Table 4. Supplementary materials: comprehensive themes and quotes across qualitative studies included in the meta-synthesis

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| **COSTS OF PERFECTIONISM** | |
| **Anxiety**  **(n=15)** | **Anxiety, worry (n=10)**   * Worrisome (Ashby et al., 2012) * Reflecting upon when they were on stage during a less successful performance, the participants spoke of having what they feet was an inappropriate, scattered, or negative focus with a pervasive feeling that things could be going better (Clark et al., 2014) * “Anxiety disorders and depressive problems” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * … Anxiety and constant pressure experienced by participants by virtue of a perceived obsession with analysing one’s performances… (Hill et al., 2015) * “I was very, very worried that I would be really bad… I’m really not used to being bad at anything.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “Well am I going to be as good at this as I am at everything else?”… “Am I actually clever enough?” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I sometimes still struggle to almost sort of switch off sometimes from things… I think sometimes it’d be quite nice just to be able to sit down at night and switch off.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “Especially if I’ve done badly in a race, I’ll pick at it. I’ll think about it and it’ll chew me up for days if not weeks until the next one.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I often worry about my future.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * Another participant expressed that it is difficult for her to monitor her grades due to severe anxiety… (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I am worried that I am not going to be able to do something well.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * … Worried about her parents’ reactions because of their high expectations. (Neumeister et al., 2007) * Unrelenting anxiety and worry. (Schuler, 2000) * Their fixation over making mistakes resulted in an almost continual state of high anxiety. (Schuler, 2000) * They constantly doubted their actions, and lived in a high state of anxiety. (Schuler, 2000) * “[I] always wanted things done right or I don’t feel good.” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * “… and then you get worried, like a snowball… the more you worry about not making a mistake, the more it happens.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “… worried about what [their] teammates think.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
| **Stress (n=7)**   * Stressful (Ashby et al., 2012) * “No… because I get stressed out about a lot of things that I don’t need to.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “I guess the worst thing about it is that I did generate a lot of stress in myself.” (Egan et al., 2013) * The theme of stress was addressed directly in 13 of the 14 cases. Participants typically wrote that their stress derived from their perceived academic inadequacies. (Merrell et al., 2011) * … most stressful aspect of her life was concern over not getting accepted to medical school and, consequently, her inability to plan more decisively for the future. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… thinking how I might disappoint myself and my parents and thinking of the risk of losing my scholarships causes a great deal of stress on me. So much stress in fact that sometimes I think that I could drop out of school right now, not get a degree, and be perfectly happy.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… I also get stressed out that I am disappointing them.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “As of right now, stress is overwhelming my life…” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… stresses me…” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I am very much a perfectionist. Of course, I cannot really ever be perfect or do anything perfect, therefore, I get upset and stressed out.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “People get stressed out, enormously stressed out and have a short fuse…” (Moore, 2018) * “Making an A is a lot harder, so [my perfectionism] is much more stressful on me now than it ever was in high school.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * Perfectionists were reported as unsatisfied people who experience additional self-imposed stress. (Rice et al., 2003) * Relevant external triggers… external pressure and stress. (Thew et al., 2017) |
| **Depression (n=18)** | **Depression, feeling down, distress (n=12)**   * HW: 6 little distress, 7 considerable distress. LW: 7 little distress, no considerate distress. Only 5 of the 36 participants said they had no distress, an indication that perfectionism caused some distress for almost all the participants, although this was more evident for those in the HW category (Ashby et al., 2012) * “… I used to feel very mediocre or not good enough that I considered very many times thoughts of suicide and even an attempt one time.” (Augsberger et al., 2018) * … Feelings of hopelessness… (Clark et al., 2014) * “… and that then leads to all sorts of other things like you feel depressed or angry, so in that way it’s not helpful.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Feelin like you’re never good enough lead to a lot of feelings of unworthiness and loneliness because you retreat… I ended up dropping lots of courses in high school because I just felt I wasn’t good enough to even sit in the room and learn the material because I couldn’t learn it as fast as others.” (Farmer et al., 2017) * “Anxiety disorders and depressive problems” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * Loneliness and introversion are more frequently observed. Perfection and social isolation behaviours are witnessed.” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * “Despite intense efforts to show themselves in a good mood and camouflage their feelings, what they feel is loneliness and insignificance.” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * “Should I be sort of wallowing in it a bit longer?” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… sometimes a hollow feeling that perhaps you need to be getting more – not enjoyment. I do not know how to put it. It’s almost hollow sometimes – you’re not getting – I do not know it’s that a victory… is a hollow victory because suddnely it’s no longer a victory it’s now a small step on the bigger ladder rather than actually your last goal… so suddenly… rather than looking at it as happy you’re looking at it as negatively sort of thing – I suppose in a more kind of distressed way; certainly more a negative way than a positive way.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… feels like the pressure to be ‘perfect’ has mounted to an enormous level… and when I don’t succeed at something I become somewhat depressed and moody.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… dwell on it…”, “… be pulled down by it…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “When you get a bad grade on a test, you feel bad inside, and when you are trying to go to sleep at night, you just feel guilt, like really bad, depressive guilt, like you did something seriously wrong that you should be ashamed of. And you have nobody to blame but yourself.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… feels so upset because it is, like, all of this work is for nothing.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It would just take so much energy out of me just because I would focus so much more on the bad part of it, about not being good enough.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It’s normal to get B’s once in a while, I’ll get really upset. I want to be perfect and get all A’s.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “At first it was a drive to be even better, but then when I hit the ceiling with my own abilities, it kidn of just collapsed, and I just stopped doing things.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “… never happy…” (Rice et al., 2003) * “… depression…” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
| **Blame, guilt (n=4)**   * “If I do not work I feel guilty. I feel terrible if I do not work. But then sometimes I think, ‘well, what’s the point of working? I’m not getting the performances… why should I bother?” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I couldn’t really blame the teacher, but I could blame myself probably… I should have studied more. The test was made so that you could get a good grade, and I didn’t, and it was my fault.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “When you get a bad grade on a test, you feel bad inside, and when you are trying to go to sleep at night, you just feel guilt, like really bad, depressive guilt, like you did something seriously wrong that you should be ashamed of. And you have nobody to blame but yourself.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “You know you shouldn’t feel guilty about it, but you feel so guilty it’s incredible.”(Neumeister, 2004a) * Guilt and anger as a result of imperfection (Neumeister et al., 2007) |
