

Ep #26: Overcoming Perfectionism



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 26. Today, we're talking all about overcoming perfectionism. You ready? Let's go.

Welcome to *The Less Stressed Lawyer*, the only podcast that teaches you how to manage your mind so you can live a life with less stress and far more fulfillment. If you're a lawyer who's over the overwhelm and tired of trying to hustle your way to happiness, you're in the right place. Now, here's your host, lawyer turned life coach, Olivia Vizachero.

Hi, my friends. How are you doing today? I hope you are awesome. I just got back from ten days in Florida, some for pleasure with friends, and some for work. Lots of work, actually. I met with my business coach, and I think I'm going to do a whole episode, just talking about the power of being in a mastermind, and the connection, and the growth, and the learning.

I think that would probably be really valuable to people because I also host a mastermind. I just want to get into the nitty gritty, but it's a lot to talk about, so I don't want to spend a bunch of this episode talking about it. I think I can say that it's for its whole own separate episode. So, that's what I'm going to do.

With that being said, we are continuing to talk about the three P's: people-pleasing, perfectionism, and procrastination. In the past two episodes, we've talked about perfectionism. I have gone through what it looks like in practice, so you're able to spot it. We talked about worth dysmorphia, and really working on your self-concept, your idea that you're good enough, that you're worthy enough, that you are enough, in order to work to overcome your perfectionism.

But today, I'm going to get into some tactics. Because as much as thinking that you're worthy is important and so required to overcome perfectionism, there are some tips and tricks that you can also implement to make a difference here. All right, let's dive in.

Actually, before we dive in, I'm going to digress for just a second. I do a pretty good job, I know I've mentioned it on the podcast before, I do a pretty

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good job of keeping my two panthers out of my room while I record this. So, you don't have to listen to them be disruptive. But I've just been gone for ten days, and one of my cats, Bear, is absolutely glued to my side. So, you might hear him.

If you do, just bear with me this time, we're going to give him some grace because he has a mild case of separation anxiety. If you hear some purrs, it's just because he's happy that his mom was home. Okay? I also tend to think of it as like the best ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) ... Hold on one second. (Sound of cat purring) I'm sorry, but that is just like the cutest noise on the face of the earth. Okay, I digress.

Let's get started. All right, when it comes to overcoming perfectionism, we have to start with addressing our thoughts. I always want you to gain awareness first, to figure out what you're currently thinking, and then we want to see if those thoughts serve us and change them, if necessary. If you're a perfectionist, chances are your thoughts aren't serving you.

You want to start by just examining what your thoughts are about perfectionism. Do you think it's a good thing? If you do, if you think it's beneficial to be a perfectionist, if you think it's helpful, you're going to keep engaging in that behavior because you think it's beneficial. You think it's good. So, you want to check in with yourself there.

Do you think it's good to be a perfectionist? If you do, what do you want to choose to think instead? Maybe you want to think the exact opposite; that it's bad to be a perfectionist, that it's not helpful, that it doesn't serve you, that it's safe or okay to be imperfect. Those are thoughts that are going to help you start to move the dial with your perfectionist tendencies, to become someone who doesn't indulge in perfectionism, like you have in the past.

You also want to examine your thoughts about making mistakes. Do you think it's the worst thing ever, if you make one? Do you think that you're not good enough, if you make mistakes? Do you think that people won't

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respect you, or hire you, or want to work with you, if you make them? You want to start to explore; what do you think about making mistakes?

Then from there, ask yourself again; do those thoughts serve me? They probably don't, if you're indulging in perfectionism. What do you need to think instead, about making mistakes? One of the things that I always have clients do, I'm going to do a whole podcast on this, I call them "mirror judgments". But you can always check in with yourself to see how you approach or judge another person when they make mistakes.

Oftentimes, my clients will think that they're accepting of themselves when they make mistakes, but they'll indulge in a lot of drama and worry ahead of time, that other people won't be receptive or understanding if they make them. I'll always check in with them on how they judge other people, when other people make mistakes.

If it turns out that they tend to be really judgmental of other people, chances are you're going to think other people will think exactly the same thoughts that you think about other people when they make mistakes. Whatever you think about other people is what you think other people will think about you. I know that's kind of a tongue twister, but work with me here, okay?

