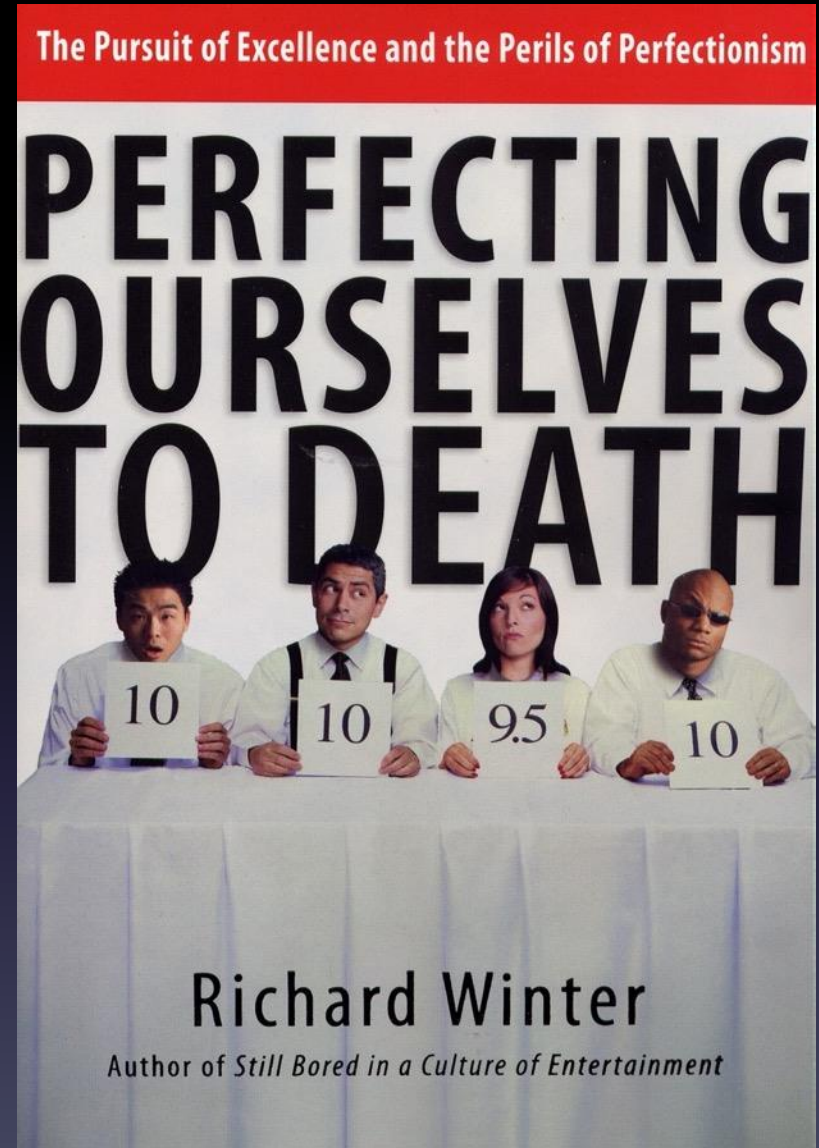


The Pursuit of Excellence and the Perils of Perfectionism

© Richard Winter,
MB BS MRC Psych, Emeritus
Professor of Applied Theology and
Counseling, Psychotherapist.





The Perfectionism Book

Walking the path
to freedom

Will van der Hart
& Rob Waller

OVERCOMING PERFECTIONISM

A self-help guide using
Cognitive Behavioral Techniques

'Cognitive behavioral techniques are, in my opinion,
the most effective form of psychological therapy for
emotional disorders.' Dr James Le Fanu, GP

**ROZ SHAFRAN, SARAH EGAN
AND TRACEY WADE**

“Perfectionism”

- Strong desire to be flawless in appearance, performance, and character
- What do we expect of ourselves?
 - External pressures
 - Internal drives
- Healthy or unhealthy ?

Millennials

- **Perfectionism increasing over time :**

A Meta-Analysis of Birth Cohort Differences from 1989 to 2016.

Curran, T., & Hill, A. P. (2019). *Psychological Bulletin*, 145, 410-429.

- Image, success, peer acceptance, and social media presence
- Pressure of sifting, sorting, and ranking
- Depression, anxiety, impostor syndrome, anorexia, cutting, and suicide

SHAPE

SECRETS of STAR TRAINERS
GET YOUR PERFECT BODY!

Jennifer Lopez's amazing abs
Heidi Klum's sexy butt & legs
Jennifer Garner's awesome arms



Most sunscreens wear off as the day wears on.

They may last just 80 minutes before it's time to reapply. But one application of new Bain de Soleil All Day lasts a full six hours. Yet it does even more to protect you: It's waterproof, sweat-proof, towel-proof. And comes in an SPF right for you. New Bain de Soleil All Day. It won't call it a day until you do.

BAIN DE SOLEIL
THE INTELLIGENT TAN.

