the world is certainly an important thing. But also learning how to just value yourself as a human being on this earth. Like, what are those other things about you that are awesome? Are you funny? Are you creative? Are you good at making friends? Are you relational?

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Just kind of serving yourself. If that's an area you need to grow in, that's okay. Your perfectionism part will tell you it's not okay because the perfectionism part always expects perfect, right. Expects you to be good at all things at all times.

So let's change the story on that. Let's change the story and turn it into one of love. Learning how to love and appreciate yourself. So I want to start with saying that loving yourself is not easy. Loving yourself is hard. So if you're one of those people that's like oh my gosh, loving myself? Gross. I don't even know where to begin with that. Your normal.

Like I think a lot of people really, really struggle with loving themselves, especially if you have a trauma history or an anxious brain. It's really, really difficult to kind of dive into that because if you have a strong trauma history, who you are uniquely as a person was not reflected back to you. So you've had to learn and live through survival mechanisms and see yourself through the lens of survival all the time.

As you go to therapy and do EMDR, IFS, brain spotting, whatever modality you choose to do, and you start to unpack that story, you start to get that reflection back to you. The reflection you should have always gotten right? Which is you are lovable, valuable, and capable. But if you don't believe that about yourself then those words are probably annoying just hearing coming out of my mouth. You're probably cringing just thinking about it, right?

So instead of jumping all the way to self-love, let's just do regard. How do you regard yourself? Starting to change the narrative because regard is more of a neutral statement, and practicing giving yourself feedback. Kind of being your own parent and showing up for yourself in a way that feels good and aligned to you. So how do you regard yourself? What does that look like? Does treating yourself like a machine, is it in alignment with being human? No, it's not. But perfectionism will lead you there.

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So taking a step back and learning how to treat yourself well in small steps. So small steps might look like spending five minutes of rest in between tasks or pacing yourself or scheduling fun activities. Even if you could be working, you decide to do something fun to give your brain a break because the work will always be there. The projects will always be there, right? But how can you treat yourself nicely? How can you treat yourself well? Let's just start there before we jump all the way into self-love. Because, again, like self-love is a very hard concept for most people.

So I want you to consider reframing perfectionism's role in your life and thinking about if I could change it, what would that look like? How can I do a really good job at all of my tasks and still treat myself with respect? How can I still treat myself as a human being with respect? So what does that look like? You get to define that. I can't define that for you. So just sort of thinking through that.

You may also want to do some journaling around this. Journaling perfectionism's role in your life and the anxiety that drives it. Just kind of notice what comes up in the journal. Like why is anxiety driving perfectionism? Why is it so important? Because a lot of times perfectionism makes anxiety worse. Because anxiety then gets stirred up and it feels like it has to kick up into high gear because now a story is being told that a potential threat could happen. That potential threat could be rejection or it could be criticism. So we don't want that for our brains, right? We don't want that for our anxiety brains because that's not helpful.

So I want to encourage you today that there is another way. Perfectionism doesn't have to rule your life. You are valuable beyond what you can do. You are valuable beyond what you can produce.

My hope for you today is that you can learn to do something different with perfectionism. Just kind of see where it leads you. Just kind of notice anxiety's story that like comes up and puts a lot of pressure on you to perform and to do well. How can that look outside of pressure? Like you can perform well without all the anxiety and the pressure. There is a way of

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life that you can get a lot done, and it can feel really good without all of perfectionism story.

All right, my friends. Again, I always highly recommend getting the Anxiety Remix workbook. It's on my website on the front page. You just click it, and it'll take you to the landing page. This is a great start. Like if you're struggling with the anxiety that goes alongside perfectionism, this will give you the coping skills and tools that you need to get through hard moments when anxiety is popping up.

So a lot of times when we're in anxious moments, we don't know how to support ourselves. So I wrote a workbook to help you have what you need in order to help you with anxiety. So again, that's on the front page of my website. As always, feel free to say hi on Instagram. I'm always there, and I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Mental Health Remix*. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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