You want to address and change your judgments, that you have of other people making mistakes, so you can be more gracious and kinder to yourself when you make them. You want to check in there with those mirror judgments.

Take a few seconds to think about what thoughts you'd like to practice instead? Do you want to think that it's safe to make mistakes? Do you want to think that it's normal to make mistakes? Do you want to think that mistakes are just a part of learning, and that you're always winning and learning?

Or, rather, winning or learning? Do you want to think that you can still make mistakes and be exceptional? That's a fun thought. Right? Give some time

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and think about the thoughts you want to think about making mistakes? Can you be more gracious and kind to yourself in that area?

I also want you to examine your thoughts about what you make imperfection mean about you. Normally, when we do something imperfectly, we add extra meaning to it. Do you make it mean that you're not worthy enough, that you're not good enough, that you're never going to get to where you want to go, you're never going to be successful?

That's so much pressure that we put on ourselves, when we think those kinds of thoughts. Ask yourself; what do I make it mean about me when I do something imperfectly? If you need to pause the podcast, just to let that question sink in, go ahead for a second. What do I make it mean about me when I do something imperfectly?

If your answer doesn't serve you, if it's super negative, you want to ask yourself; what do I want to make it mean instead? I always want to offer you that you can choose to make it mean absolutely nothing. But you're probably, definitely, going to want to course correct.

You're going to see that the way you're thinking about being flawed, about being imperfect, about making mistakes, about having things be a little bumpy, you're probably giving it some really significant meaning. And, that meaning is probably not positive. If that's the case, can you course correct?

Now, that's a little purview into the thought arena, when it comes to overcoming perfectionism. You've got to figure out what you're currently thinking, and you want to see; do I need to change my thoughts? To come up with thoughts that serve me instead, and help me get out of my perfectionistic patterns?

You also want to focus on your feelings. There are a lot of feelings that people experience when it comes to being imperfect. You need to learn how to sit with those emotions. I always describe this as letting them ride shotgun with you as you go about your business, right? You're in the driver's seat of your life, but some of these negative emotions,

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unfortunately, have to come along for the ride. Because part of the human experience is feeling negative some of the time.

But a lot of us, when we go through our lives, we let these negative emotions drive, we give them so much power and control over what we do or what we don't do, and how we feel, and how we go through our lives. Instead of doing that, those negative emotions are just going to come along for the ride and you're going to take really intentional action to avoid perfectionism while feeling a little uncomfortable.

You're going to have to practice feeling emotions like; incomplete, imperfect, unprepared, judged, exposed, maybe a little embarrassed or worried. If those emotions jump out at you, and you tend to have a really hard time feeling them, again, pause this podcast episode and take a second, and find where you experience those feelings in your body.

Where do you feel unprepared? Where do you feel exposed? Where do you feel embarrassed, or imperfect or anxious? The worst that can ever happen to you is that you experience that emotion in your body, you'll experience it as a vibration. I know that sounds kind of silly, but that's all emotions are they're vibrations in our body, and you want to practice feeling them on purpose, with intentionality.

We work so hard, I always say we do back handsprings essentially, to get out of these negative emotions. But nothing really happens when we feel them. You want to just practice feeling them on purpose. Okay? What happens to you when you feel imperfect, or incomplete, or exposed, or vulnerable, or embarrassed? Nothing actually happens. Yes, it's uncomfortable physically, in your body, but that's all. You don't die. You've survived every negative emotion you've ever felt.

You want to make a deal with yourself. You want to identify what emotions you avoid when you indulge in perfectionism? If you're constantly focused on being perfect, you never have to feel imperfect. You never have to feel flawed; you never have to feel incomplete, or judged. If you attain

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perfectionism, that land of being in the ideal, you won't have to feel those feelings.

So, you want to see and be on to yourself; how do you use perfectionism to avoid feeling your feelings? Once you get clear on that, you can ask yourself and make a deal with yourself; what would be so bad if I just felt these on purpose? Would I be okay? Spoiler alert, the answer is yes; you will be okay.

You can also just decide that you're willing to feel them. I made that deal with myself a really long time ago, when I decided to start building this business. I said, "Hey, this is going to be uncomfortable. We're going to have to feel a lot of negative emotion as we embark on this venture. That's all right. What if we just promise to feel your feelings and move forward anyways?" That's what I did.

