The many faces of shame.



Perfectionism

Is my shame showing and how to counteract it. If self-acceptance reduces anxiety because we are capable of accepting our strengths and weaknesses and accepting ourselves as a complete package, then how do we accept the parts of us that are not so hot?

**Step 1**. **Perfectionism** is not ever the goal. Being perfect makes us anxious, unhappy and is far different from doing our best. It’s great to put in our best effort. That is not perfectionism. That is trying hard. Trying to be within our ability and reasonable.

Perfectionism is trying to not make mistakes. It is trying to be enough for others and ourselves and placing our worth in their appraisal of us. Doing our best is driven internally and does not rely on our performance-based outcome for our sense of self. It is an internally awarded appraisal that says to self “self I am proud of you and your effort, you really did your best”. It does not compare your place endlessly in the line of all others and then judge you, compared to them.

To sum up step 1 recognize that perfectionism is not a goal, at least not a healthy one.

**Step 2**.

Example: There is a project due. Let’s say a report to be turned in, at work or school. You do it, but are so meticulous at it you consume day and night, hours to make it perfect. It was good enough to get an A on round 2 but you go 8 rounds to make it perfect. Of course, it is, but at what cost?

**Well, that is step 2. What is the cost of perfectionism?**

In our sample, of the report, let’s look into it.

1. Missed out on family time due to obsessing over paper
2. Did not see friends due to this
3. Excessive anxiety and worry while working on it
4. Lowered sense of self-esteem while telling myself it’s not good enough
5. Fear the person reading the report will not like it after all that time and effort I put into it
6. Now the rejection factor is much worse because I put so much into that paper, it really does reflect me and if I am good enough
7. I was not able to sleep well enough which impacted me the next day
8. I am in a cycle of stress due to putting so much pressure on myself to do this perfectly
9. I ignored the other assignment because I don’t have the energy to put into it like I did this one (pattern of procrastination of perfectionism).

**Step 3. What is the intent?**

1. Get paper turned in
2. What interfered with this intent?
   1. Placing my sense of self on a project
3. Do work well enough
4. What interfered with this intent?
   1. Proving worth through work and trying to do work to perfection
5. Not flunk school/get fired from work
   1. What interfered with this intent
      1. Nothing, but I overshot the goal. I will not get fired or flunk if things are not perfect. Good enough is sufficient. An A is an A. A great report is a great report. Family, friends, balance, health, mental health all matter, not just one report.

YOUR TURN

Step 1. Perfectionism is not the goal. Write out the perfectionistic behaviors you were using

Step 2. Write out what the cost of perfectionism was

Step 3. Write out the original intent and what ‘good enough’ looks like as well as what interfered with your intent.

PROCRASTINATION

Shame in a turtle shell

If I can’t do it perfectly, I won’t do it at all.

100% perfect, or 100% Not at all

Procrastination can come from being too exhausted to take on a task, feeling like tasks are too daunting because when we do them our perfectionism kicks in and we go overboard, or just good old anxiety based. Regardless, tackling procrastination is one of the toughest tasks out there. Procrastination is accompanied with a LACK OF DRIVE AND DESIRE. This makes it pretty hard to jump start.

There are a lot of negatives associated with procrastination. As with most avoidance techniques, the longer we avoid the more anxious we become, the greater anxiety and depression get. The more we feel judgement from ourselves and others then the more daunting the task feels. Its really a vicious cycle.

Step 1. Pick your poison.

Causes: circle which one it might be at this time:

Worry, conflict avoidance, task avoidance, perfectionism, lack of faith in ability to do task, waiting for desire/drive, waiting to feel like it, don’t feel capable of task completion, afraid to start and not complete, task is too large

**Step 2.**

**There are a few ways to manage procrastination.** If one does not work this time, try it next time. First break the task into smaller compartments.

This can be setting a **three to five minute timer** and just doing the task for that time.

If it is paperwork, **setting up a bunch of empty manila folders** and placing 4 pieces of paper in each one. Your task it just to clean out one a day. That’s it. Eventually your stack will be put away.

If it is a physical task, the timer method works well or setting aside **a small space**. Don’t clean an entire house or clear out a garage, one floor, one shelf and then make yourself be done.

If it is running errands, just go and do one or two and return home or go grab a coffee or soda on the way home as a reinforcement for a job well done.

Step 3. Self-efficacy. Our belief that we can control and have an impact on our environment. When we get stuck in freeze state we often feel like we cannot. Breaking things down by time and task helps with this and proves that we do have some control over the task, ourselves and the environment.

Then, remind yourself and reinforce that you just did make a dent. If you demean your progress you will only procrastinate more next time because you got no reinforcement from this in the future. So Step 3, write out or say to yourself you accomplishment for this.