

9. Recovering from Perfectionism



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Dara Tomasson

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How many times do you want to do something, really want to do it but you don't because you just can't get it right? Not sure if this episode applies to you? I've got a diagnostic quiz to see where you fall in the perfectionism realm. So, grab a pen and let's see where you are. But before we do, I've got to read some of these amazing five star reviews that I have received from so many women. I'm just going to share two with you because I just can't decide which one I should share. So, let's go.

This is from Mary in New Mexico. She says, "I love this inspiring and motivational podcast. Dara takes weight loss concepts and breaks them down into manageable ideas and then uses personal stories and quilting examples to explain the ideas. Thank you so much. Would love an episode on dealing with food craving and eating urges." Oh, my goodness, I've got you. And in fact, as this episode is airing, in September I'm teaching my ladies how to lose two pounds every week. So, such a good course.

And then I have another one that I want to share. This is from HASC64. "Dara does a wonderful new podcast. She is so easy to listen to as I'm working. The content is just what I need to reaffirm what we are learning in her Love Yourself Thin group. If I miss something she says or need to replay and relisten, it's so doable. I've never done podcasts before, this is so easy." Well, I am glad that it's so easy for you. So, let's go right into our self-inventory of where you fall in the perfectionist realm.

I am Dara Tomasson, and this is Weight Loss for Quilters episode nine. Did you know you could lose weight and keep it off for good? After 25 years of hiding behind my quilts, I have finally cracked the code for permanent weight loss and I've lost 50 pounds without exercise or counting calories. I'm Dara Tomasson, professional quilter turned weight and life coach, where I help quilters just like you create a life they love by losing weight and keeping it off for good. Let's jump into today's episode.

So, I have 11 questions for you here. And what I need you to do is I need you to rate yourself, one being this does not apply to me at all, and 10 meaning this is totally me. I've got this.

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So, number one: there is no room for mistakes. So, one, that's not me at all. 10, that's totally me, there's no room for mistakes.

Number two, you have a very specific manner in which things should be done. One, that's not me, 10, that's totally me. And then of course, you can rate yourself anywhere in between.

Number three, you have an all or nothing approach. It's either you do everything well, or you don't do it at all. Everything in between is a no go. One, not me, 10, totally.

This is number four, it's all about the end result, you don't care what happens in between or what it takes to achieve the goal. You just want to ensure that the end result is attained, otherwise you'd feel annoyed or even devastated. One, that's not me, 10, you're speaking my language.

Number five, you are extremely hard on yourself. It doesn't matter if it's due to your fault or just one small thing, you're always quick to beat yourself up and feel extremely bad about a mistake for a long, long while. One, not me at all, 10, totally me.

Number six, you become depressed when you don't achieve your goals. You often mull over outcomes that don't turn out as envisioned. You keep wondering what if. One, not me, five, kind of, 10, totally me.

Number seven, you have extremely high standards. At one point you become held back by these standards as you procrastinate and stop working on your goals out of fear that you can't reach them. One, not me, 10, that's totally me.

Number eight, success is never enough. Even when you achieve x, you wanted 2x. You are rarely content with the status quo and you keep wanting to see more and better things. One, not me at all, 10, that's me to a T.

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Number nine, you procrastinate just to do something at the right moment. You are constantly waiting for the right moment to work on your goals. One, not me, 10, totally.

Number 10, you constantly spot mistakes when others don't see any. While this can simply mean that you you're just very detail oriented, perfectionists often spot mistakes, issues from a mile away. Sometimes they seem self-imagined. One, not me at all, 10, that's totally me.

And number 11, you often spend copious amounts of time just to perfect something. One, not me at all, 10, that's totally me.

Okay, so what I need you to do now is I need you to tally up all the scores. So of course, you can put me on pause, you can take some time. And because now what we're going to do is we have three groups that you're going to fall into. So, did you score 0 to 33? That's group A. 34 to 77 is group B. And 78 to 110 is group C. So, if you scored in group A, which is 0 to 33, you fall in the normal human range of looking at life.

If you scored in group B range, your senses are heightened about what you make your actions mean. I invite you to look at the sentences that scored higher than five. Can you think of a specific example in your life where you are triggered? How does this play out? Is this preventing you from living the life that you really want?