|  | **Negative self-evaluation as a consequence of not meeting personal standards (n=7)**   * “Feel bad about self”, “critical of self” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Yes, absolutely… I believe it’s honestly my fault…” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… in the morning, you have to face yourself in the mirror, and think that I was too soft, and not tough enough to do the race…” (Egan et al., 2013) * “It’s that feeling of never being done.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “If I can do that, then I should be able to do better. If I could achieve that, if I worked a little harder, what could I have achieved?” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “At school if I don’t do as well as I think I should be doing, then I feel like I’m failing.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I think if I haven’t got something right, then I’m a bit of a worthless person. Or that I’m not good enough, sort of thing.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * External trigger for self-critical thoughts most frequently reported by the control and depression groups was making a mistake or failing at something.”(Thew et al., 2017)   “… I was terrible at myself; I hated myself; I was my own worst enemy.”(van Staden et al., 2009) |
| **Frustration, disappointment, anger (n=7)**   * “Increasingly throughout, I was getting really annoyed with myself, and I think that led to it getting worse in some places.” (Clark et al., 2014) * They were disappointed and annoyed with how it went… some spoke of embarrassment (Clark et al., 2014) * “… also you can get a bit frustrated with yourself…” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… and that then leads to all sorts of other things like you feel depressed or angry, so in that way it’s not helpful.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… but you are so frustrated with your won work and your own lakc of perfectionism.” (Moore, 2018) * “It makes me angry when I am not rewarded for my efforts…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… strong feelings of frustration and anger.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… angry at myself…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It frustrates me because, if it is my mistake, I know I have control over the situation and I know I could have done it right.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… and it was something that was completely within my power to meet those expectations, and I did not, and that made me angry.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * Guilt and anger as a result of imperfection (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “Ballistic” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “… that is frustrating because you feel like you’ve failed at living.” (Robb, Due, & Venning, 2018) * When they did not meet their high standards, they became angry with themselves. (Schuler, 2000) * They became angry with themselves and their parents. (Schuler, 2000)   “… frustrated…” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
| **Failure and mistakes**  **(n=13)** | **Fear of failure/mistakes (n=9)**   * HW/LW: “fearful of mistakes” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “… feeling pressure not to make mistakes…” (Clark et al., 2014) * “Just try and think about the stupid music. I just don’t know how to do it. There is so much to learn in this subject isn’t there? How will I ever get it right?” (Clark et al., 2014) * “I made so many mistakes talking, grammatically, everything… I made a lot of mistakes. They make me nervous.” (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) * “Oh, I made so many mistakes!” (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) * “I was very, very worried that I would be really bad… I’m really not used to being bad at anything.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… because you’ve got such drive I do not know if your fear of failure is more than say somebody who hasn’t got such a drive perhaps… I mean, referring to my friend – they hadn’t had such a fear of, you know, failing.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “There is always that fear that you won’t do well.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * Avoidance of difficult tasks or abandoning them part way through to avoid failure. The primary motivation for striving to achieve appear to be fear of failure and the implications of such failure on self-evaluation. (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “It would just be a total loss of security if I fell from this standard… I support it is a fear of… knowing that I would feel insecure inside myself.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “Not making mistakes was the focus of their definition of perfectionism.” (Schuler, 2000) * “Not messing up.” (Schuler, 2000) * “No mistakes.” (Schuler, 2000) * “No screw ups.” (Schuler, 2000) * … Neurotic perfectionists’ intense concern over making mistakes. (Schuler, 2000) * … Neurotic perfectionists were concerned about making mistakes. (Schuler, 2000) * The fear of mistakes was spontaneously reported by a remarkably high proportion of children and adolescents. (Vogel et al., 2019) * “… the more you worry about not making a mistake, the more it happens.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Interpretation of failure/mistakes (positive and negative) (n=6)**   * “No I didn’t really fail to meet it because I didn’t know what I was capable of achieving, so I was not disappointed.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… that I’m human, that I can make mistakes as well! That you can’t do everything well all the time.” (Egan et al., 2013) * Mistakes were not tolerated. (Egan et al., 2013) * “In the big scheme of things, it’s not the end of the world… it was just an unfortunate sequence of events.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “I had some grammatical errors, but small ones. I was fine. I am quite fluent and spontaneous. It wasn’t difficult to express myself.” (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) * “… but instead of being a constructive evaluation, I just beat myself up over what I have failed to do.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I minimize my successes, and then it seems reasonable that the failures would grow to take up that space.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… dwell on it…”, “… be pulled down by it…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “Here’s this one weak spot, and that permeates everything else. It spoils everything.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “Failures are of my own making. I attribute it to my unwillingness to put forth the effort needed to succeed. I’ve never felt there are things I can’t do… I know if I work hard enough, I can at least do respectably, if not excel. So the only excuse for failure in an academic area is my own laziness.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… if I failed at something and I was disappointed about it, if I did equally as well on something else, then I would try to focus on that, I wouldn’t want to think about that.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It would not bother me nearly as much because I could concentrate on my achievements [instead].” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “That grade should never happen again because I think I am capable of doing much better.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I turned it outward because people missed the same problems. So, if [the professor] is asking those and everyone is missing them, then there is something wrong… I studied for it, I can’t really blame myself.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It’s okay, I’ll try better next time.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I was the one giving tutoring out, but now I was the one who was receiving the tutoring. I did not like that idea at all. It was like, I’m perfect. I do not need tutoring.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I’ve learned to deal with failure sometimes.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * When discussing losses and mistakes, the unhealthy perfectionistic athletes shared that they had difficulties recovering and were very self-critical: “The hardest thing when you make a mistake is trying to like forget about that mistake and move on.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
| **Pressure**  **(n=26)** | **Pressure to succeed (n=3)**   * “… I always place a certain amount of pressure on myself. Regardless of how I am doing in a match, I never feel fully satisfied.” (Jackman et al., 2016) * … Needing to perform well academically in order to enter or remain in their chosen field of study. (Merrell et al., 2011) * Another participant noted her tendency to put “enormous” pressure on herself to succeed academically, an expectation to perform which was intensified since coming to college. (Merrell et al., 2011) * The pressure to succeed… (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I often worry about my future. Will I be successfully after college?” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I thought if I didn’t take this class, I was showing right there that I couldn’t do it. If I had not taken it, I wouldn’t be as good as the others who had taken it.” (Neumeister, 2004c) |
