

THE

*overcoming
perfectionism*

WORKBOOK

SARA LAUGHED

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Dear Reader,

This short PDF is the workbook accompaniment to the blog post “How to Overcome Perfectionism in College” on my site, Sara Laughed (<http://saralaughed.com>). For more thorough resources on overcoming perfectionism, as well as the full blog post, please click [here](#)!

I hope this guide helps you in your journey to a more balanced and healthier life. Perfectionism tends to be a habit that we build and grow over many years, so it can be difficult to address. Don't get discouraged if it takes you longer than you expect. With perseverance and a willingness to adjust your mindset, you will get there.

Warm wishes,

Sara

Do you struggle with perfectionism?

	Yes	Sometimes Yes	Sometimes No	No
Do I have to work very hard to meet my own standards?				
Do I want to be the best in everything, even if it's not an interesting or important area for me?				
Am I very conscious and aware of my mistakes?				
Do I often criticize myself for even small mistakes?				
Do I often get angry, depressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed when doing work?				
Do I judge myself on my ability to meet my standards?				
Do I feel like my assignments are never "done" because they could always be better?				
Do my standards make it harder for me to finish things, meet deadlines, or work in group projects?				

If you answered "yes" or "sometimes yes" for four or more of these questions, you may struggle with perfectionism.

What are some areas in which I struggle with perfectionism?

- School assignments (e.g. papers, essays, presentations)
- Class participation (e.g. raising your hand, speaking up in class)
- Studying
- Having a clean and organized room
- Lifestyle and health
- Hygiene and appearance

What are some problems that come from my perfectionism in this area?

Check In: Are my standards flexible, achievable, and realistic (FAR)?

You may struggle to identify whether your standards are flexible, achievable, and realistic. Part of the reason for this is that we all have different skill sets, so what may be achievable for you may not be achievable for someone else.

A good test is “Does working at this standard often make me feel angry, depressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed?” If so, it is not a flexible, achievable, or realistic standard.

Life Area	My Standard	FAR?
Exams	<i>Example: I must start studying weeks before the exam; take detailed notes on all chapters of the textbook; study for hours a day; and get an A on the exam.</i>	No

If you found that many of your standards are not flexible, achievable, and realistic, then these are good areas in which to adjust your standards.

Check In: Adjusting Your Standards (Standard #1)

This section of the workbook will help you address different standards in your life that you may want to change. Feel free to print it out as many times as you like for different standards you are addressing.

A. What would it be like to adjust my standard?

Standard: _____

a. How does having this standard help me?

b. How does having this standard hurt me?

c. How will changing this standard better my life?

d. How will changing this standard worsen my life?

B. Reflection

Should I change this standard? Why or why not?

Adjusting Your Standards: Setting Goals (Standard #1)

When dealing with overcoming perfectionism, it is helpful to set specific, achievable, and realistic goals for yourself. Do not try to “beat perfectionism” entirely in a month; instead, focus on one habit or area that you can try to better in a few weeks. Even achieving your goals in one or two perfectionistic areas will likely make a difference in changing perfectionist mindset. Use the following questions to set SMART goals for yourself in dealing with perfectionist habits.

Area of life (e.g. School, Work, Organization): _____

What is the unrealistic standard that I would like to change?

(e.g. “I will only be a successful student if I get an A in every single class.”)

What would be a more realistic standard?

(e.g. “I am a successful student if I do my best to learn the material. My grades do not define my success.”)

What is one habit that would help me change my standard?

(e.g. Balancing my work with self-care and free time.)

What is a way I can act this out in my day-to-day life?

(e.g. Daily yoga practice; 30 minutes of reading before bed; meals with friends instead of over work.)

What time frame do I have to enact this practice?

(e.g. One month)

Is it okay if I make mistakes along the way?

- Yes
- No

(Hint: these kind of mistakes are always okay!)

Check In: Adjusting Your Standards (Standard #2)

This section of the workbook will help you address different standards in your life that you may want to change. Feel free to print it out as many times as you like for different standards you are addressing.

A. What would it be like to adjust my standard?

Standard: _____

a. How does having this standard help me?

b. How does having this standard hurt me?

c. How will changing this standard better my life?

d. How will changing this standard worsen my life?

B. Reflection

Should I change this standard? Why or why not?

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Dealing with Hurdles

As you try to adjust and change your standards, you are likely to come across some problems such as:

- Fear of change (e.g. "If I lower my standards, my grades will suffer.")
- Reacting to mistakes (e.g. "I slipped up; I will never be able to overcome this.")
- Circumstances leading you to old behaviors (e.g. a breakup causing you to return to your old standards as a coping mechanism).

These things are all completely normal and natural parts of the process of overcoming perfectionism. Something that may help you avoid these pitfalls, however, is planning ahead for them.

What are some hurdles that may cause me trouble as I overcome perfectionism?

What are some things I can do to remind myself to keep going when they occur?

What are some actions I can take after the hurdle to keep going in my goal?

What are some things I could say to feel better when dealing with the hurdle?

Progress Diary

Finally, I recommend keeping a progress diary as you move towards healthy attitudes and away from perfectionism. You may choose to journal daily, once a week, or only when you feel like it. When you do journal, in your planner, notebook, or a special diary you have bought just for this occasion, here are some questions to keep in mind:

- What kind of thoughts have I been having about work and success today?
- What kind of thoughts have I been having about myself today?
- What are some positive improvements I have seen recently?
- What are some areas in which I am still struggling?
- How am I feeling about my goals? Are they still flexible, attainable, and reasonable?
- Do any of my goals feel “complete”? Do I feel ready to take on any new goals?

When you do feel ready to take on a new goal, refer back to this workbook and go through the steps again for a new area of your life. Good luck!