PUT IT ON
ONCE AND YOU'RE SET UNTIL SUNSET.

Lose weight: The 1-2-3 plan

SHAPE

CARDIO BLAST

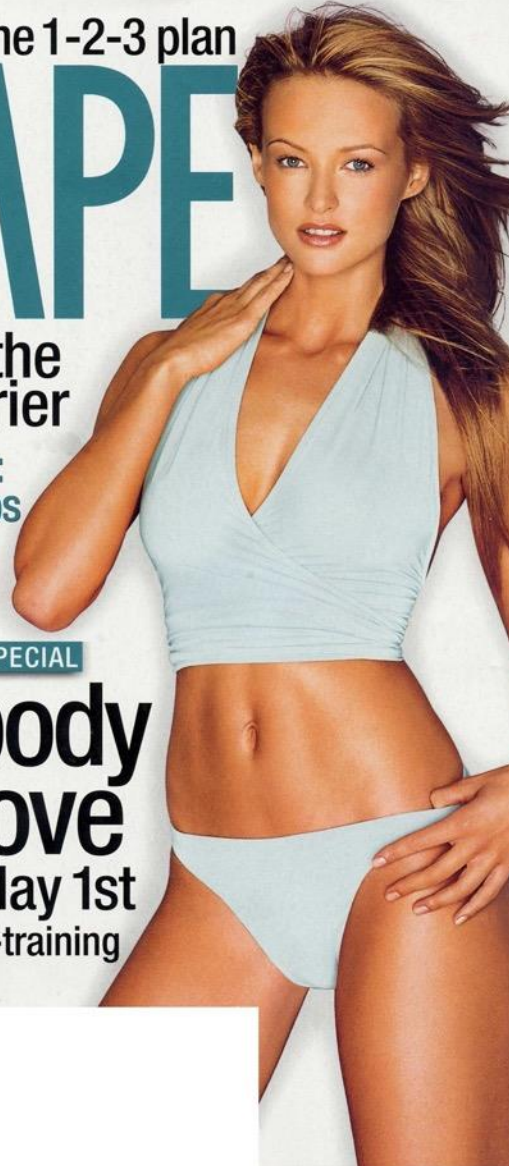
Break the fat barrier

Workout Pullout:
Great Arms & Abs

How America is making you fat!

BODY CONFIDENCE SPECIAL

Get a body you'll love (really) by May 1st
with our strength-training exclusive (p. 104)



March 2001



\$2.99 U.S. \$4.99 Canada
www.shape.com

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RODALE'S MALAYSIA Men's Health

Super New Plan!

GOLD-MEDAL ABS!

5 EASY MOVES FROM THE WORLD'S TOP ATHLETES

EAT OUT TO LOSE WEIGHT PG108

EXCEL IN EVERYTHING!

- Double Your Money
- Drive Like a Pro
- Charm Her Pants Off!

