

# The Disappointing Futility of Perfectionism

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*Why Your Inner 'Prosecutor' Doesn't Really Know What's Best, and How to Shut It Up*



How do you talk to yourself?

Are you encouraging or critical? Is your opinion of what you've accomplished ever 'good enough' or is it never enough?

Do you feel shame and anxiety at the thought of showing your work, or do you know to protect it while it is in development so that you don't share it prematurely or indiscriminately, and first share it for the feedback and encouragement of a knowledgeable peer or mentor?

In a word, are you *self-constructive* or *self-destructive* in your creative pursuits?

If you are the later, chances are you never received (or saw modeled) the kind of support and encouragement that would allow you to make mistakes and learn from them. Instead, you were indoctrinated at some point into the toxic cult of perfectionism.

## **Time to break away and deprogram that shit.**

*'Deprogramming'* is exactly what getting off the path of perfectionistic, ego-driven self-paralysis and onto the path of excellence will take. By catching and changing your self-talk, you begin to rewire your brain. I'm sure I won't be the first to tell you that this has been empirically proven.

Some people are resistant to the idea of reframing things positively because they believe that focusing on what's good about themselves and what they're doing means they need to lower their standards. In reality, the opposite is true: Positive self-talk allows you to leave yourself alone so that you can flourish at your own pace.

Contrary to the subtitle of this piece, learning to reprogram your self-talk is not about making it shut up. You can't. Would that you could. But just because you can't doesn't mean you have to chew on self-abnegation like a bone. Spit it out, and focus on what's right in order to build on that. This reframing technique will take some time to become habitual. Scratch that; it will probably take a lot of time. But if you stick with it, you will find yourself beginning to change your default self-responses from hyper-critical to self-accepting and innovation-seeking.

When I follow up with clients who are working on this, they will often say 'I'm trying'. I am quick to correct them: trying infers the inevitability of failure. Mental command is not something you develop by taking shots at it. We're talking about a lifetime of mental habits. It takes practice.

**Don't try. Practice.** Then when you fail or make a mistake, which

happens as we develop a skill through practice, you'll remember to start over again.