



You don't have to PERFECT to be AMAZING.

Perfection almost killed this article. I've been thinking about writing about this topic for two weeks. I kept putting off getting started. I wanted it to be just right.

Why an article on perfectionism?

Because the desire to be perfect is one of the biggest challenges that adversely affects the performance for athletes and professionals. Perfectionism is the enemy of done.

Perfectionism is often tied to unreasonably high personal expectations. Perfectionism prevents us from trusting in our skill set. In believing our effort or "we" are enough.

There are many positives about being a perfectionist. Perfectionists are very motivated, have a strong work ethic and are very committed to their goals. Who wouldn't want anyone with those traits on their team?

Perfectionists also have some challenging traits. They often evaluate their performance or themselves as an A or F. Good or Bad - no middle ground. Perfectionists can over train and overwork to a point of injury or stress overload.

How does Perfectionism show up in sport?

Athletes often share that if I am not perfect in my performance, I am not good. It creates a personal level of dissatisfaction, frustration, disappointment and often erodes the athlete's confidence level.

A golfing client believed every shot had to be perfect for his round of golf to be good. When we peeled it back and got him to acknowledge and say "I don't have to be perfect to play a great round," I could see the stress leave his shoulders. The desire to be perfect is a heavy burden to carry.

I was watching a baseball client's game one day. He made a nice play in the field. After a slight bobble, he made the throw to first and got the runner out. I could tell from his body language that he was annoyed because the play was not perfect. An out is an out. We teach clients to make the shift and be accepting of a functional win and even an ugly win. It doesn't have to be perfect to be effective.

How does perfect show up at work?

Let me count the ways. Professionals might be consumed for hours just to get a work assignment perfect when good would have been good enough. The extra hours perfecting a good product might be more effective being used on the next project. Perfectionists are often at work after hours getting things just right.

Or professionals might be extremely critical when evaluating their self performance. I had a first time leader who after 13 months resigned. (I loved this leader and to this day we remain good friends.) When I asked him why he was resigning he said, "I grade things as an A or F and I was not pleased with my year. I gave myself an F." He had a great 1st year on the job and I was sad to lose him. He said, "That was not good enough for him based on his standards."

We challenge our clients to think beyond evaluating their performance as an A or F (1 or 10) and to see the entire scale. It's ok if today was a B or a 7. We teach to recognize we do our best for the moment.

Your efforts in sport, work and life do not have to be perfect to be awesome. Say it three times, slowly breathe and internalize this.

I am certain when I was younger I was a perfectionist. I had the work ethic of a perfectionist to my detriment. In my pursuit of my collegiate basketball goals I ignored the fact that I woke up daily with back pain and continued to train. I over did it and lost my senior season due my back injury. I trained through the wrong type of pain consistently. (Not good.)

Maturity and life allowed me to give up my perfectionist traits.

The perfectionist traits like the ones that drive you to prepare, and prepare some more just so you get it perfect.

We know that work expands to the time allocated. We teach professionals to time boxing things. So instead of taking a day to write a quarterly report, allocated 2 hours to complete it. Instead of taking hours and hours to prepare for a presentation, trust your skill set and time box your preparation time.

Do you have perfectionist traits that are getting in your way? Let go of unrealistic expectations, trust in your skill set and go with the game you brought today.

You don't have to be perfect to be amazing.

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