SEDUCE ANY WOMAN ANY TIME PG110

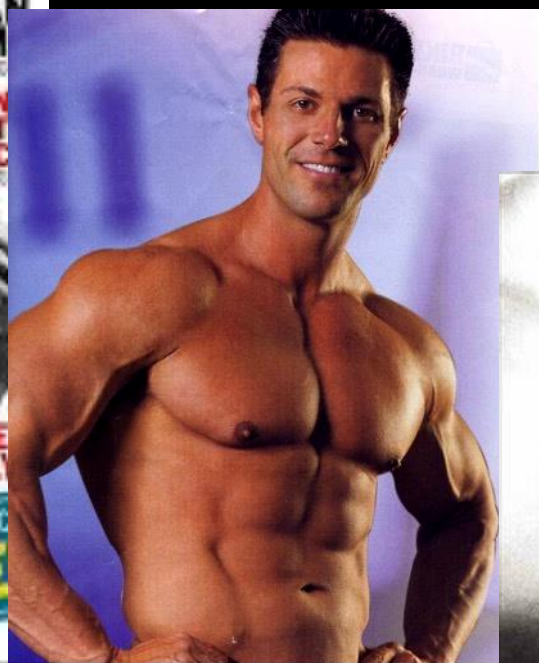
30-SECOND HEALTH CHECK PG112

LOOK BETTER INSTANTLY

MORE STRENGTH + MORE POWER + MORE SEX + MORE ENDURANCE

YOUR NEW BODY IS HERE

WORLD'S TOP ATHLETES



Magazine

Men's Fitness

BODY CHALLENGE

Get your perfect body in 12 weeks

- ✓ Look lean and muscular
- ✓ Lose your belly
- ✓ Easy-to-follow plan

MAGBOOK

Newsweek

August 9, 1999 : \$3.50

The New Age of Cosmetic Surgery

Younger Patients, More Choices, Greater Risks



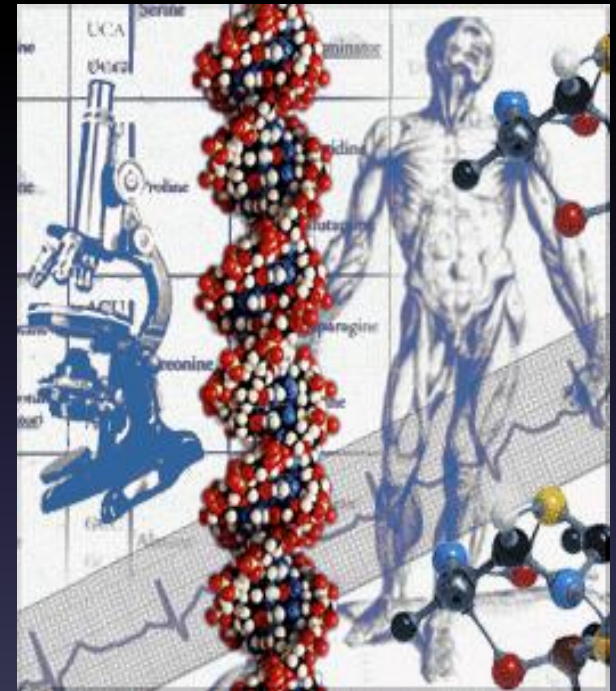
www.newsweek.com



The Pursuit of Perfection

- The Promise of Technology

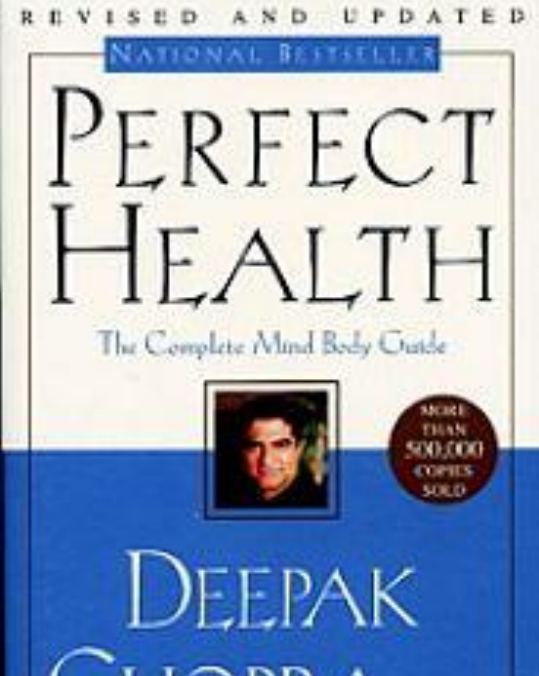
The Passionate Pursuit of Perfection.



*The Thinking Person's
Guide to
PERFECT HEALTH*

The Transformation of Medicine

Heal. Balance. Restore.

