

## Ep #70: Other-Oriented Perfectionism



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Olivia Vizachero

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You're listening to *The Less Stressed Lawyer* podcast, Episode 70. Today, we're talking all about other oriented 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.

Hey, you guys. How's it going? I am so jazzed to talk about this topic. I have had a lot of personal breakthroughs. In this area of my life recently, I've been doing so much work on this issue. It's been so transformative for me and in my relationships really changing the way that I interact with people and how I get along with the people in my life, the people that I care about.

Because it's been so transformative for me, and it's made such an impact on the day to day enjoyment of my life and the people in my life. I'm really excited to talk about this topic, introduce you to it, and share with you what I've learned. So we're talking today about other oriented perfectionism.

If you're a perfectionist towards yourself, and if you're new to the podcast, I have several episodes on this topic. They're episodes 24 through 26. I'll make sure they're linked in the show notes. There's an episode on perfectionism, an episode on worth dysmorphia, which is a concept that I coined where you underestimate your self-worth, or you have a distorted view of your self-worth.

Then I have an episode on overcoming perfectionism. So I have covered this topic before. But all three of those episodes really focus on how your perfectionism is directed at yourself or weaponized against yourself.

Today, I want to flip that, and I want to talk about other oriented perfectionism. If you're a perfectionist towards yourself, you're almost certainly an other oriented perfectionist as well. You almost certainly struggle with other oriented perfectionism, which is perfectionism that's oriented or aka directed at other people.

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So you're expecting them to be perfect instead of expecting yourself to be perfect. The thing that I find so fascinating about other oriented perfectionism is how subtle it is, which is why addressing it and creating awareness around this topic is so powerful. Because people don't even realize that they're doing it most of the time.

Since I started exploring this in my own life and I've been having all of these aha's and breakthroughs, seeing how I'm indulging or engaging in other oriented perfectionism, I see it so ubiquitously with my clients. It comes up for them all the time. I'm seeing it in just every area of their lives. So I was so excited to talk about this because since it's so prolific and prominent, it's going to be so transformative for you to shift the way that you think about this and to really dial down your oriented perfectionism.

Now, people don't even realize they're doing this, like I said a moment ago. You're really unaware that this is even a thing that you're struggling with. It's because basically no one would articulate that they expect another person to be perfect. You're not going to say that or even think that to yourself in your own head.

Because if you thought that thought you'd quickly identify it as being unrealistic. You're like oh, of course no one's going to be perfect. I don't expect them to be perfect. So we don't articulate it in that way using those words.

We simply receive behavior or actions that we don't like. They're different from the expectation that we have for people. We get upset when people do certain things that don't align with our expectations. So it's having that expectation, and then it contrasting with reality, with our lived experience. But it's that expectation that we basically formed based on nothing that is the expectation of perfect, that people should behave a certain way.

Now, we make it a problem when people don't conform with our expectations, when they don't meet our expectations. As if something's gone wrong when we don't like how a person behaves, what they do, what they say, how they act, the way that they show up.

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What I've started to realize one of the concepts that I teach my clients is that life is 50/50. 50% good, 50% not so good. Now the facts that we experience in and of themselves, they're neutral. But the human experience is such that you will likely want to think that 50% of what you experience is good. That 50% of what you experience is not so good. That's just normal. That's a pretty common way for it to split.

This is, of course, just your opinion, which is in your control, but this is generally how it breaks down. Okay. I like to apply this thinking on that macro level that life is like this and on a micro level. So rather than just thinking 50% good and 50% bad, I like to think that life will be 50% boring and 50% not boring, or 50% fun and 50% not fun.

I like to apply this to myself, that I will be 50% amazing and then 50% not so amazing. That I'll have my moments too. Giving myself permission to be less than perfect. I also think it's about entrepreneurship. 50% of owning a business is incredible, and 50% is not so incredible. 50% is easy and 50% is not easy. 50% is fun, and 50% is not fun.

So I've started to apply this to people as well. I'm going to like 50% of what they do, and 50% of what they do I won't like. I will like 50% of their qualities and 50% of their qualities I won't enjoy. That doesn't mean that anything's gone wrong. It just sets my expectations such that when people behave in a way that I don't prefer, I don't make it a problem. I'm just like oh, of course. This is the 50% that I'm not going to love. This is subjective, right?

