

# INFORMED CONSENT: THE RISKS OF PERFECTIONISM IN MEDICINE (AND LIFE)

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Recovering Perfectionist

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## What Are We Going To Cover Today?

Goal: Explore perfectionism in medicine and learn skills to maintain passion and productivity in our practice of medicine and still have something to take home.

- Define Perfectionism
- Assess self care and self compassion
- Boundary setting as a healthy skill in medicine

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## CME Disclosure

Today's faculty: Pam Honsberger, MD and Michael Lee, MD; the planners for this activity, and the CME staff, do not have any relevant financial relationships with commercial interests or affiliations to disclose.

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### Why Now?

◦#10 on the List



Avoid Perfectionism

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### Medicine and Perfectionism Go Hand in Hand



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### A Conversation with My Younger Self



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### My Inspiration



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### Then and Now.....



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### So What is the Problem with Perfectionism?

1. It is an unattainable goal.
2. It is more about perception than internal motivation.
3. It is addictive... rather than question the logic, we believe we weren't perfect enough.
4. It actually sets us up to feel shame, judgment, and blame.
5. We are often hypocritical of both ourselves and others.

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### What Perfectionism is not....

- It is not striving to be your best
- It is not self-improvement
- Most perfectionists were raised being praised for achievement and performance
  - I am what I accomplish
    - Grades, manners, rule following, people pleasing, sports, etc.
  - Add Culture and ethnicity and it complicates our shame and feelings of inadequacy

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### The Risk of Perfectionism: Here it Is - Informed Consent

- Physicians are at **significant risk for burnout** and some specialties at higher risk (>50%).
- Research shows that perfectionism **hampers success** and is often a **path to depression, anxiety, addiction**
- **Emotional Exhaustion** is a hallmark of burnout and as women we are at greater risk if we try to be everything to everyone.
- Perfectionism can also lead to **disengagement**, which leaves us with less professional fulfillment and connection.

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### A Work in Progress

1. Value Clarification
2. Boundary Setting
3. Self-Care
4. Self-Compassion
5. Looking for Color, Joy, and Creativity

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### My Lantern



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### What is a Boundary?

◦Boundaries are imaginary lines that help you **protect yourself** both physically and emotionally.

◦A Boundary is **what is ok and what is not ok.**

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### So What's the Problem?



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### Self-Care



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### Self-Compassion

- Self-Kindness
- Common Humanity
- Mindfulness

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### Boundary Setting in Caring for Others

- By doing this work, it has allowed by me to better care for patients who struggle with:
  - Perfectionism
  - Self-Care
  - Self-Compassion

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Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.

– Christopher Germer

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Self-Compassion

Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings – after all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?

- Kristin Neff

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## Self-Criticism

- Self-criticism can lead to generalized hostility (toward oneself and others), anxiety and depression
- Self-compassion has been linked to diminished anxiety and depression, better emotional coping skills, and compassion for others

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/06/27/5-strategies-for-self-compassion/>

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## Self-Criticism

A final word on self-criticism: Do not beat up on yourself. Even if you think you know your flaws, there is no need to advertise them. Most people won't have noticed.

- Philip Toshio Sudo

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## Self-Compassion

- Self-compassion is extending compassion to one's self in instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering. - Kristin Neff
- Change the negative self talk of self criticizing and shaming, and move towards a more supportive and compassionate one.
- Talk to yourself like you would to a friend compassionately




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## Self-Compassion

### 3 Core Elements:

- Self Kindness
- Common Humanity
- Mindfulness




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## Self-Kindness

- Value taking care of yourself as much as you value taking care of others.
- Avoid having guilt or shame associated if you want to do something for yourself that you enjoy or if you need time for yourself.
- Work on the practice of asking for help and support.

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## Common Humanity

- Maintain Healthy Connections
  - Remember we all have feelings of inadequacies and we all suffer and are not alone
  - Avoid isolating yourself, and make sure to have a set group of family and friends you can reach out to if you need support




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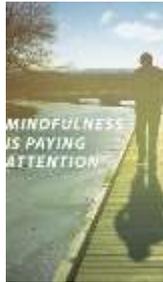
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## Mindfulness

- Pay attention to your feelings and avoid getting overwhelmed by them
- Acceptance and non-judgment, knowing that you won't know everything or can't do everything perfectly
- Avoid "comparison"
- "Comparison is the thief of joy"  
- Theodore Roosevelt




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## Mindfulness/ Box Breathing Exercise

- Please think of 1 thing that happened this week where you were very self critical or critical to someone close to you at work or at home.
- Please think of you talking to a friend who was going through the same thing and what would you say to that friend compassionately.




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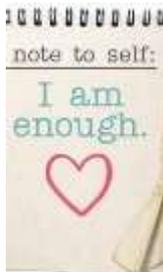
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## Self-Appreciation

- Appreciating what is good about ourselves
  - Can be done without arrogance or superiority
- Allows for gratitude
  - Can be grateful for mentors and life experiences that have shaped and developed your gifts




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## Be Kind to Yourself

To be self-compassionate is not to be self-indulgent or self-centered. A major component of self-compassion is to be kind to yourself. Treat yourself with love, care, dignity and make your wellbeing a priority. With self-compassion, we still hold ourselves accountable professionally and personally, but there are no toxic emotions inflicted upon and towards ourselves.

- Christopher Dines

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## Self-Compassion in Caring for Others

- Having self-compassion allows for one to better see the need for it in others
  - Practicing self-compassion makes it easier to coach it to others
  - Will allow for sustainable positive behavior changes in others
  - Empowers others to be proactive for self care

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## Self-Compassion Scale

<http://self-compassion.org/test-how-self-compassionate-you-are/>

- Kristin Neff

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## Self-Compassion Mantra




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## Thank You!




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## Resources

Brown, B. (2012). *Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead*. New York, NY: Gotham Books.

Brown, B. (2010) *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden Publishing.

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Neff, Kristin. (2011) *Self Compassion. The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Williams, J.C., Dempsey, R. (2014). *What Works for Women at Work: Four patterns working women need to know*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

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