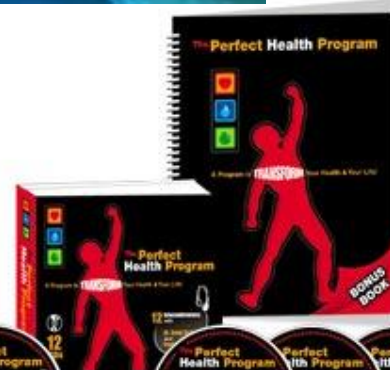


PERFECT HEALTH
PROGRAM

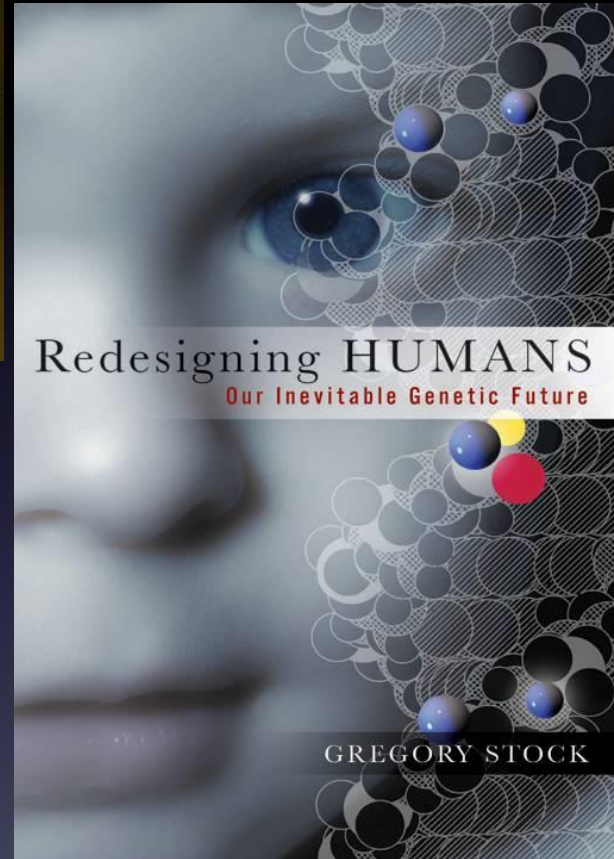
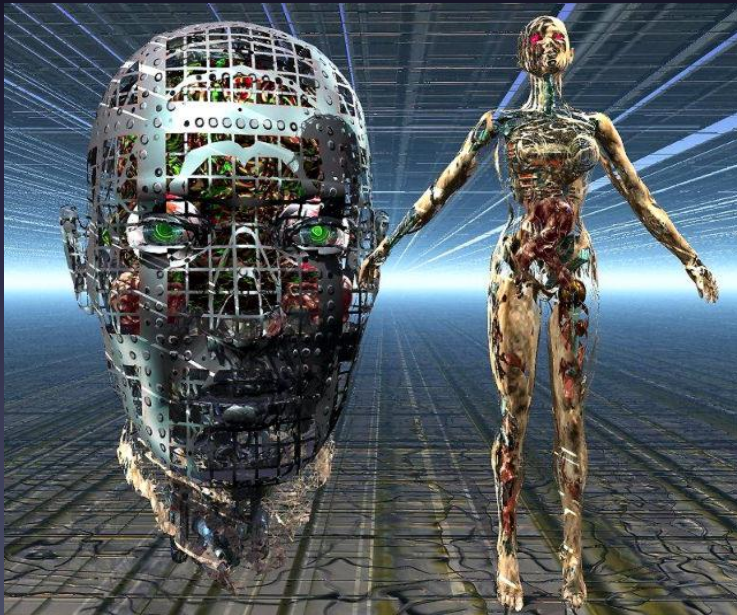
OUR SIGNATURE 5-DAY
WELLNESS EXPERIENCE
Carlsbad, California



**The Perfect
Health Program**



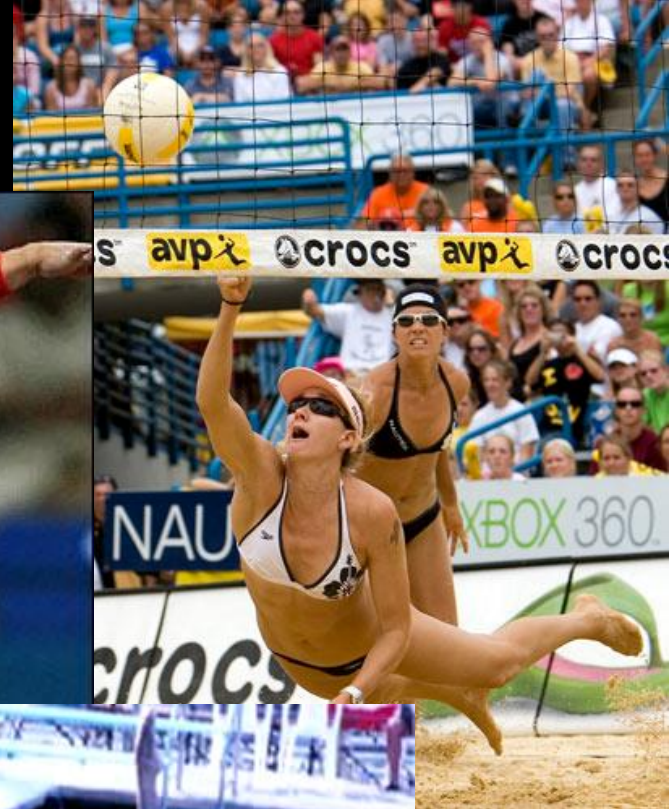
I now have
perfect
health





The Pursuit of Excellence

- The Promise of Technology
- +
- Hard Work, Commitment and Discipline
- +
- The Pressure to Excel