| **Personal standards/expectations (n=20)**   * HW/LW: “doing one’s best” as central to perfectionism (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Right, I have to get it technically right.”(Clark et al., 2014) * “I hate that being someone that has to have it all so right because it puts too much pressure on me, and that then leads to all sorts of other things…” (Egan et al., 2013) * “I don’t know that my standards ever move, because I think they are always impossibly high.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Well I constantly try and set it higher, to do a better job next time.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “I would probably actually set them higher, which is part of the trap I suppose.” (Egan et al., 2013) * The “high personal standards and goals” theme was the most common theme. (Farmer et al., 2017) * … high expectations and standards for one’s own performance, working very hard on tasks, and demonstrating a good work ethic. (Farmer et al., 2017) * “You want to make sure that it [work] is the best it possibly can be…” (Farmer et al., 2017) * “… if I get a good grade that is an A average but here’s one B+ or A- or something then he would still complain about that and ignore the rest of it…” (Farmer et al., 2017) * Participants made it clear they had high standards of achievement and expectations regarding their performances. (Hill et al., 2015) * “No I think I can do one more, I think I can do one more let’s try it.” (Hill et al., 2015) * High standards… magnitude of expectations…(Jackman et al., 2016) * … high personal performance standards: “You want to win every ball and distribute it in the right way. So you come a perfectionist because you want to do everything right.” (Jackman et al., 2016) * “I pick up on tiny mistakes and I have such high standards.” (Jackman et al., 2016) * Personal and parental expectations were evidence, largely in the form of expectations for the participant to perform well academically and, in the future, professionally. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “The A’s that I expect out of myself.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I cannot stand not to perform well, but I am not interested or motivated enough to care to put forth the extra effort to get the A’s. I have to admit, I am really hard on myself.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… I feel if my expectations were not so high I would be more comfortable.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… never good enough…” (Merrell et al., 2011) * Another participant expressed that her grades are not as high as she believes they should be… that she is not “living up to her potential”. (Merrell et al., 2011) * One participant explained that she has felt incapable of living up to her expectations. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I have always been a little bit hard on myself. Ever since I could remember I hated when I wasn’t able to achieve something.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * … Unrealistic expectations of themselves… (Moore, 2018) * … standards inappropriate for level of students’ stages of cognitive, psychomotor and emotional development. (Moore, 2018) * “It is a self-invented pressure that does not respond to positive evaluation by others. It is like never reaching complete satisfaction because of the belief deep down inside that one will never be good enough.” (Moore, 2018) * “… A new expectation or goals is set without reflecting on, or enjoying current success…” (Moore, 2018) * “… when you think that you reach perfect, then expectations will be even higher…” (Moore, 2018) * “I felt that I’ve been trying too much for the past years. Again, that it wasn’t really showing anything anyway, everything I do was neve good enough and um, just my efforts don’t really give out much results.” (Nealis & Mackinnon, 2018) * “… If I got a B, that would cancel out everything else I did well.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “If you are not doing something perfect or above perfect, than you are doing something wrong.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “Wow, I got all A’s. I can’t get a B now.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * They set the high self-standards for themselves to meet based on the internal drive for self-improvement and perfection. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… disappointed that I didn’t do as well as I should have…” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “I make myself do things perfectly regardless of other people.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “No one pressures me. It’s just for myself. To prove to myself that I can do well… and to improve myself.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “But that’s not like me. I’m going to have to go and try to get a higher grade than my lowest one.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “I know that I’m not fat, but I just want to be perfect, and I know I can’t be, but I expect myself to be.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “It’s a waste of time if I’m not going to be the best or the top, so I try to stay away from things like that.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I can’t stand not being at the very top level of skill in whatever I do. And if can’t, then I probably won’t do it, like I’ve kind of given up on school here because some of the teachers make it impossible for you to get an A, and I would always try for an A, A+ at my pervious school. So, that kind of killed me.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “… if I’m not the best, then I shouldn’t be doing it because it’s not my strength.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I was not meeting the expectations that I had set for myself… and it was something that was completely within my power to meet those expectations, and I did not, and that made me angry.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I always want to be at the top… I don’t stop until I get what I want, and I always get what I want.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I’ve also placed very high expectations on myself about achievement. I’ve placed these demands on myself.” (Nilsson et al., 2007) * “Strive”, “must do”, “pushes”…used to connote the drive or need to have everything perfect. (Rice et al., 2003) * … Doing everything in their power to be the best. (Rice et al., 2003) * Self-imposed dysfunctional standards… (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * Striving in spite of adverse consequences… (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “You set yourself expectations…” (Robb et al., 2018) * … quest to achieve their “personal best.” (Schuler, 2000) * “personal best”, “doing everything right”, “trying your hardest” (Schuler, 2000) * … when their work did not meet their high standards, they became angry with themselves. (Schuler, 2000) * … High standards of performance, doing one’s best. (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * “A counsellor said I expected too much from myself.” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * … High standards…(Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * Effort was identified as a significant personal expectation that all healthy perfectionistic athletes had of themselves and as a benchmark by which they assessed their performances: “If I finish a race and feel like I could have run faster, I, I wouldn’t think of it as a very, very good race. Even if I would have won… if I do give it my all and I run a really good race and I end up not winning, I would probably feel very happy with that.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “I trained so hard I shouldn’t get tired.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “I feel like no one should score more than [10 points] on me if I, if I’m working.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “Expectations only lead to disappointment.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “… looking back on the things that I did and could have been better.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014)   Maladaptive perfectionism among dancers may involve a large perceived discrepancy between performance and personal standards, compulsive doubting of their own actions…(van Staden et al., 2009) |