What I like about someone might be something that someone else doesn't like about them. Vice versa. What I don't like might be someone else's favorite quality about someone. So these are just our own subjective individual preferences, and we get to have them. There's nothing wrong with our preferences. But you want to realize and set the expectation that people aren't going to 100% meet your preferences. They're not going to perfectly and neatly fit within that box that you create.

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I recently had a conversation with my romantic partner. This was such a breakthrough for me, like an epiphany. He was helping me move. One of the things in our relationship that I've been working on is for us to always speak to each other respectfully. That's something I borrowed from a friend of mine, her name is Maggie Reyes. She's a brilliant marriage coach. That's something that she teaches her clients.

Of course, I can't control him and how he speaks to me and what he does, I can just control myself and how I speak to him. But I can also have boundaries in how I respond. If I perceive that he's speaking to me in a way that's disrespectful, I can choose to end the conversation until he comes in a way that I consider respectful.

So I was getting really frustrated. He was helping me move and the tension was growing throughout the day. We were starting to get on each other's nerves. I was starting to get frustrated and annoyed. I just felt like the conflict and tension was building as the day went on. I was able to calm myself down rather than being reactive and nasty. But I very calmly said to him, I was like hey babe, sometimes you're just really hard to get along with.

He took a deep breath. The reason that I wanted to articulate it was I wanted to communicate like where I was at in that moment, how I was feeling, what my thought process was, just where I was at so things didn't continue to escalate. As I communicated that he just kind of smirked at me. He took a deep breath. He was really calm. He goes, "Babe, do you think that you're not hard to get along with sometimes?"

I swear it hit me like a ton of bricks. It completely caught me off guard. If I'm being really honest, and I'm not ashamed to admit this to you, I want to be fully transparent but it's kind of comical to me. I actually was stunned. It surprised me. I was like huh actually, I think that I am easy to get along with like all the time. I admitted that to him.

He was like, "Yeah, no you're not. That's not how I see you. That's not how I feel. I think sometimes you're hard to get along with too." It was a

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complete shock and surprise to me. Maybe that seems arrogant or naive or short sighted or whatever. But because I'm familiar with myself and I know how I am and I like how I am, I just assumed that everyone else likes how I am too. That I fit within their expectations of me and that there's no friction there. That I'm just a complete goddamn delight is really how I see myself.

Which is great. It makes me feel very confident and pause have about myself, but it also takes me out of awareness that there may be things about me that people don't enjoy. In this conversation with my partner, I realized oh my goodness, this is me being an other oriented perfectionist where I expect him to behave a certain way that always aligns with my preferences. For me to find him 100% agreeable or 100% easy to get along with.

When I realized that that's actually unrealistic, because sometimes the way I want him to be is different than how he prefers to be. So there's going to be that natural tension and conflict there. If I change my expectation to be more in line with this 50/50 concept that sometimes I'm going to love what he does, and sometimes I'm not going to. That nothing's gone wrong. That isn't a problem for me to solve. Everything's okay. That's just how relationships work.

That there are going to be things about me that he likes and things about me that he doesn't like. That we're all looking for these unique combinations of what are the things that I prefer in someone that allow me to tolerate the things that I don't prefer with the assumption that there are always going to be things that I don't prefer about someone. That that's just part of the territory of being in relationship with another person.

When you start to look at all of your relationships, and you become aware am I expecting to like 100% of how someone behaves? Or am I expecting to not like some of the ways in which they behave? If you're expecting to like 100% of how people behave, you're going to be disappointed and frustrated a lot of the time because people will invariably not meet your expectations.

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If you often find yourself thinking that the people around you are doing things wrong, they're not doing things the right way, or the way that things should be done. You're engaging in other oriented perfectionism. You think there's one right way to do something, the perfect way to do something, the best way to do something. Best is really interchangeable and synonymous with perfect.

We often use it instead of perfect because it seems more realistic, but it's not. It's the same thing. It's just as ambiguous, just as unclear, and just as unattainable. If you constantly find yourself saying they did it the wrong way. There's a right way to do it. There's a best way to do it. There's a better way to do it. They didn't do it that way.