THE UK'S BEST-SELLING MONTHLY BRIDAL MAG

Perfect Wedding

From the publishers of hitched.co.uk

ISSUE 145 • APRIL 2018 £3.99

897 AMAZING IDEAS for every budget

HOW TO KEEP GUESTS HAPPY
20 inspirational ways to entertain

"It was our biggest regret"
Real couples' woes and how to avoid them

#vintagevibes
Gorgeous accessories with a classic feel

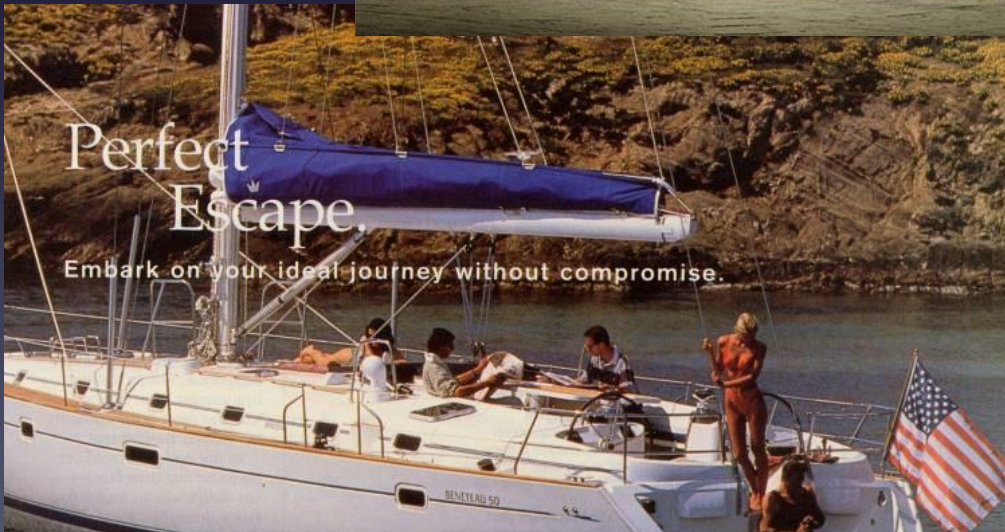
YOUR ULTIMATE WEDDING TIMELINE
What to do – and when!

A sparkly belt adds serious bling

Find your DREAM DRESS

10 A-LIST HAIRSTYLES TO ROCK THE AISLE!







Even a perfectionist
needs a little variety now and then.

Tanqueray.
Have at least one thing in your life that's absolutely perfect.



The Promise of Perfectionism

- *There's no denying that when you count up material comforts, remarkable achievements and other outward sign of success, perfectionism will seem to have served you well – especially in this day and age. We have been going through an era in which setting high standards and devoting an inordinate amount of time and energy to attaining them is considered a prerequisite for success.*
- *But appearances can be deceiving.*

Types of Perfectionism

- Appearance
- Performance
- Moral
- All round

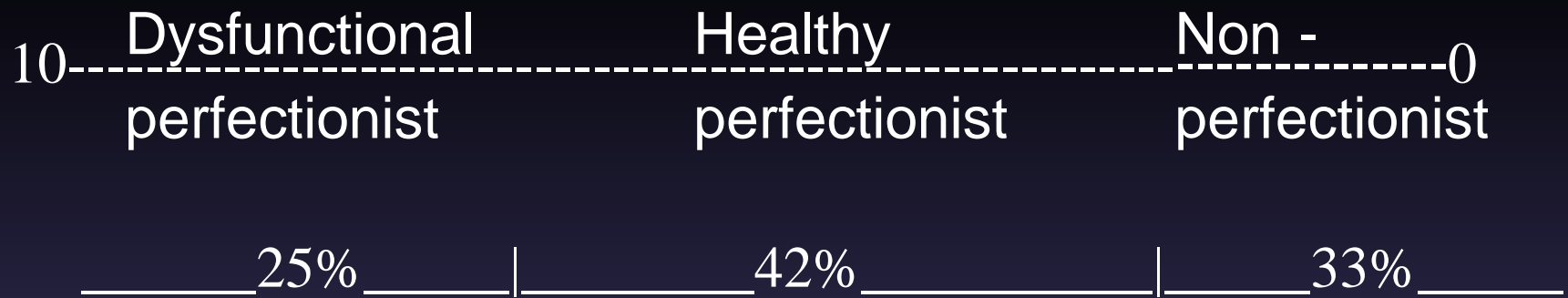
Assets and Liabilities of Perfectionism

- Sometimes good, sometimes bad!
- Healthy and/or Unhealthy
- Normal or “Neurotic”
- A Spectrum?



Perfectionism – a spectrum

820 academically gifted 6th graders



“Disorganized
Unreliable
Lacking in
self discipline”



INEPTITUDE

IF YOU CAN'T LEARN TO DO SOMETHING WELL,
LEARN TO ENJOY DOING IT POORLY.

www.despair.com



MEDIOCRITY

IT TAKES A LOT LESS TIME
AND MOST PEOPLE WON'T NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE
UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE.

www.despair.com

Unhealthy Perfectionists

- Have standards that are high beyond reach or reason
- Strain compulsively and unremittingly toward impossible goals
- Feel their best efforts are never good enough
- Unable to feel satisfaction or joy in a job well done
- ***Measure their own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment***
- Preoccupied with performance and/or appearance

Don Hamacheck

Normal/Healthy Perfectionists (People of Excellence)

- Pursue excellence
- Derive a very real sense of pleasure from the labors of a painstaking effort to meet high standards
- Feel free to be less precise as the situation permits
- Rejoice in their skills
- Appreciate a job well done.

