



Tear OFF the Mask of Perfection and Reveal Your **True Beauty**

By Pamela Power Scanlon, M.S.

Have you ever shown up at work, in a social scene, or even with your family as though you have your act perfectly together, even when you didn't? All people put on masks of perfection from time to time. But have you ever considered the implications that striving for perfection can have on your overall well-being? I'd like to invite you to take off your mask of perfection and reveal the true you. This is why.

We are all beautifully human. That humanness makes true perfection impossible. Being perfect goes beyond desiring good or even great results. It's almost impossible to achieve and even harder to maintain. Trying to be perfect increases stress, lowers self-esteem, and results in overall discontent. Dr. Brené Brown, author of *Daring Greatly*, describes perfectionism as a 20-ton shield we carry around to avoid being hurt. Regardless of how you describe it, trying to be perfect or just pretending to be perfect sets us up for failure.

What can we do to shift away from the desire to achieve the unachievable and shift toward opportunities for growth and deeper connection?

We can start by taking off the perfectionist mask and stepping into the shoes of a high achiever. Both set high goals. Both strive for excellence. But the differences of these two seemingly similar types are profound.

Perfectionists and high performers can be in the same room, experiencing the same thing, but will interpret a totally different outcome. For example, high performers appreciate work well done, and see the space between that level of performance and perfect as room for development. Perfectionists see anything less than perfect as a failure. High performers take pride in their accomplishments, while perfectionists look critically and see the imperfections. High performers are motivated by a desire to achieve their goals. Perfectionists are motivated by fear of failure and underachievement. High achievers are resilient and get back in the game when things don't go as planned. Perfectionists tend to land in self-degradation and can feel paralyzed by stress. High performers exhibit high self-esteem. Perfectionists view themselves critically and see their flaws as shameful.

Essentially, when we strive for perfection, we prevent ourselves from living a happy, fulfilled life. But unfortunately, we may also put pressure on those around us to meet that standard, even if it's unintentional.

So why do so many of us struggle with perfectionism when the reality is that none of us are perfect?

Dr. Brown explains that we struggle with perfectionism in the areas where we feel the most vulnerable. She says, "If I look perfect, live perfect, and work perfect, I can avoid or minimize criticism, blame, and ridicule." We're afraid to appear weak. But in truth, it's when we show up as our authentic selves, flaws and all, that is when we're most courageous. When we share our vulnerabilities, we open ourselves up to developing strength, character, and more meaningful relationships.

Imagine what life would be like if you decided to take off your perfectionist mask? Take a moment to consider the idea of showing up each day, in all areas of your life, comfortable in your own skin, and free to express who you truly are. How would you look? How would you feel? How would your authenticity impact your stress, self-esteem, the quality of your relationships, and your happiness?

Today, I challenge you to change your language from perfectionist to high performer. Rather than criticize yourself, celebrate the fact that life always leaves you space to evolve and improve. Give yourself the freedom to breathe and the courage to be seen. You will discover the genuine beauty you were created to be.

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