

Perfectionism

Anonymous

Oh, you're just really type A. What does that even mean? You're just really organized, like, wins "Most Organized" during Middle School Superlatives type organized. It's a good thing that you're this way. If anything, it's just healthy perfectionism. Why would caring about your grades so much be a bad thing?

No, that's not quite it.

Google says that perfectionism is "the need to be or to appear perfect, or to even believe that it's possible to achieve perfection. It is typically viewed as a positive trait rather than a flaw."

Yeah, that's definitely not it either.

A few more clicks on Google and you find that it can actually interfere with quality of life or can become an outsized desire to avoid mistakes, errors, and failures that are common. Psychcentral.com says the root of it all is believing your self-worth is based on your achievements, and is often present when there are rigid, high, parental expectations. You find that perfectionists can be self-critical, or at least that's what verywellmind.com thinks.

We're getting there.

It's filling out mazes for fun in the first grade, emphasis on for fun, yet tears stream down your face because you just can't get it right, so you have to erase and erase with the erasers on your \$1 Staples pencils, but the erasers don't work that well so the paper rips along with your 6-year-old heart. Your teacher is definitely going to call your mom to talk about this one later.

It's picking up the violin at age 8, another thing that's supposed to be fun, until there are constant concerts and music festivals and competitions. It's having to repeat the same four measures of "Stairway to Heaven" for an hour until your mom comes in telling you to take a break, before breaking the news that she couldn't tell that the song you were playing was supposed to be "Stairway to Heaven". What utter heartbreak. It's practicing until there are calluses on your fingers and you slam your bow against the wall at least once in frustration. I definitely would not want to be one of the people in that house that's for sure.

By high school, it becomes all about the numbers. Crunching the numbers of what your GPA might be after every single grade. Each number feels crucial, like it's life or death. Studying for hours even if you don't have to, but you know that if you don't, not doing it will lead to sleepless nights worrying about that exam that feels so important. Who's on honor roll? What's the average grade? How many people got a 5 on that AP test, how many APs have you even taken? Spoiler Alert: None of it really mattered that much.

Volleyball games become nerve-wracking (another thing that was meant to be fun), where every missed serve makes you feel like you might as well just ride the bench for the rest of the game and cut the cameras that are filming you for the highlight reel, because why would a coach want someone who can't even serve the ball? Every bad pass, every hit that's out of bounds, all make you feel like a failure.

By college, you leave your family and your hometown but pack your obsession with numbers in your backpack, because how could you go back to school without that, right? It's the same meticulous care for grades, but this time there's tuition and a good

post-grad job on the line. Great. There's even more pressure to not slip up. Every number becomes even more threatening than before. It's all that's on your mind. The numbers drown you, they wear you down, they drag you through the mud, and then, when they aren't validating enough for you, they defeat you.

That exhausting desire for the highest letters on papers and numbers on exams takes its complete reign. No more music, no more volleyball - just school. You edited that paper five times? Maybe you need one more for good measure. Class until 3, lab until 6, homework until maybe 11, maybe 12, some sleep, and finally that 7:30 am alarm to start it all again. It's tiring, and you're starting to get over it, but you can't really get over it because no matter how hard you try to just "go with the flow" or "not let the numbers define you," anything but a good grade ruins your day.

Yep, that sounds about right.