I'm going to take issue with the way that they're behaving, with the way that they're acting because they didn't do it the way that I think it should have been done. This is other oriented perfectionism. It's this other oriented perfectionism that's causing all of your negative emotion when people behave the way that they behave.

The truth of the matter is there's no right way to be. There's no right way to do things. There are different ways to do things. Everyone gets to have an opinion as to whether their way is the right way or the best way or the wrong way, but there is no objective standard. So you might think it's the right way, and someone else might think your way is the wrong way and vice versa. There are just different ways.

If you start to open yourself up to the idea that there's no one right way to be, you can start to see where you expect people to be a certain way and how that expectation is actually what causes your frustration. I started to see all the frustration that I create for myself when I expect people to act a certain way, the "right way" in my opinion.

I realized that this is exactly what other oriented perfectionism looks like in practice. In my moving example, for instance, it's like there's one right way to help someone move. If it's not that way, it's the wrong way. If I opened my expectations up to say there's a lot of different ways to help people

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move. There's a lot of different ways you can behave when you're helping someone move. There's a lot of different moods people get to have as they're helping someone move, it helps me dial down my own disappointment and frustration when reality doesn't match what I was expecting.

Think about asking your partner to help you do chores around the house. If you're engaging in other oriented perfectionism, you're often going to be frustrated with the way that they perform those duties or those tasks. There's one "right" way to wash the dishwasher. That's other oriented perfectionism if you're putting that on someone. If there's one right way to do laundry, if there's one right way to put your kids to bed at night to do the evening routine, if there's one right way to celebrate the holidays.

That's been me with my parents. I've talked about that on the podcast before where I expect them to be a certain way. To like the holidays and want them to celebrate exactly the way that I want to celebrate them. So this is other oriented perfectionism. That there's one right way to be. I upset myself when people don't comply or match my expectation.

Think about how this shows up in work as well, especially when it comes to delegating. If you delegate a brief to someone, and you get it back, and they didn't write it the way that you would write it. There are a lot of ways to write an argument, to structure a brief, to make your case to the court.

If you're focused on it not being done the one right way that you think it should be done, you're going to exhaust yourself and really expend so much effort getting it to match the way that you think it should be. You're going to be so frustrated in the process thinking that the person that you're supervising that you delegated to didn't do it the right way.

Maybe someone phrased an email differently than you would phrase it. If you're indulging or engaging in other oriented perfectionism, you're going to feel embarrassed by what they said in the email because you're thinking they should have approached it differently than they did. That they should have phrased differently, they should have worded it differently.



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Another way this comes up, do you ever get upset with someone and tell yourself or say to them it's not what you did, but how you did it. It's not what you said, but how you said it. This is other oriented perfectionism. You think there's a perfect way or a best way for them to phrase something, and they didn't match your expectation, your definition of "right" and then you take issue with it. You make them wrong.

That happens for people all the time, and it causes so much unnecessary conflict. If you find yourself doing this, just notice that you're expecting someone to be perfect. That, of course, they're not perfect. So they get to say things however they want to say things. If you find it disrespectful, you get to decide what you do with that. That's your opinion, and you're welcome to have it. But what if you just let it be okay that they said it the way that they did and not take issue with how they phrased it, with how they worded it.

Think about when you get someone's work product, and you're reviewing it, and there are mistakes there. If you get frustrated by this, I want you to check in with yourself. What are you expecting? Are you expecting their work product to be perfect?

You typically wouldn't articulate that that's what you're expecting. That that's the standard. But if you find yourself frustrated with having to correct things or make changes, I want you to check in with yourself here. What is your expectation? How many mistakes is your team member allowed to make? What's good enough versus perfect?

How many mistakes are you expecting them to make? What if you changed your expectation and you expected there to be things that you need to correct in their work product if that was just part of the program? What does them getting it wrong look like? Are you expecting this to happen? Or are you unconsciously or subconsciously expecting perfection? How often are they allowed to get it wrong? How often do you expect them to get it wrong?