And then if you are in the last group, perfectionism is affecting your life. That is preventing you from fully experiencing the joy that is available to you. I want you to know that you can become a recovered perfectionist. I myself, when I taught quilting, I've always said, "I am the president of the perfection recovery program." And inevitably at the end of each class I had at least two or three ladies that would come up to me, kind of secretly, saying, "Is that real, Dara? Do you really have a program?"

And so, as I was working with ladies in weight loss I saw it come up so often these traits. And I'm super curious of where you rated yourself. Because I do have to say, there was a lot of, even my clients that I worked with for a while, and I'd say something about perfectionism. And they'd say,

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“No, no, that’s not me.” And then we would do the quiz and it was very surprising to them. So, you can work on becoming a recovered perfectionist. It will take work, but it’s totally worth it. Recovery is 100% possible.

So now that we’ve done the quiz, and you’ve seen where you kind of fall in those three categories. Why is my 12 step perfection recovery essential in losing weight? Well, like I say, weight loss is actually never about the food and it never has been. So, one of the problems we have is that we never really were taught to think about our thinking. And so, I’m going to read this definition. This was just one I found from the American Psychiatric Association on perfectionism.

It says perfectionism is the tendency to demand of others or of one’s self an extremely high, or even flawless level of performance in excess of what is required by the situation. It is associated with depression, anxiety, eating disorders and other mental health problems. So, you can see how working through perfectionism in a weight loss podcast is extremely relevant.

So, what does learning and growing mean for you? I am going to let you in on some of the reasons why I became a perfectionist even though I didn’t even realize that I was one. When I was a little girl I wanted my mom and dad’s approval. I was the third born of six kids. My mom and dad were super busy raising us and doing the best they could. I wanted their love and affection. There is nothing wrong with wanting our parent’s attention. However, I had some thought errors going on.

When my mom told me that I didn’t do a good enough job cleaning my room I made that mean that I was not good enough. When I didn’t get perfect grades, i.e., 95% on a test, my parents would comment about what happened to the other five. I made this mean that I wasn’t acceptable if I didn’t attain perfection. This just didn’t happen with my parent’s attention. I would find myself wondering if the observers of the swim club practice were taking about how fast I was. Or I’d wonder if the ladies at church noticed what a well behaved girl I was.

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I grew desperate for validation and praise from other people. I hadn't received the memo that the most important person to get praise and validation from was me myself. I am the most important person to care about me. So, the quest continued and I did all sorts of great high achieving things in my life to get the continual praise and accolades from the people around me. To everyone else, I looked like an extremely confident and accomplished person.

However, I often felt a lack and fatigue that I didn't fully understand. Not until I learned what a perfectionist really meant did I truly see why I was always so exhausted. I heard perfectionism explained this way, when regular people make a goal and they don't achieve it, they just keep troubleshooting to pursue their goal. Whereas when a perfectionist doesn't achieve a goal in their first attempt, they make it mean that they are a failure and that they are no good. What? I was blown away from this explanation. I was so grateful that you are here listening to what I'm saying.

Another realization about perfectionism is that I thought confidence came from the thoughts others had about me. "You are so talented." So, I rode the hamster wheel or doing and people pleasing to get their accolades. But true confidence comes from the thoughts that I have about myself. This creates a more calm Dara, who gets her own back, creates healthy boundaries, and has an honest and authentic relationship with herself. This is also possible for you when you start really understanding what perfectionism is and how you can change that dialog.

There are several other reasons why we take on being a perfectionist. One is frequent fear of disapproval from others or feelings of insecurity. Another is having a parent who often disapproved of your efforts as a child, which pushed perfectionism. Another reason we become perfectionists is we had troubles with parent attachment when young, which causes difficulty with self-soothing as adults. This could lead to having trouble accepting a good outcome as good as if it's not perfect.

Another reason I adopted perfectionism was an effort to avoid a negative emotion. This one is so big. So how many of you love being organized?

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Yeah, I love it too. And one of the problems was, was I thought that if I could be so organized, if I could be ultra-prepared, and amazing, and wonderful, I could avoid all the problems that would come to me. So, I thought that if I could figure out how to solve the problem for good, I would never have to feel bad again, kind of like the way that I thought about weight loss. I genuinely thought that people who were thinner, were happier.