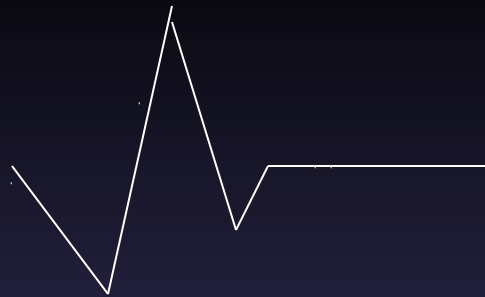
David Burns

Perfectionism

Active

Passive

Driving



Defeated

Productive

Paralyzed

Thought Patterns of Unhealthy Perfectionists

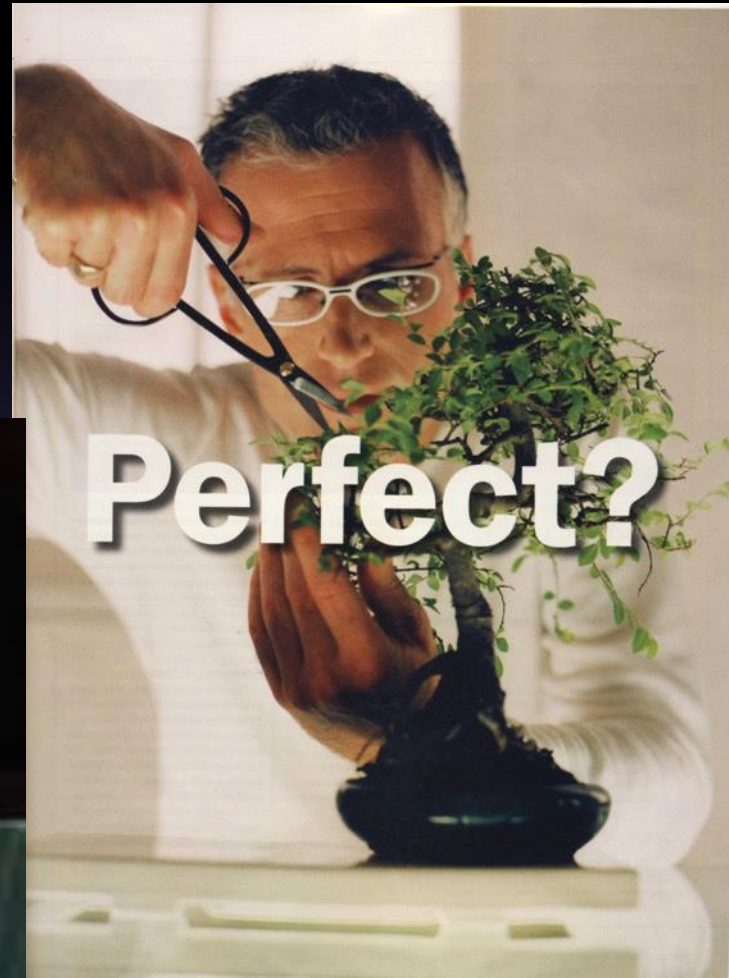
- All or nothing thinking
- Need for control
- Tyranny of “oughts” and “shoulds”
- Excessively rigid standards and inflexibility

Thoughts and Feelings of Unhealthy Perfectionism

- Always failing, never enough
- Shame, inferiority
- Excessive concern over mistakes
- Doubts about actions
- Over responsibility

Perils of Perfectionism

- Anxiety and Worry



Procrastination



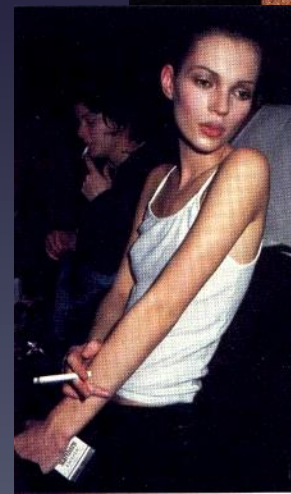
Indecisiveness

Perils of Perfectionism

- Excessive checking, list making, and organizing
- Not knowing when to quit or giving up too soon
- Decreased Productivity and Performance
- Failure to delegate
- Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders: Longing to be...

- Accepted and loved in a lonely world
- Powerful in a dangerous world
- In control in a disordered world





PERFECTION

A beautiful fairy tale that always leaves you hating yourself.

Perils of Perfectionism

- Depression and Suicidal Ideas
- Relationship Problems
- Scrupulosity
- Obsessive Compulsive Symptoms

The Roots of Perfectionism

- Genes (temperament)
- Culture
 - Sub-culture
 - Military and Medical
 - Social media
- Family
 - Example/modeling
 - Parental expectations and criticism
 - Shame and abuse
- School





The Triple Bind

- Be pretty, sweet, and nice
- Be athletic, be competitive, and get straight A's
- Be impossibly perfect

Stephen Hinshaw, Ph.D.

with Rachel Kranz



Roots of Unhealthy Perfectionism

- Shame
- Fear
 - Failure
 - Rejection
 - Loss of control
- Pride
 - Wanting to feel superior

Practical Strategies for Health

Learning to Live with Imperfection

- Evaluate pros and cons of perfectionism
- Recognize all or nothing patterns
- Keep journal of thoughts and feelings
- Awareness of feelings and fear of loss of control
- Resisting lies we tell ourselves
- Move from idealism to reality
- Accept day by day, little by little
- Work on small goals

Living with Imperfection

When Perfect isn't Good Enough: Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism, Martin Antony and Richard Swinson (2009)

- Less perfectionist about physical appearance
 - No more than 30 mins getting ready
 - Miss workout in gym
 - Willing to gain five pounds without upset
 - Learning to tolerate anxiety

Living with Imperfection

- Become more tolerant of others
 - Stop caring how they wash the dishes
 - Tolerate spouse/friend arriving late
 - Allow children to make mess
 - Learning to tolerate anxiety

Ambivalence to change!