It's what I've been doing ever since. Man, does it pay dividends? See if you can get into that deal, that arrangement, with yourself? Can you make the agreement to feel all of these feelings, that you feel when you're imperfect, when you're not indulging in perfectionist behavior?

All right, you also have to separate your self-worth from the action you're taking, from what it is that you're doing in your life. Because if your self-worth is so wrapped up with your progress that you're making, with what you're doing in the world, you're constantly going to pressure yourself into doing it perfectly.

Because if your self-worth is tied to how well you do things, and you don't do them perfectly, you aren't going to allow yourself to feel worthy, to feel good enough. All right? I told you in the last episode, you can just decide that you're good enough. That's completely available to you.

But you want to make sure; are you associating your worth as a human being, with what you're doing as a human in this world? You're a human being not a human doing, always remember that. But if they're tied together, you want to separate them.

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The way that you do that, is just by constantly reminding yourself, and really mentally rehearsing the belief that you are not what you do. That you're whole, worthy, and good, and enough, all on your own. Regardless of how productive you are. Regardless of what you produce in this world. Regardless of what you do. Regardless of what you accomplish, and how you go about accomplishing it. All right? Those two things are separate.

Now, when we're goal setting, you want to do a couple things. Number one, you always want to define 'enough'; you want to make sure it's objective and attainable, it's measurable, and you've got metrics to track your progress. I did a whole episode about this earlier, in the podcast. So, go listen to *Defining Enough*, if you haven't listened to that yet. But you want to make sure you define whatever it is that you're striving for.

Perfectionists like to use words like; better, best, more, less. enough. Those words are really ambiguous, and then we end up just chasing the horizon. Being really unclear about what we're aiming for, not knowing how to recognize it when we arrive there.

We end up feeling so discontented during the process, because we never know what we're working towards. You want to make sure you define 'enough' and get really clear on what you're aiming for, and how you'll work, following the yellow brick road, to get to the end result. It's going to help you feel so satisfied. It will also help you feel accomplished when you get there, which is such a beautiful gift that you can give yourself.

Now, once you've defined enough, you can also apply that in tandem, with the concept of the 'minimum baseline'. The minimum baseline is a goal setting tool. I talked about it in the two-part episode about *Following Through*, that I did a couple of episodes ago. If you haven't listened to that, I really dive into detail on how to become someone who follows through, how to build that as a skill set.

If you're a perfectionist, you're probably not one who has a history of following through. You probably do what I talked about two episodes ago, where you start and stop, and you quit ahead of time, and you fail ahead of

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time, you never really get going. You don't have a good relationship with following through, you don't identify as that kind of person. And, it's because you put so much pressure on yourself, that it's really hard to get started.

Then, when you do something imperfectly, if you're really engaged in all-or-nothing thinking, where it has to be completely perfect or it's not worth it, you quit, right? If you do something imperfectly, you might as well not continue to do it. You want to make sure that you're setting very realistic goals that are attainable, you're not indulging in perfectionist fantasy goal setting. With that, you want to work it as a minimum baseline goal.

What that means is you pick a really obvious, "Of course 1,000%, I'll achieve this result," you pick that as the goal. You make the smallest commitment possible, and you promise yourself that you will stick to it, no matter what. You work, and work, and work, to become someone who follows through, no matter what. It may not be super comfortable, that's okay, I talk all about that in that two-part episode.

But you can do that, you can survive the discomfort of following through. But picking small, attainable goals is going to help you reestablish that sense of self-trust, that indulging in perfectionism has really eroded for you, right? Most perfectionists have a terrible relationship with themselves when it comes to self-trust.

They don't trust themselves at all, because they have a history of bailing on the promises that they've made to themselves. Because their promises are unrealistic, so of course, they're not going to be able to stick to them.

You really want to work on reestablishing that sense of self-trust and becoming someone who follows through. The best way to do that is to set minimum baseline goals and accomplish them, little by little. It may seem, if you're a perfectionist, that the little-by-little progress isn't sexy, isn't enough progress, isn't enough accomplishment.

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But I promise you, a little goes a long way. And, you get so much further, faster when you set and achieve goals this way. Small, simple progress is sexy as hell, I just want you to remember that.