|  | **Self-esteem/identity (n=12)**   * Participants at times felt they were expected to be “perfect” and this unachievable expectation affected their mood, self-esteem, and aspirations. (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “… devalue yourself…” (Brüdern et al., 2015) * … “anticipate critique” as specific strategies of this group serving the protection of their self-esteem. Other plans related to self-esteem protection in this group are “avoid assuming responsibility” and “maintain self-determination”. (Brüdern et al., 2015) * “I don’t think I could choose not to have high standards, because I guess that’s how I see myself.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… they are suffering from lack of self-esteem in points that they feel weak…” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * “… introversion, self-esteem problems and perfectionism are experienced more frequently.” (Gokaydin & Ozcan, 2018) * “I am a perfectionist.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “If I am in control, then things will go okay. I trust myself.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “The smart kid,” “The smart one.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * … Participants to equate their identities and self-worth with pleasing others… achievement allowed them to maintain their self-worth. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “I am academic. That’s my box.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “If I can’t do this, then what chance do I have at anything else?” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “I just felt like maybe I was a bad person. I felt like it was me not being good enough.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “[If you get a bad grade] you feel incompetent, and that is one of the worst things you could ever be.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “… and that’s difficult, that’s very difficult, and then all of a sudden it seems like you’re in a cycle or you’re stuck in a trap of just having to be what you’ve always been.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “In a way it would be better if it [perfectionism] was learned, then re-learning would be possible.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * “… you’re not sort of realising the person you wanna be.”(Robb et al., 2018) * … participants’ sense of self-worth depends on their ability to do things right. (van Staden et al., 2009) |
|  | **Drive for improvement, excellence, striving (n=6)**   * “… you’re constantly looking for how you can make something better.” (Hill et al., 2015) * … An obsessive approach to improvement. (Hill et al., 2015) * The overarching theme of “drive” referred to participants’ unwavering commitment to, and focus on, constantly improving her or his performance/work. (Hill et al., 2015) * … Focusing on ways to continually improve. (Hill et al., 2015) * “You always want to be better than you actually are at that moment. You’re not happy until something is completely perfect but it’s almost like perfect doesn’t exist – always looking onto what’s next.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… not settling for mediocre… trying to push to that next level and almost being as close to ideal or close to… you know, perfect performance as possible… to almost be better, be better, be better… and not just settling.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “[I] think that sort of perfectionism thing comes down to the sort of detail or planning, the detail of… the levels of commitment, the sort of always striving to do better you know? I think being a perfectionist almost becomes obsess[ive].” (Hill et al., 2015) * … Strive for excellence…(Jackman et al., 2016) * “I have a mantra that the ‘one percents’ are the cornerstone of everything I do. So your four mile run in the morning or 30 minutes of stretching is another one percent. Flow goes back to one percents and I was just one percent away.” (Jackman et al., 2016) * … Internal drive for self-improvement and perfection…(Neumeister, 2004a) * … internal drive for perfection was more powerful than external motivators and that it persisted despite the concerns of their families that they were placing too much pressure on themselves. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “My biggest influence would be to do better myself. Competitiveness is part of my drive, but I think competing with myself is a lot more influential than anything will ever be: myself.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * …continual striving…(Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “… getting to the root of the problem”(Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “He [coach] gives me the drive to want to be better, to want to push myself to the limits and just test what I’m capable of.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Dissatisfaction (n=5)**   * … recurring dissatisfaction with current performances or works. (Hill et al., 2015) * “So I will not be satisfied…” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I think sometimes it can be easy to be dissatisfied constantly because, if and when you reach your goal, whatever that may be, whether it be the best race you’ve ever done or the best cake you’ve ever done or the best piece of writing you’ve ever done, you then instantly expect more of yourself because you’ve done that so was it really your best? Could you have done better? So, you’re kind of expecting more of yourself so there’s that unrelenting desire to push for more.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “…It is like never reaching complete satisfaction because of the belief deep down inside that one will never be good enough.” (Moore, 2018) * Perfectionists were described as “never satisfied”, “never happy”, and as people who “can never enjoy accomplishments” (Rice et al., 2003) * “[I am] very rarely satisfied with any task. It is never good enough.” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * “… you will never ever be satisfied, you will never be happy with yourself. If you are a ballet dancer… never.” (van Staden et al., 2009) |
| **Interpretation of success**  **(n=2)** | **Interpretation of success (n=2)**   * … responded to successes with “a lack of personal pride”. (Neumeister, 2004b) * “One more thing I got through.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I feel like I didn’t do anything extraordinary for it. I just performed at the level I normally do.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I always just looked at [my successes] as good luck on my part, things that could happen to anyone if they’ve had the resources I’ve had.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * … did not feel proud of himself. (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It takes more work for me to think about my successes… I can’t really recall any successes.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I had this grin on my face for, like, an hour because all the hard work paid off.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… because I worked hard for it.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… a mix of satisfaction and pride…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… personality and ability to handle the pressure…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I turned it outward because people missed the same problems…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… Within a couple of days, and often even shorter, because you’ve achieved it you think well, it’s not that brilliant anyway.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) |
| **Relation to others (n=19)** | **Relationships (n=6)**   * HW/LW: negative affect on relationships (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Sometimes it can be a nuisance because even with my wife I set too high standards and you put a lot of pressure on other people because you expect the same as what you expect for yourself.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Well yes it does because obviously he [partner] knows when I’m upset and it makes him upset.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “It can affect friendships possibly, in certain situations, and possibly family relations because it’s such a whole encompassing thing… it’s easy to get caught up in whatever you’re doing… quite easy to get totally absorbed…” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… it’s not that I do not care, it’s not that I do not think about them and not there for them. It’s just that I’m so focused on achieving one thing.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… being a perfectionist means I cannot put that away and go and enjoy something else in my life…” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… I think that it probably had the most negative impact on my social life.” (Hill et al., 2015) * Family appeared to refer directly to relationships with parents, though in rare instances sibling relationships were mentioned. Parents also emerged in the variant category of social support. One participant explained that parents are a support system, and another added that friends are also supportive. However, in opposition to the uplifting sentiment engendered by social support, the category of interpersonal strife also surfaced in the narratives… One participant likened her high school experience as “hell” wherein she was surrounded by people who endeavoured to “make her feel stupid”. Others reported how they are likely to cope through social interaction, citing family, friends, and professional counsellors as valuable sources of support. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “It makes life challenging but it’s worth it to please others. Isn’t that sick? It’s so true though.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I myself have experienced that you cannot give anything extra of yourself, so you start growling at each other and have a harsh tone.” (Moore, 2018) * “… I am sorry that it came so personal. It was a waste of energy, it was not fair [to my classmates] and it was unnecessary. Maybe it was because we were a group of girls.” (Moore, 2018) * “… the older students could have supported somewhat better. My perfectionism has not benefited cooperation in the group.” (Moore, 2018) * “… the company complains about the way I work with people…” (van Staden et al., 2009) |