- **“When the perfectionist discovers that instead of making him a superman, therapy attempts to strengthen his humanness and get him to accept his imperfections, he is both angry and disappointed. Instead of an anxiety-free existence in a state of perfect living, he discovers that therapy will only help him to live with anxiety in an imperfect world in which he will have not ultimate control of his destiny. Such goals are so alien to him that he considers himself a failure for even approaching them... !”**

Salzman p. 143-4

?

?

?

Bigger Questions!

?

?

Beliefs about the Nature of Reality

- What story do we live by?
- Evolution, chance and time...?
 - What is perfection?
- Impersonal God or energy
 - Perfect already?
- Personal God
 - created perfect
 - fallen
 - being restored
 - memory and longing

Beliefs about Values

- Appearance?
- Performance?
- Productivity?
- Many good but... too important?

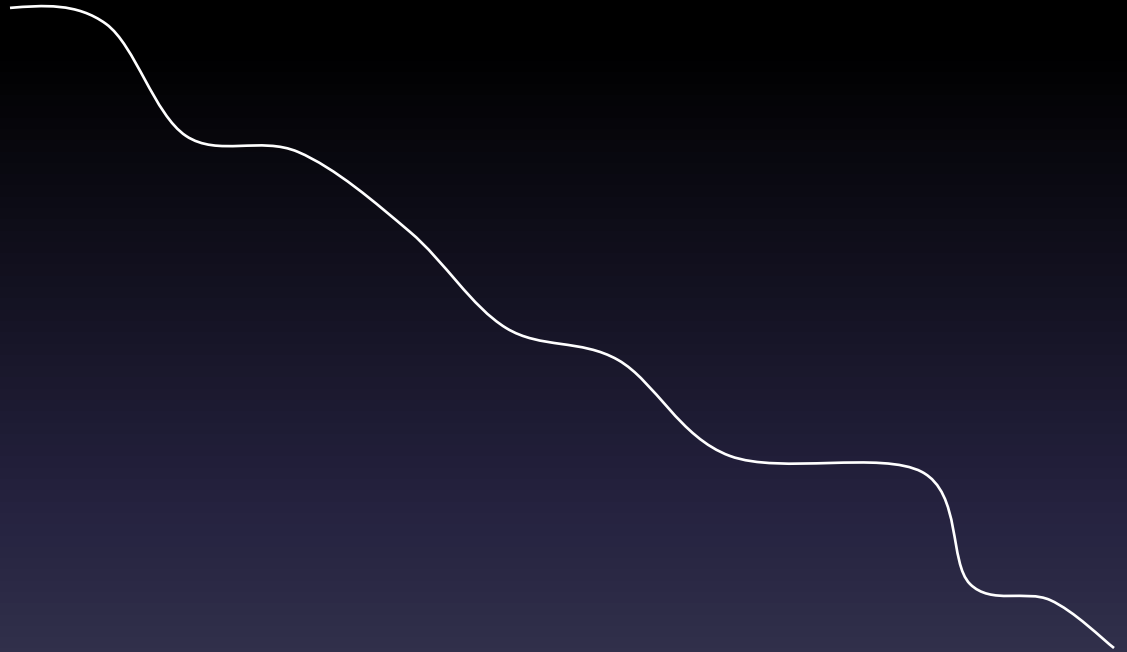
Jesus -
on what's
really
important

Matt 5-7



Bumping into reality: It's downhill all the way!

- Knees
- Back
- Brain
- Disease
- Decay
- Death



The glory fades...

*All men are like grass, and all their
glory is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers the flowers fall...*

Isaiah 40:6-7



Beliefs about the Nature of Perfection (“Be perfect...” Matt 5:48)

- Appearance
- Possessions
- Performance?
 - Grades
 - Quality work
 - Athletic or artistic performance
 - Financial success
 - Productivity
- Character development and relationships?

What is really important?

- Being a good steward of the gifts our Creator has given
- Developing Character and Integrity
- Learning to love well
- Becoming truly human - Living in relationship with our Creator

The Path to Perfection

- All the great religions
 - Common awareness
 - Try harder
- But Christianity different
 - A personal and moral universe
 - Cannot achieve perfection on our own
 - Need rescue
 - A loving God who comes

A loving God who comes...

- To rescue us
- To accept us as we are
- To gradually transform us
- Grace

If True...

