

## Ep #02: F\*ck Perfectionism



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Melissa Parsons**

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## Ep #02: F\*ck Perfectionism

Hey, this is Melissa Parsons, and you are listening to the *Your Favorite You Podcast*. I'm a certified life coach with an advanced certification in deep dive coaching. The purpose of this podcast is to help brilliant women like you with beautiful brains create the life you've been dreaming of with intention.

My goal is to help you find your favorite version of you by teaching you how to treat yourself as your own best friend. If this sounds incredible to you and you want practical tips, I'm changing up how you treat yourself, then you're in the right place. Just so you know, I'm a huge fan of using all of the words available to me in the English language. So please proceed with caution. If young ears are around.

Oh, hi! Welcome back to *Your Favorite You*. I'm so glad you're tuning in for episode number two. Let's get right to it.

Okay, today I'm going to be talking about perfectionism. I used to wear my perfectionism as a badge of honor. These days, I am actively watching my brain to look out for my perfectionist tendencies and trying to shut that shit down as soon as I notice it.

I don't know about you guys, but I come from a long line of proud perfectionists. To illustrate this point, my maternal grandfather Len, would have the most amazing Christmas displays in our hometown. Our family business was often lauded with awards for the most amazing outdoor Christmas decorations.

Grandpa Len was so crazy about his tree that he would often drill holes into the trunk of a live fir tree and add branches to any bare spots. This tree had to be perfect from all the angles. Even the one that faced the corner of the room, it would take him days, not hours to put up the tree and his nativity scene that didn't even count his winter village. This is how nuts it got.

He of course, was rewarded with actual rewards from our city and from all the praise and "oohs and ahhs," from anyone who had the privilege to view his handy work. And just in case that doesn't illustrate it deeply enough for

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you or pointedly enough, Grandpa Lenny was a huge part of my childhood growing up.

And after school we would go again to our family business, which was a funeral home. So that explains a lot about me, probably to many of you. The funeral home is a place where my grandparents also lived, and we would stay there until after dinner every night. So, naturally when I had a project to work on in fifth grade, Grandpa Len was there.

He was the most handy person, and he could literally fix anything. So anyway, I had this electricity project where I had to construct a circuit and with grandpa's help, this project became way more elaborate than any fifth-grade project in 1984, and by the time I turned it in, not only was I forbidden from touching it by grandpa out of his fear that I would somehow ruin it, my teacher recognized that there was no way Missy Roberts had done this all on her own.

We lived in a small town, and my grandpa had been the mayor and the county commissioner at this point, in addition to owning and operating the funeral home for about 40 years at this time. So, my teacher literally said, Missy, you get a B on the project.

Tell grandpa he gets an A+. And I'm not even kidding. Anyway, I have read so many books, so many amazing books, trying to figure out how to recover from being a perfectionist. The first one I read was Brene Brown's, *The Gifts of Imperfection*. This was a crazy title for me. I was like, "I thought it was a gift to be perfect ... you're telling me it's a gift to be imperfect?"

But as I was reading this, one of Brene's quotes that hit me hard, was perfectionism is not the same thing as striving to be your best. Perfectionism is the belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame.

It's a shield. It's a 20-ton shield that we lug around thinking it will protect us, when in fact, it's the thing that's really preventing us from flight. Oof. I don't know about you, but that quote hits me hard every time I read it.

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Then, I read Glennon Doyle's book, *Untamed*. It helped me realize that we, especially as women, were never meant to be caged animals. We were never meant to live within boundaries imposed on us by other people, impossible standards set by society that none of us would ever be able to live up to.

One of the most profound statements about perfectionism for me came from Dr. Edith Eger Holocaust Survivor psychologist, an author of two amazing books, which I have referenced ad nauseum.

If you have been following my coaching journey, her two books are *The Choice* and *The Gift*. Dr. Eger has much to say on this topic, but some of my favorite quotes are, “perfectionism is the belief that something is broken: you. So you dress up your brokenness with degrees, achievements, accolades, pieces of paper, none of which can fix what you think you are fixing.” Ugh, that’s another one that just gets me.

I know that so many of my clients will recognize themselves in this pattern. What I want to say about this is that you are never broken in the first place, and even if you were, you were already doing the work of putting yourself back together, and the goal that you fill the broken places with what makes you even more beautiful.

Just like a piece of Japanese Kintsugi Art, another quote from Dr. Eger, this one touches on our very primal fear of being alone. Evolutionarily being alone is extremely unsafe. You are much more likely to die if you are alone hundreds of years ago. She says, “one of our first fears is of abandonment. Thus, we learn early how to get the A's attention, affection, approval.”

We figure out what to do. And whom to become to get our needs met. The problem is not that we do these things, it's that we keep doing them. We think we must in order to be loved, it's very dangerous to put your whole life into someone else's hands. You are the only one you're going to have for a lifetime. All other relationships will end.

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And one final quote from Dr. Eger, if you will allow me. "It doesn't take courage to strive for protection. It takes courage to be average. To say, I'm okay with me. To say good enough is good enough." That's so good.

Like my Coach Brooke says, if you're portraying yourself as this perfect person, people are always going to be looking out for your flaws. No one likes a perfectionist, and probably, especially the perfectionist doesn't like herself.

