

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Proving Yourself at Work without Stressing Yourself Out

Ten-hour days, working through “days off,” triple-checking everything you do and second-guessing each decision you make. If this all sounds familiar, you’re not alone. In today’s competitive workplace many of us put too much pressure on ourselves to work the hardest, be the best, stand out and rise above.

Being under pressure does have its advantages: it can keep you focused, organized, improve performance, generate ideas and give you that sense of achievement after successfully tackling a challenging job. But the obsession for perfection can actually make you a less effective employee and seriously drain you mentally and physically. Fortunately with a few tried and true tactics, proving yourself at work without wearing yourself down is possible.

Lightening the Load

You set the bar high when it comes to your own expectations but no project, situation or decision you make will ever be entirely perfect. Fussing over the little details and failing to see the big picture can leave you trapped. To be a “healthy perfectionist” you should:

Stop comparing yourself to others. The standards you reach for are usually based on the ones you see in friends, family and colleagues. Although this can be motivating, remember that the most effective comparison is the one between where you were, where you are now and where you’d like to be.

Manage your time. Part of the reason people obsess and stress over work is because they want it to be mistake-free. You need to learn where to draw the line, discover more efficient ways to get the job done and realize that making mistakes actually helps you learn and grow. Set time limits for each of your jobs and stick to it. Think strategically to help you prioritize between what needs to be done immediately and what can wait and be sure to set regular goals. This will help you complete your tasks while still being available to others.

Learn that sometimes less is more. When you’re striving to be the best, overdoing it can seem natural. You may find yourself trying to make something better by doing too much without considering if the work is actually necessary. Jamming a presentation full of unneeded details may not only fail to add value but could also ruin a good thing.

Build on your skills by investing in your professional development. Find out what skills you need to get where you want to be and actively seek out the education you need. Showing initiative and the desire to constantly grow professionally will help you stand out and allow you to use your energy in a positive and practical way.

Find your inner voice. The inability to make a decision adds considerable pressure to your life. Try believing in your intuition and just go with your gut every once in a while. Instead of over- thinking everything and being controlled by your desire to be perfect, have faith in your expertise. Also remember that you can’t predict every challenge that is coming your way. Try to roll with the punches, realizing that most situations can be dealt with as they crop up.

The answer isn’t to stop aiming high and pushing yourself to reach your full potential but rather to find

your flexibility. Don't let the unbending desire to get everything right all the time prevent you from taking risks, making big and learning valuable lessons.

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Strike a Balance

Even if you've deflated some of the pressure you put on yourself, you will still inevitably battle workplace stress. If you find a way to round out your life personally and professionally, you may discover that your work performance actually improves.

If you're struggling with a project and feeling the pressure, go for a quick walk so you return with a renewed perspective and a fresh focus. Set cut off times at night to put all work and thoughts of work away and dedicate specific evenings to spending uninterrupted time with your family. Pursue an old hobby or take up something you've always been interested in. Make a healthy diet and an active lifestyle a priority and refuse to let your job negatively impact your health. Strive to become a "healthy perfectionist" by achieving excellence instead of sabotaging your own personal growth.