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This is what you want to start to consider because my guess is you haven't thought through this. Because you haven't thought through this, you're expecting flawlessness, you're expecting perfectionism even if you wouldn't articulate it that way.

Think about this back at home also, kind of reverting back to that for a second. Think about your kids. What are you expecting from them? Are you expecting them to behave 100% of the time? Are you expecting them to follow rules 100% of the time? Does that cause you immense frustration when they don't follow your rules 100% of the time or when they misbehave some of the time? Same thing with your partner. What are you expecting? Are you expecting them to fall into your preferences 100%?

A really simple example of this just take driving. Are you expecting other drivers to be perfect? Or are you expecting them to be flawed humans just like the rest of us? If you were expecting them to be flawed instead of expecting them to be perfect would you be a lot less upset when someone doesn't use a blinker when they get over and switch lanes, or when someone cuts you off, or when someone takes too long to start moving after the light turns green?

If you're fast honker, if you're quick to hit your horn, you're probably expecting other people to be perfect when they're driving and to go as soon as the light turns green, to not waste a single second. What would it look like for you to be way more understanding of other people's imperfections, of other people's "flaws"? Again, flaws are just subjective. What someone perceives to be a flaw might be what someone else perceives to be an asset or a positive attribute and quality.

I really want you to take some time this week and start to search for the ways that you indulge in other oriented perfectionism, okay? If you think people aren't behaving correctly and you think they should be doing something different than they are, you are likely indulging in other oriented perfectionism. Okay.

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I've talked about this before as well using the term manuals. We typically have instruction manuals for people. We get frustrated when people don't meet the expectations that we have for them in those instruction manuals that pretty much just exist in our head. We, of course, haven't taken the time to write them down anywhere or share them with people. But we have these manuals for the people in our lives.

The manuals are really based off or fueled by this other oriented perfectionism. That there's one right way to be. We know what that right way is. If people don't adhere to our standard of right then they're wrong. They're just de facto incorrect.

But what if there's no best way to be, no right way to be, no perfect way to be? How does that revelation change the way that you show up and experience your relationships? How does it change the way that you interact with the people in your life? I bet it's going to make you so much more tolerant, so much more accepting, so much more understanding of the people that you interact with.

You're going to be able to enjoy the parts of them that you enjoy, and not take issue with the parts of them that you don't enjoy. You're just going to come to expect that there's going to be that 50% that you don't love, and that that's okay. Really all we're ever doing is searching for the 50/50 split in people that were willing to accept, okay.

You're looking for the 50% good that you value and you appreciate that makes whatever their 50% combination is of the things that you don't like tolerable. Everyone's 50/50 split preferences are going to be different. Just like I've talked about this before on the podcast, there's a 50/50 split with being an employee and a 50/50 split with being an entrepreneur.

I prefer the 50/50 split of being an entrepreneur over the 50/50 split of being an employee. That doesn't mean that being an entrepreneur is better. It just means that it is my preference to choose that 50/50 versus a different 50/50. A lot of people prefer the 50/50 of being an employee. That's totally fine. Their choice isn't right or wrong. Neither is mine.

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So with the people we have in our lives, it's the exact same thing. There's a 50/50 split of the things that we like and the things that we won't like. That doesn't mean that there's a problem. Nothing has gone wrong. Just plan to expect that from people. It's all about finding the 50/50 split that you prefer, and that you're willing to accept in order to get the parts that you love. Then to take the parts that you don't love with a grain of salt.

All right, this is going to transform your relationships and make it so much less tense, so much more enjoyable. You're really going to be able to appreciate people in such a different way. I promise. It's so revolutionary. I just can't say enough about it. It's completely changed my life as I've started to have these realizations and epiphanies. I hope the same is true for you.

I would love to hear about how this concept opens your eyes and changes your life improves your relationships. DM me on social media. I'm on Instagram and LinkedIn. Or write a review for the podcast and tell me how this transforms the way you interact with your loved ones, with the people in your life at work, outside of work, all that good stuff.

Okay. That's what I've got for you this week, my friends. I can't wait for you to start applying this to overcome your other oriented perfectionism. I hope you have a beautiful week. I will talk to you in the next episode.

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](http://www.TheLessStressedLawyer.com).