We have been sold a bill of goods that success is linear, and that success breeds success, and the goal is to have success after success after success. What if instead, the most successful people are the ones who have a shit ton of fails behind them?

If you're not failing at least some of the time, are you even dreaming big enough for yourself? My friends, your self-worth cannot be based on your achievements. Your worth is not in what you do, but who you are. I made the unfortunate mistake of getting straight A's in third grade, and of course I was proud of myself, and I was praised by my well-meaning family.

The idea of getting anything less than an A was incomprehensible to me. Don't get me wrong, this is all pressure I put on myself. My dad certainly did not pressure me to get good grades. My mom loved that I was smart and curious and loved to read, but she loved me for so many other reasons too.

I know many of you will not relate to this because your parents also made their love for you conditional on you being one of the best in your class or the best in your field, or they had a specific path for you to follow that if you did not, their love for you was conditional on you being something that you were not.

I was one of the lucky ones, and I truly am grateful for that. I was introduced to the idea of not needing to be perfect in medical school where the saying goes, "P equals MD, all you have to do is pass to get your degree. You don't have to get an A." What they don't mention there is, that's true unless you want to get into a competitive residency, or if you want a couples match with your significant other.

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I chose pediatrics, which historically is not like dermatology or neurosurgery in terms of competitiveness, but I wanted to go to a highly respected program, and I wanted to be with my soon to be hubby, and I didn't want to be the limiting factor in our couples match. I did not truly embrace the idea of striving to be less than perfect until I was introduced to the idea of B minus work, which is endorsed by my coach and mentor, who I already mentioned once in this podcast, Brooke Castillo.

The idea is that done is better than perfect and that people out in the world actually want to hear from us. They don't care if the messaging is perfect or if the marketing is perfect, or if the audio and video is perfect. They just want us to get it done. Put our work out there and we can always go back and tweak and refine and make it better later if we want to.

I know for sure that perfectionism leads to procrastination and often keeps us from putting our ideas out into the world. It often leads us to abandoning work that others need to hear when we perceive that the finished product is less than perfect. Now when I introduce the concept of B minus work to my amazing clients, we often have to negotiate a bit.

Some want to strive for B+ or a minus, which is fine, but no one is grading your shit anymore. You are the only one keeping track of your GPA at this point in your life.

This is still a work in progress for me. I will admit I still like my house to look just so before I start working every morning. Man, do I love it when the dishwasher, the washing machine, and the dryer are all running at the same time.

I can't stand smudges and fingerprints on my cabinets and my doors. I love the look of a freshly mowed lawn with straight lines or a freshly vacuumed room. It makes perfect sense that the idea of perfection is enticing.

Underlying the need to be perfect is definitely a feeling of fear. Lots of questioning what will happen if things don't go perfectly according to plan.

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One of the concepts that I adopted from Dr. Eger's work, is to change all of my "what if" statements to "even if" statements. So instead of asking "what if things don't go perfectly according to plan?" which will keep you spinning and in fear and paralyzed, we change it to, "even if things don't go perfectly according to plan."

So, for example, instead of asking "what if no one listens or subscribes to my podcast," which has zero traction whatsoever, I think, "even if no one listens or subscribes to my podcast, it will still be an exercise and me solidifying my thoughts about the amazing life I now have due to coaching and being a coach. I will keep writing and producing until I no longer find it useful. It will help me learn and grow, hopefully on my way to becoming a popular podcast that helps so many incredible women."

I firmly believe the idea that I'm either winning or learning in life, never losing. I definitely have embraced my coach Maggie's statement that nothing in life has to be perfect in order for it to be awesome, and I have shared this statement with my clients time and time again.

Perfectionists tend toward all or nothing thinking, "I have to do this perfectly or I will not do it at all." This line of thinking makes you miss any amazing progress you have had over time. I get coaching on this all the time. This perfectionism thing is deeply ingrained in me, and I still don't recognize it half the time.

Just recently, I was coached on my frustration with not successfully signing a couple clients after a consult call. My thought was, "it's not working." This thought made me feel terrible like a failure. My astute coach who does not let me argue for my limitations and certainly does not let me get away with sneaky, perfectionist thinking said, "so, let's see ... Melissa, you are marketing on social media and through your emails, people are seeing you there being you. You offer them a consult; they reach out to you for a consult. The consult is scheduled. You both show up to the consult to offer them an amazing transformation on the consult call alone. So, the way I see it, is that everything is working, and you only have to troubleshoot for one step of your process, not all of it."

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She pointed out all the progress I had made, and because my brain, and likely all of yours', is programmed to keep me safe by having a negativity bias. All I could see was the failure instead of the five successes that led to the fail.

Our brains really are so not helpful at times. The beauty of working with a coach is that I will always see you as your favorite version of you. I will teach you that perfection is no longer the goal. I will help you drop it at least for a little while. You can always pick it back up if your life falls apart from embracing less than perfect.

The best news about this is that when you stop expecting perfection from yourself, you stop expecting it from everyone else in your life, there is so much beauty in dropping unrealistic expectations for yourself and for everyone else that you care about. Once you accept and love your whole imperfect self, the magic can begin.

I want this for all of you. This is the first key in becoming your favorite you.

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Thank you for listening to this week's episode of Your Favorite You.

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I, so look forward to meeting you.