|  | **Other expectations and standards (parents, family, teachers, friends) (n=10)**   * … Never meet the expectations of their parents, other family members, society, and themselves (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “Expectations at home, when I lived with my parents, were far too great for me to handle in my teens… and surprisingly also in my early 20s, despite not living at home.” (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “My relationship with my relatives has had rocky periods and I feel they disapprove of me. It makes me feel bad about myself.” (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “My family was really hard on me growing up in terms of… the picture-perfect demeanour I would have to maintain to compete with their friend’s children. I used to feel very mediocre or not good enough that I considered very many times thoughts of suicide and even an attempt one time.” (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “It is very important to them that I succeed.” (Hibbard & Walton, 2012) * “[If I fail], I would not say they were disappointed, but they know my potential and they expect high standards from me; they think I do not try hard enough.” (Hibbard & Walton, 2012) * Allusions to family were found in 12 of the 14 cases. (Merrell et al., 2011) * Personal and parental expectations were evident, largely in the form of expectations for the participant to perform well academically, and, in the future, professionally. The category of parental expectations was also typical, and participants shared that their parents expect them to do well academically. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “My parents put a lot of pressure on me to make good grades like my sister. I know they will be disappointed if I don’t, and while they never overwhelm me, I know the pressure is there.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “My parents’ expectations of me was much higher and I also get stressed out that I am disappointing them.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “… drive to please others…” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “Thinking of how I might disappoint myself and my parents and thinking of the risk of losing my scholarship causes a great deal of stress on me.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “It makes life challenging but it’s worth it to please others. Isn’t that sick? It’s so true though.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “If I said I was not good at it, maybe they would think I was not good at other things. Maybe it could spill over into other [areas], and I’m not good at anything.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * they perceived their parents as setting the high expectations for their achievement as part of their authoritarian style… teachers and classmates held high expectations for them, as well, in both academic and social realms. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… like my parents didn’t appreciate me making A’s anymore; they always expected it.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “…my mom especially was really disappointed…” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “You are always expected to do well in everything that you do. I brought home report cards in high school, and my dad was like, ‘you know a B is not okay. You need to be making A’s all of the time. When I was your age, I was getting A+’s on everything. Why don’t they give you people A+’s anymore?’ (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… expected my siblings and I to be perfect. She expected me to excel at everything I do and always try my hardest…” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… tell you in the most rational, calm voice how you have betrayed her trust.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… to try to please my dad and make him happy.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… tried really hard to fit in with everyone at one time, [and] would do whatever everybody else was doing.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “No one really cared [about my grades] except my parents.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “Since the sixth grade, I have been tagged as ‘the smart kid’, and to fail to meet the expectations others had for ‘the smart kid’, I would lose that distinction, which was really the only thing I felt I had to offer in the microcosm of society in middle and high school.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “The thing that drives the perfectionism in me the most is other people. I want to do better, and I would feel bad about myself but I would feel bad about myself because I would think others thought badly of me. It’s all about other people. I think how my teachers, my friends, and, to a degree, how my parents think of me is what really drives it.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… he would be very disappointed…” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “You should always exceed other people’s expectations.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “If I have an A or a 100% [he asks] why isn’t it higher than 100%? It always needs to be better. Nothing is ever good enough.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “He told me I am going to end up working at Walmart as a greeter and told me I am not going to get into college.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “He wanted to get a bumper sticker that says my daughter is an MIT reject.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “In my family, to prove that you’re smart, you just had to get an A in that class, whatever it took. [My parents] have such a high expectation, and if I don’t get that certain grade or that certain mark or get help if I’m struggling, then they just get on me.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “They expect a lot out of me, like I should have a 4.0 GPA… [my parents] won’t yell, but they will be very disappointed, and they make sure [I] know it.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “[Aunt] she is one who definitely thinks I should always be perfect.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “Sometimes it’s a guilt thing… and my dad got really upset about it because he’s like, ‘you’ve had all of these opportunities.’ And when I quit, he was really upset because he was like, this is something I’ve always wanted to do, and he cried, and I was like ‘Oh, my gosh’. So, I started playing piano again.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “… just awful, absolutely awful. It was complete drama. My mom made the situation about her. She said, I can’t believe you did this to me, you hurt me so much, I feel as if I’ve failed as a mother.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * … parents…(Schuler, 2000) * … perceived expectations of others about their abilities… two factors that influenced… intense emotions over making mistakes. (Schuler, 2000) * Pleasing others was important to most of the neurotic perfectionists. While most believed that at least one of their parents was perfectionistic, they viewed their parents’ perfectionism as impacting them negatively. The neurotic perfectionists perceived that their parents expected them to be perfect in everything. (Schuler, 2000) * “Don’t fail”, “do the best”, “where are the A’s?”, “You should do better.” (Schuler, 2000) * They believed their families, peers, friends, and teachers also expected perfection from them. (Schuler, 2000) * … athletes expressed the desire to perform well for their parents…(Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Others’ reactions, evaluations (n=10)**   * … Concerned about potential poor evaluations resulting from the performance. Aspects of the performance experience which were the focus of inappropriate concentration included: evaluations. (Clark et al., 2014) * “It gets on lots of people’s nerves…” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Well yes it does because obviously he [partner] knows when I’m upset and it makes him upset.” (Egan et al., 2013) * … fear the evaluation of their peers and the subsequent possibility of appearing foolish. (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) * “I am bothered a little [about my errors] because I get nervous, and I think that the other person thinks that I don’t know how to speak. It happens a lot. I try to pronounce the best I can, and when I try to pronounce better, my pronunciation gets worse, because I get flustered. That is, I get flustered because I sometimes pronounce words badly. I try so hard to pronounce perfectly. For example, I have a classmate who is very calm when he speaks. He gets mixed up sometimes, but he untangles himself quickly. But not me. I get mixed up and then I get even more mixed up. I get into even deeper trouble.” (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) * “If I fail, they call me a failure.” (Hibbard & Walton, 2012) * “… Everyone says I’m a massive workaholic and that it’s actually a bit unhealthy.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I like for people to think well of me. I don’t like to fail in front of other people.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I would make excuses as to why I couldn’t do it, like I hated it. If I had ever said ‘I’m no good at math,’ I thought my friends would think I was not good at other things, and it would spill into I am not good at anything.