I also want to encourage you to fall in love with the process of achieving your goals. Most people aren't in love with the process of achieving their goals. In fact, they think to themselves, "If I could just skip the process of goal achieving, and just get right to the end result of having the achievement of having the accomplishment," they would pick that.

The problem with that, is you set yourself up to operate in a world where you're only giving yourself permission to celebrate success when you get there. You only celebrate the trophies in your life, and candidly, the trophies come pretty infrequently. You end up feeling dissatisfied, and discontented, and underwhelmed most of the time, right?

You can even go so far as to feel really frustrated most of the time while you're working towards achieving a goal, if you've set yourself up to be the kind of person who only celebrates the end results. You don't want to do that. Instead, you want to become a person who doesn't just celebrate trophies. You want to become a person who celebrates the process.

I want to encourage you to fall in love with the process. The everyday, nitty-gritty work of achieving your goals. It can be so sexy, but you have to think of it that way, and you have to practice thinking of it that way. That it's sexy to be someone who's committed. That it's sexy to be someone who follows through. That it is sexy to be someone who is consistent as hell, right?

That small incremental progress that you make day after day after day. The small incremental commitments that you stick to every single day. You want to fall in love with the process.

It's going to feel like a struggle some of the time, but you can fall in love with that part, too. Fall in love with the challenge of accomplishing your goals. If you start to love that part, start to love the imperfection of it, the challenge of it, the trial-and-error aspect of it, the always winning or

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learning mistakes part of it. That you're going to fumble and that that's not a problem, it's part of the process of learning.

If you learn to make peace with that part of the process, if you learn to fall in love with that part of the process, you will be able to stop indulging in perfectionism, and you will have so much fun along the way.

I had a feeling... This is a total digression. I had a feeling that you could hear Bear in the background, and I just went back and listened to the recording, and you definitely can. I promise I'm not torturing him; he is just still sad and happy, and overwhelmed with all of his own feelings that I'm home.

I'm just going to leave that in this episode, as an example of what's possible of not indulging in perfectionism. Indulging in perfectionism would be me re-recording that section of this episode. I'm just going to leave it in, to serve as a little example to you, of what it looks like to not indulge in perfectionism.

That's going to be my A- B+ work for the day, and it's going to be okay. I'm just going to choose to believe that you will find, Bear endearing and me endearing, and that you will choose to accept us both for our flaws and imperfections.

All right. You want to fall in love with the process of accomplishing your goals, even the messy parts. If this is a new concept for you, I get so excited to introduce people to this concept. Maybe no one ever told you that you could fall in love and celebrate the process, you've probably only seen people celebrate end results.

One of my favorite mentors is Gary Vaynerchuk. One of his big, audacious goals is to buy the New York Jets®. He's a serial entrepreneur, he's a public speaker, he's kind of a motivational speaker, I think he would hate being described that way. But I think it is what he does. He's very motivating to me, at least. He talks all the time about this big, audacious goal of buying the New York Jets.

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I know that's a little contrary to what I just told you, to set a minimum baseline goal or really small, achievable, simple goal, but you can do both. You want to work on setting minimum baseline goals to start, in order to establish that self-trust with yourself. But then, once you've done that, and you've become someone who follows through on doing what they say they're going to do, you can set some really big and audacious goals.

That's what Gary's done; he has set this big, audacious goal of buying the New York Jets. He's not anywhere close to amassing the wealth needed to do that yet, even though he's worth several hundred million dollars. It takes more than that to buy the Jets, apparently. He always talks about that people really get him wrong, they're mistaken.

They misunderstand him, when he says that he wants to buy the New York Jets. Yes, he'd love to have the New York Jets, he'd love to own the team. But it's not about that. It's about the process that he has to engage in to become someone who's capable of buying the New York Jets.

What businesses does he have to start? How does he have to grow them? What success does he have to amass along the way? What does he have to learn along the way? What's that process like, right? And, he has fallen in love with the process of getting to that endpoint. He likes the day-to-day aspect of it, the constant growth, the constant learning, the constant missteps, and course correcting, that comes with achieving an audacious goal like that.