So, this was an attempt at self-preservation. So, this is the problem. I'm going to talk about this over and over in my podcasts. To have a healthy balanced life, a 50% of life is going to be difficult, and 50% is going to be wonderful. But just like Brené Brown, she has become a shame expert which of course has lead us to understand perfectionism in such a relevant and new way. And we talk about perfectionism isn't actually about being perfect. It's about a feeling of perfect. We are continuously trying to chase that perfect feeling. Sound familiar?

Kind of like when we try to chase the yummy flavor of food. This is a moving target because the only way to feel an emotion now is from the reaction or behavior or others, gaining approval from others, creating a dependency. We never learned how to create that feeling for ourselves. Therefore, going back to the perfectionist actions to try to get that perfect feeling. See what I mean about a moving target?

Brené Brown explains that perfectionism is like wearing a 20 pound armor that we use to protect ourselves. Perfectionism is there when we are more concerned with what others think about us than what we think of ourselves. Brené explains, "If I look perfect, live perfect, work perfect, I will rid of minimize criticism or ridicule." We are not able to do anything brave if you are wearing the straitjacket of what people think.

So, what is the solution to all of this? I really want to invite you to go back to your playful, innocent, five or six year old self. And I want you to ask yourself, what was she like? How has she evolved? Are you proud of who you have become? Are you taking good care of her?

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So just like I said in a previous episode about the importance of looking at your life through a filter, just like when we use, wear the red glasses to look at our quilt to see if it's well balanced in the value of the fabrics you chose. I want you to look at yourself with love and compassion. What would it mean for you to truly look at yourself with so much love?

So, when I talk about this 12 step recovery program, I wrote this with the outline of the traditional 12 step program with AA and all the other recovery programs. And so, I'm going to share with you the 12 steps of the program. And in my courses and all of that I have classes where I teach interactively. But I'm just going to read this to you and so you can see how so many women are truly working through how to overcome the obstacle of these different thought patterns that truly have been growing within us for so long that we don't even question that they're possible to change.

So here are the 12 steps. Step one, I am not supposed to be perfect, my job is to learn and grow.

Step two, I look at myself with love and compassion. So, I see myself in my purest form.

Step three, I am the creator of my feelings. Our thoughts create our feelings, I choose my feelings.

Step four, I was born worthy, s 100% worthy, my self-worth does not come from what other people say, the number on the scale, or the amount of money I have in the bank.

Step five, I achieve balance in my life by embracing all emotions. I understand that my life will be 50% positive and 50% negative.

Step six, I choose what I think. No one has the power to change the way I feel.

Step seven, I use the model to become conscious of what I'm thinking.

Step eight, I decide what I want to think about myself so I monitor the self-talk I have.

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Step nine, relationships are important to me so I create healthy boundaries to achieve these.

Step 10, I honor and respect my physical body and prioritize taking care of it.

Step 11, I celebrate myself in every way, my victories and my failures, because this is how I grow.

And the last step is, I commit to being willing to be vulnerable with my emotions and not resist or avoid them because this is how I truly become me.

So, I will be sharing this in a future podcast. But the most important relationship we have is with ourselves. And when we can learn to truly prioritize ourselves, that is where we can truly grow and learn. So, thank you so much for coming along with me in this journey of perfectionism. And I do want to encourage you to go back and look at where did you score five or higher. And I want you to think of specific examples in your life where that's playing out. And I want you to question what would change in your life if you could improve that relationship.

So just the fact that you're here listening and allowing your brain to work through that is just a huge victory. So, thanks for listening to Weight Loss for Quilters. If you want more information please visit daratomasson.com. See you next week.

To celebrate the launch of the show, I'm going to be giving away \$100 gift cards to Lisa Bongean's Primitive Gathering shop to four lucky listeners who follow, rate and review the podcast. It doesn't have to be a five-star review, although I sure hope you love the podcast.

My goal for this show is to provide you with tons of value. So please let me know in your review if there's a topic you'd like me to cover. Visit daratomasson.com/podcastlaunch to learn more about the contest and how to enter. I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

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Thanks for listening to *Weight Loss for Quilters*. If you want more info, please visit daratomasson.com. See you next week.