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “It would be difficult to be in a class where everyone was wishing you would do worse… people don’t like you because you get good grades.” (Rice et al., 2003) * “She is totally, totally a perfectionist but she won’t admit it, she doesn’t see it, and doesn’t have time to relax… going, going, going… everything has to be perfect… if something is undone, I am like, ‘Honey you need to calm down and you are getting all crazy’ and she is like ‘No, no’. And she doesn’t see the fact that she is. She can put on a pretty good show for everybody too for people who don’t understand she is that way.” (Rice et al., 2003) * … humiliation… embarrassment…(Schuler, 2000) * The intense sensitivity to others’ reactions to everything the neurotic perfectionists did resulted in self-imposed pressure to work hard. (Schuler, 2000) * The neurotic perfectionists perceived that they would be criticised if they did not meet their own and others’ expectations. (Schuler, 2000) * They were perfectionistic to get praise from their parents. Described as perfectionistic by: Parents, friends/classmates, spouses/partners, children. (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * Some felt significant pressure to perform to avoid “being yelled [at]” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Expectations and opinions of others (n=6)**   * … judged others harshly (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Sometimes it can be a nuisance because even with my wife I set too high standards and you put a lot of pressure on other people because you expect the same as what you expect for yourself.” (Egan et al., 2013) * Participants also described perfectionists as the sorts of people who are highly critical of others. (Farmer et al., 2017) * “… what it does is make me want to be rewarded for that effort.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “It feels much harsher. I tried to be perfect, but it wasn’t quite there. It makes me angry when I am not rewarded for my effort, not really at myself because I know that I’ve put forth the effort. Not angry at the professor, but just the situation.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “… a bad feeling… when the coach gets to you.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * Principal dancers are frequently critical and judgemental of other dancers, applying the same perfectionistic standards they set for themselves. (van Staden et al., 2009)   “… we expect so much of them. Why aren’t they able to do the stuff we do…?” (van Staden et al., 2009) |
| **Behaviour**  **(n=17)** | **Over-commitment (n=2)**   * “… I’ll probably end up burning out at some point…” (Robb et al., 2018)   “I am a perfectionist. I would like everything I do to be perfect, meaning looking good, sounding good, expressing exact and accurate ideas. To do this, I overwork myself trying to fit more and more things into my schedule, expecting my performance to be at the top… well, not merely at the top, but perfect.” (Merrell et al., 2011) |
|  | **Obsessiveness, order, organisation, details (n=9)**   * HW/LW: “nit-picky, excessively neat and organized.” (Ashby et al., 2012) * … obsessive compulsive tendencies…(Ashby et al., 2012) * “… get caught up in the details…” (Farmer et al., 2017) * … obsessive approach to improvement. (Hill et al., 2015) * “… if I’ve recorded something I will take extra takes constantly just to see if I can make it better. (Hill et al., 2015) * “… I think being a perfectionist almost becomes obsess[ive].” (Hill et al., 2015) * The notion that obsessiveness was a component of perfectionism and helped “fuel” participants’ drive was emphasized by several other participants. (Hill et al., 2015) * “… almost a superstition, you know, this obsession with getting everything spot on.” (Hill et al., 2015) * Viewed “obsessive” behavior as part and parcel of perfectionism: “I think it’s almost… being obsessed isn’t it? And just trying your very hardest in everything… trying to get absolutely everything right and the very best out of yourself.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I think I have this obsessive work ethic about what I do that makes me a perfectionist because I do not stop doing something until it’s the best it can possibly be and I think that’s being a perfectionist… I think perfectionists are workaholics.” (Hill et al., 2015) * Participants’ “obsessiveness” appeared to be characterised by a particularly meticulousness, which include attention to detail and extremely sharpened focus. (Hill et al., 2015) * “I think attention to detail [makes me a perfectionist] more than anything else. If I’ve got… a race in mind for example, I’ll make sure that I stick to a training regime, I’ll make sure I eat really well and I’ll try and leave nothing to chance. So I just make sure everything is in place, even sleeping, you know – the right amount in between and just making sure that I’m doing everything I can to achieve what I want to achieve.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “meticulous” (Rice et al., 2003) * “Some people take this to an extreme and that’s what you see in a perfectionist and obsessive-compulsive.” (Rice et al., 2003) * … Making lists and checking task performance (both overtly and covertly) (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * The main theme for the normal perfectionists was order and organization. (Schuler, 2000) * … They stated that perfectionism was about correctness, redoing work, and doing work in a certain way. (Schuler, 2000) * … repeating work over and over…(Schuler, 2000) * Order and control (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * “[It’s] negative because it limits spontaneity… negative for time management, [I] may overdo things…” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * … compulsive personality…(Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * Rigid behaviours. (Whitney et al., 2008) * Excessive attention to detail. (Whitney et al., 2008) * “… often focusing too much on unnecessary detail and losing the sight of the ‘bigger picture” (Whitney et al., 2008)   “Everything has to be in precise order: if my hair doesn’t look beautiful then the whole evening is going to be a mess. I will do my hair fiver times over and over again.” (van Staden et al., 2009) |
|  | **Assigning time to perfectionistic behaviours over other tasks, excessive time (n=5)**   * HW/LW: “takes a lot of time.” (Ashby et al., 2012) * … did have habits that took longer than needed as a result of perfectionism. (Ashby et al., 2012) * … work taking longer than expected…(Farmer et al., 2017) * “… spending a lot of time on things, so you don’t have a lot of time for other things…” (Farmer et al., 2017) * … perfectionists were thought to spend so much time working on projects and tasks that they waste time and work harder than necessary for the results they achieve. (Rice et al., 2003) * … with a preponderance of time being spent on work and academics in comparison with leisure and social activities. (Rice et al., 2003) * … alluded to energy expenditure and productivity. (Rice et al., 2003) * … taking enormous amounts of time to complete work… (Schuler, 2000) * “If I make the effort [with my appearance] I can make myself feel better.” (Thew et al., 2017) |
|  | **Avoidance, procrastination (n=6)**   * “To be able to talk about procrastination in terms of worrying so much about being able to do something perfectly that you just keep putting it off… I’ve never made that link before, so I found that really useful.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * “I could not submit one assignment because they weren’t perfect and they were too long. And that’s quite a big thing.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * … cause her to not attend classes or study. (Merrell et al., 2011) * … so she routinely chooses not to check them. Another participant noted that she tends to wait for situation to become “unbearable” before she starts coping, a strategy similar to another participant who tends to procrastinate with school work.” (Merrell et al., 2011) * “If I am not good at something, I tend to avoid it.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “… going to figure out something else I have to do while they are playing. Shhh. Don’t tell anyone.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * Their method for coping with these situations was to procrastinate. (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I can’t just sit there and do nothing. That would be wrong to procrastinate that way. But, if I can do something else that is productive, I could argue that it is not as evil.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “Sometimes I don’t want to start because, if I start, I’ll do it wrong. I don’t do it until I think I can do it right, which is usually way too late to sensibly start something.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “At first it was a drive to be even better, but then when I hit the ceiling with my own abilities, it kind of just collapsed, and I just stopped doing things.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * Procrastination: serve a more complex function than simply delaying tasks out of a fear of failure. (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “I was frightened to death of putting pen to paper… writing every word of my thesis was awful. I had put it off for 2 years, and I just couldn’t start because I wanted it to be perfect.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * Procrastination served to protect individual’s self-evaluation, buffering the fragile self-worth by acting as a “scapegoat” for failure (“it was only because I had to do it at the last minute.”) (Riley & Shafran, 2005)   … procrastination… (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Risk-taking behaviour (drinking alcohol) (n=2)**   * … alcohol consumption was also noted as a coping technique. (Merrell et al., 2011) * A maladaptive perfectionist related how frustrations with her academic performance and a felt sense of pressure spurred drinking as a way to relinquish the strict expectations she had placed on herself. (Nealis & Mackinnon, 2018)   “… and I just felt that maybe I can just let it go, enjoy myself for one night, see how it is.” (Nealis & Mackinnon, 2018) |