I have wild money goals. The reason that I picked them, isn't necessarily for the money; I love money. I think it's beautiful. It's great. I love what it allows you to experience in this world. But part of it is just setting such an audacious, impossible goal for myself, because I'm in love with the process of getting there. It challenges me to think in such a bigger, bolder way. To think outside of the box, about how will I get there? It's like solving the greatest puzzle imaginable.

Ask yourself; can I fall in love with the process? What would it look like if I were to do that? How would my experience be different if I was in love with

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the process, rather than just the endpoint? How would I feel, what would my experience be like, if I was able to celebrate the way “there”, instead of just arriving “there”?

Whatever that final destination is for you, if you can become someone that can celebrate the process, just as much if not more than they celebrate the trophies, your entire life experience will be different, okay?

Also, this is sort of related. But I recently heard someone say this and I thought it was so brilliant, and very relevant for the topic of overcoming perfectionism. But we're often told, when we're younger, that practice makes perfect. Right? Ick! I totally used to buy into that concept of practice makes perfect, practice makes perfect. Yes, I do think there are some skills or tasks where that is probably true; that practice does make perfect.

But I do think, as a general rule of thumb, that's a pretty harmful way to think about things, right? Again, it really has you focused on perfection being the end goal. It tricks you into believing that perfection is something that is attainable, which, as I've explained time and time again in these past few episodes, it's not. There's no such thing as perfect; perfect doesn't exist.

Even though we tend to know that, or are willing to admit that, at least intellectually, when we buy into concepts like, practice makes perfect, we're subtly telling ourselves that it does exist, that it is achievable, it is attainable. That subtle reinforcement is really dangerous. We don't want to engage in that.

So, instead of thinking practice makes perfect, I want you to change that thought to, practice makes progress, because that's much more realistic, and then it gets you to fall in love, it reinforces and supports this concept of falling in love with the process, not falling in love with the endpoint. Okay? Practice makes progress. Not, practice makes perfect. Such a lighter way to go through life, and to approach your goals, and how you achieve them.

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All right. Last point, when it comes to overcoming perfectionism. What I want you to do, is get really good at spotting when you're indulging in perfectionism. I want you to become a master at fighting your perfectionistic patterns and interrupting them. You want to be on to yourself.

I teach my clients to do a weekly self-evaluation. It's called a weekly self-audit, or a Sunday self-audit. We just ask three questions: What worked? What didn't work? What would you do differently?

If you really want to work on overcoming perfectionism, if you know that this is a weakness of yours, and it causes you a lot of strife in your life, I highly encourage you to build in, just a sub-question under the 'what didn't work' section. Asking yourself each week; where did I indulge in perfectionism?

If you get better at spotting your perfectionistic tendencies, your perfectionistic patterns... I just love a good alliteration; I can't resist that one. If you get better at spotting your perfectionistic patterns, you will get better at interrupting them. Highlight them, for yourself each week. Get better at spotting them, and then make a plan each week.

What will you do differently next time? What is your game plan when you cut yourself in the midst of a perfectionistic pattern? You catch yourself doing it in real time? How will you interrupt it? How will you course correct? What will you do instead?

I want you to game plan for that, I want you to strategize, so you have an arsenal available to you for what you do to get yourself out of a perfectionistic pattern. The better you get at doing this, the easier it will be when that perfectionist tendency comes up for you. You'll be able to get yourself out of it faster, which will get you feeling better faster, too.

Come up with a game plan. Ask yourself; how am I going to spot my perfectionistic patterns? What will I do, when I catch myself indulging in them? You can make a game plan to course correct in the middle of it, and also after. What will you do differently next time, to avoid perfectionism all together?

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Those are my tips for you on how to overcome perfectionism. I hope you find them valuable. I hope you start putting them into play immediately. You can see huge, monumental changes in your life, if you stop indulging in perfectionism. Let yourself be human and work on making that attainable, objective progress to get you to where you want to go.

That's what I've got for you today. I will talk to you in the next episode. I can't wait. We're going to start talking all about time management. It's going to be so fun. It's such an area where people struggle, and I'm going to help you tackle it, once and for all.

I will talk to you in the next episode. In the meantime, have a beautiful week.

Thanks for listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast. If you want more info about Olivia Vizachero or the show's notes and resources from today's episode, visit www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com.