- Our fundamental worth and identity do not depend on our appearance or performance
- When we know we are accepted and loved with all our imperfections we are set free to pursue excellence without fear of failure or rejection, and with gratitude to our Creator.

Letting Go of Unhealthy Perfectionism

- I must be in control
- I am terrified of failure and rejection
- I am what I do or how I look

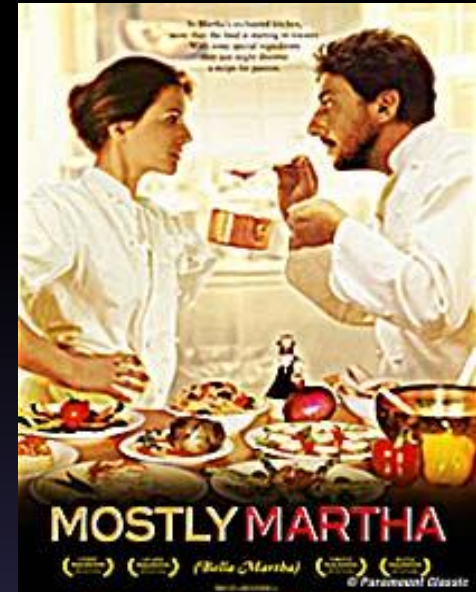
Intensity and frequency

“Recovering perfectionist”

The Optimum Environment for Change

- Relationship with God
- Relationship with people
- Relationship with self

- Experience acceptance and grace...
- “with the worst hanging out!”



The Velveteen Rabbit

The VELVETEEN RABBIT
By Margery Williams



with illustrations by William Nicholson

- *“What is REAL?”*
- *“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time.*

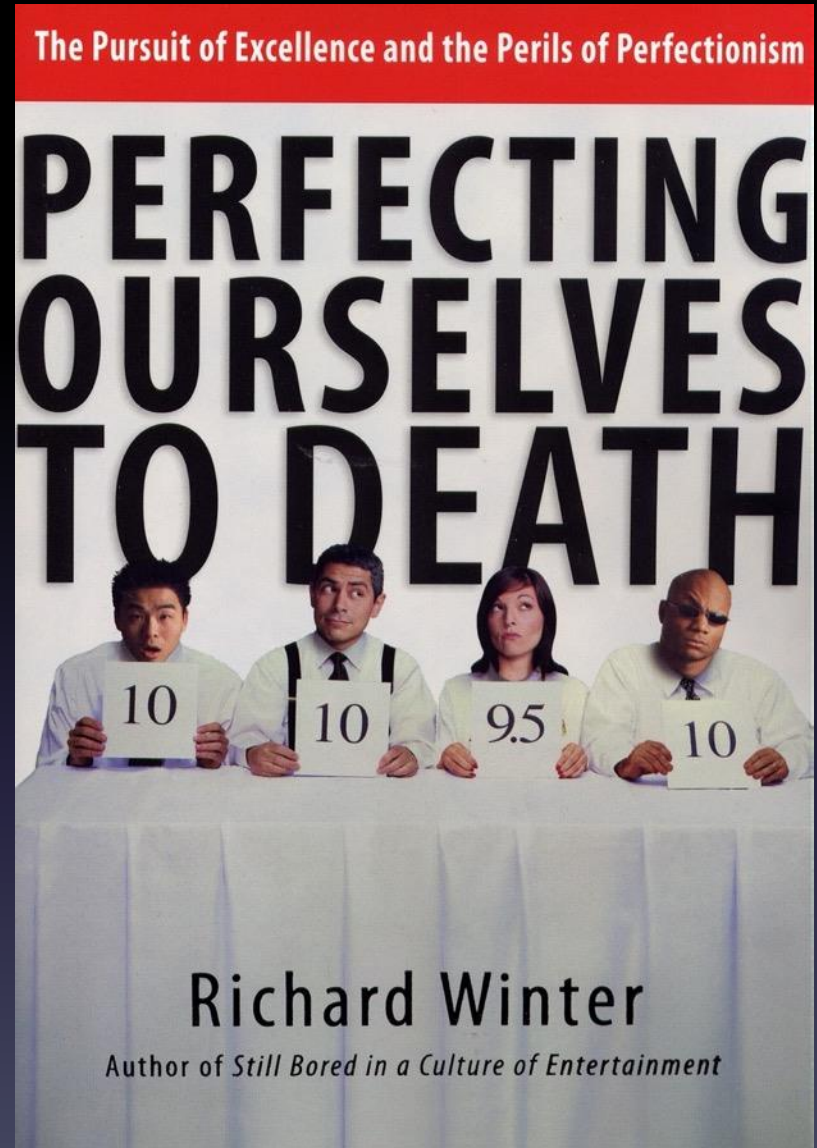
That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

- ***The command to be perfect is not idealistic gas...Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that commandment. He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (although, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what he said.***

C.S. Lewis *Mere Christianity*

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