|  | **Lack of coping skills (n=1)**  They indicated that these feelings were aggravated by their lack of coping skills… since they rarely experienced academic failures throughout their school experiences, they found themselves incapable of knowing how to cope with the experience and how to deal with their negative emotions. (Neumeister, 2004b) |
| **Cognitions/ thought patterns**  **(n=13)** | **All or nothing, rigid thinking (n=8)**   * Rigid and dichotomous thinking. (Hill et al., 2015) * “The only way to be the best musician is to just not accept any mistakes. (Hill et al., 2015) * “Everything has to be black and white.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I have to be a perfectionist in my dancing because otherwise I’d be rubbish… I’m very much a person of extremes.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “You won’t do well in the entire course, and then it’s just a downward spiral from there.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “This is the way college is.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “The mindset that, if I worked hard enough, I would get an A.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * Crystal admitted it would be good for her to get a B because “I can tell you right now, if I make all A’s this semester, I guarantee that will make me want to get straight A’s through college. I think I would kill myself with stress if I tried to do that.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “And, if you are not doing something perfect or above perfect, than you are doing something wrong, and there is no excuse for it.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * Central to this theme was the idea of limited patterns of cognition. For example, perfectionists were viewed as engaging in forms of dichotomous thinking (‘it’s all or nothing’), ‘must be right’, ‘all of the time’ (Rice et al., 2003) * … all or nothing thinking…(Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “… I have rules in what I eat, like I don’t eat after seven o’clock… [I don’t break them] unless I absolutely have to.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “I always want things done right or I don’t feel good.” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) * “I can wake up and know that it’s not gonna be a good game day.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Catastrophising (n=3)**   * “When I realised it was going to be impossible for me to make an A [in my English course] this semester, all things started racing through my mind, like, ‘what if I’m not going to get to stay in the honors program? What if I am not going to get into graduate school? What if I am not going to get a job?’ It becomes this big, sweeping kind of thing, when it’s really just a small piece.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “I think if I haven’t got something right, then I’m a bit of a worthless person.” (Riley & Shafran, 2005) * “I really feel like we didn’t accomplish something if we don’t get a win.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Self-criticism (n=6)**   * Highly critical thoughts about self (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Am I actually clever enough?” (Hill et al., 2015) * “Especially if I’ve done badly, I’ll pick at it.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… instead of being a constructive evaluation, I just beat myself up over what I have failed to do.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * External triggers for self-critical thoughts most frequently reported by the control and depression group was making a mistake or failing at something. (Thew et al., 2017) * When discussing losses and mistakes, the unhealthy perfectionistic athletes shared that they had difficulties recovering and were very self-critical. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “When you’re a dancer you are self-critical.” (van Staden et al., 2009) |
|  | **Fixation (n=5)**   * … fixating on a specific, inappropriate aspect of the performance experience (Clark et al., 2014) * “Focusing hopelessly on my personal history and what I could have done better…” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “Here’s this one weak spot, and that permeates everything else. It spoils everything.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “If I failed at something and I was disappointed about it, if I did equally well on something else, then I would focus on that. I wouldn’t want to think about it.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * Perfectionists were described as having difficulties setting limits regarding their thinking, to the point of being “preoccupied with perfection,” and unable to set limits. (Rice et al., 2003) * “… inflexible to others’ views.” (Rice et al., 2003) * … focusing on the negative…(Riley & Shafran, 2005) * Their fixation over making mistakes…(Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Areas of life that are affected:**  Professional/career, school/academic, relationships, hobbies and recreation, athletics, housework, personal appearance, self-esteem, religion. |
| **ADVANTAGES OF PERFECTIONISM** | |
| **Achievement (n=12)** | **Achievement (n=4)**   * “Feeling good about accomplishments or success.” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Possibly because it means that I’ve got an area of my life that’s actually working.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “No, definitely not. I’m achieving quite a bit.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Well, I think there’s quite a lot [of advantages] because you achieve more just because you don’t accept low standards.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “For ambitious people the more you achieve is always a positive thing. I think I get quite a lot of satisfaction about getting better at things… there is a level of satisfaction about getting better at something and I think that’s good – and that’s about the working hard that you get through demanding more so I think that’s a good thing.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I’d sell perfectionism – if you wanted to stretch yourself to see how much better you could do things and see if you could – if you were a competitive person and wanted to achieve more then I’d adopt a perfectionist attitude because it helps focus the mind, offers more wisdom in problem solving and helps feed your ambition if you’re of that mind.” (Hill et al., 2015)   … underlying motive to achieve…(Neumeister, 2004a) |
|  | **Organised (n=5)**   * “Organised and neat” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “Being neat and organised” (Farmer et al., 2017) * “[A benefit of perfectionism is that] I think you’re an organised person definitely. So I do not take – leave anything to chance… I just find it gives my life structure… whether I’m at work or whether I’m just relaxing or I’m focusing on a race or training. I use spreadsheets for everything and… it means that I never miss anything or I never leave anything to chance. And I think it gives me the best possible chance I can have of succeeding in any aspect of life.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I organise and space [my writing] out in my schedule enough so I don’t do it at the last minute. I do things in progression. If the paper is due in 2 weeks, then I am working on it every day for 30 minutes or an hour so I can come up with the best paper I can. I space it out a lot.” (Neumeister, 2004c)   … organised…(Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Hard work, being challenged (n=8)**   * Two less experienced musicians spoke about how not playing as well as they could have increased their determination to be more prepared in order to play better in subsequent performances. (Clark et al., 2014) * “… just that you do need to put the effort in to get where you want to go.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… and that’s about the working hard that you get through demanding more so I think that’s a good thing.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I am working even harder to get there.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “Right now, I am having trouble, but I think I am working harder on it than I ever have before.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * Participants indicated that the challenging course work at the Academy drove them to work even harder to excel. (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I stayed up until 3 in the morning working on my math homework because it’s the B+/A- range, and so I really want to make sure I end up with an A in that class.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “When I was little, I tried to do the best. There wasn’t much to do in school. It was, everything is easy. I got perfect grades. And then as I got to high school, and there were some challenges, I had to try harder and had to go above and beyond. I did extra assignments. I would always add that extra Powerpoint. I always wanted to challenge myself.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * … they believed their success was due to their hard work and drive for perfection. (Schuler, 2000) * … working hard was also viewed as a means to achieving other goals. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * … and I achieved those goals by working hard. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014)   Working hard led to feelings of satisfaction, pride and confidence: “I feel proud of myself if I, if I work really hard.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Learning (n=2)**   * “I am going to have a hard time when I get into all courses for my major because I like studying everything.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * She explained that her love of learning influenced her achievement because: “I am motivated to do well because I like the things I am studying.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “… because I like the feeling that I am learning more and becoming more knowledgeable.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I enjoy learning now more than ever. I want to know a lot of things. I want to learn because I want to know it and not so I can get a [good] grade.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I push myself, rather than other people pushing me. Even if other people are doing well and I’m doing poorly, it’s not them making better grades that motivates me. It’s me not understanding the concept.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “If I am trying to learn a new skill, and I’m scared, and I don’t go for it, I see that as failure. I have to make myself go for it [because] if I don’t, I have let fear overcome me. Then, I have totally failed.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “In college, you are here to learn. You don’t have to go to college. Maybe in high school you can slack off, but in college, it’s all about learning, so I go for the challenge, rather than shy away.” (Neumeister, 2004c)   “…I always wanted to challenge myself.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) |
| **Goals: positive and unrealistic**  **(n=7)** | **Goals (n=7)**   * “Setting higher and better goals.” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “It makes my life easier… if I didn’t have goals then my life would be less meaningful.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Achieving goals, professionally, personally, socially, it helps to achieve goals basically.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… I’m fairly realistic in my goal setting therefore if you don’t achieve it you know it’s not the end of the world.” (Egan et al., 2013) * … commitment to overarching academic or professional goals (a variant category), although these goals were not always explicitly defined. (Merrell et al., 2011) * … the focus was specifically on a medical career or gaining admission to a different college. (Merrell et al., 2011) * … uncertain goals. (Merrell et al., 2011) * Such goals were conveyed by allusions to but uncertainty with academic and professional aspirations, made manifest in frequent changes or major or unconcealed doubts about potential fields of study. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I never set goals that are unreasonable. So, if I fall short of those goals, the next time that comes around, I am working even harder to get there. As a child, I remember a quote, ‘Great people make mistakes, but they never repeat them again.’ That’s what I strive for.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * … motive to achieve influenced them to set mastery goals. (Neumeister, 2004c) * “…That was one of my goals, to match or beat my friends.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “You set goals for yourself… and you just want to be the best at everything.” (Rice et al., 2003) * “I set out goals in my journal, and then the aim of wrestling is to achieve those goals, and I achieve those girls by working hard.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * Healthy perfectionistic athletes also referred to having “reasonable” and challenging sports goals. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * Only one of the healthy perfectionists identified winning as a critical goal and standard for determining success. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) * “We’re here to win, there’s no other main goal.” (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
| **Reduction of negative feelings (n=5)** | **Less stress, worry, pressure (n=5)**   * “Feeling in control” (Ashby et al., 2012) * “You gain respect, you’re organised, there’s less stress.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “What you see is what you get.” (Neumeister, 2004b) * “To avoid feeling stress and to maintain their own high standards, the normal participants used their organisational skills. To relive their frustrations when they made mistakes or experienced difficulties, they worked harder. (Schuler, 2000)   … motivation to avoid negative consequences…(van Staden et al., 2009) |
| **Confidence in abilities (n=2)** | **Confidence in abilities (n=2)**   * “You learn things well… it gives me confidence.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “[Being a perfectionist has] given me more confidence in other areas of my life. You know, I never thought I’d ever be, you know, do as much as I have done with it and you know it’s made me think that I do not have to put limits on other areas of my… career or job.” (Hill et al., 2015)   “… it helps confidence when I do well…” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) |
| **Relation to others (n=6)** | **Respect (n=3)**   * “… being seen as capable, dependent, competent.” (Ashby et al., 2012) * … gaining respect from others due to perfectionism. (Egan et al., 2013) * “You gain respect, you’re organised, there’s less stress.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “Other people may acknowledge that, so it’s something that somebody else can say about you that’s positive.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “People look at you as being very reliable, very trustworthy, someone who has impeccable high standards, that is someone you might want to have working for them… so an advantage in that way is people think highly of you, as long as they don’t know the internal bit that isn’t not actually very effective.” (Egan et al., 2013) * “… are respected and recognised by others.” (Rice et al., 2003) |
|  | **Admiration, recognition (n=3)**   * … praise from others… (Farmer et al., 2017) * “… Maybe I have to maintain that, ‘being smarter than you are’ to be revered.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * They were perfectionistic to get praise from their parents. (Slaney & Ashby, 1996)   “… I get recognition from performance” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) |
|  | **Superiority (n=2)**   * “feels superior to others.” (Farmer et al., 2017) * … objectively superior performance. (Farmer et al., 2017)   “It made me feel better about myself. Maybe it gave me a sense of superiority. Even though I don’t feel comfortable saying that, maybe that’s what it was. I feel like I am better than they are because I get to edit their papers. Maybe I have to maintain that, ‘being smarter than you are’ to be revered.” (Neumeister, 2004a) |
| **Healthy competition (n=3)** | **Healthy competition (n=3)**   * “If I can rank among them, then that’s satisfactory to me.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I think it’s a healthy competitive because I think I work harder.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “Competitiveness drives me to work and to excel.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “I was in classes with friends who are easily as smart as I am or smarter. We could always try to one-up the other person. That was one of my goals, to match or beat my friends.” (Neumeister, 2004c) * “There are people in my classes that I know definitely do better than I do, and I try to mimic off of them, about their study habits, when they go see the teachers’ hours and stuff like that.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “In the Academy environment where everyone is very good, it really hounded me personally to do very, very well. it prompted me to push myself hard and then it also prompted me to get only 3 hours of sleep a night, and I began to see that not everyone at the Academy gets straight A’s. I knew that it was normal for the rest of the Academy [students not to get As] so in a way I felt okay with that which is kind of out of character.” (Neumeister et al., 2007)   The normal perfectionists stated that the competition with friends and peers was a positive influence on them. (Schuler, 2000) |
| **Perfectionism and success (n=4)** | **Perfectionism and success (n=4)**   * Clearly, participants viewed perfectionism as vital to their success and so from this perspective, it was viewed in positive terms – without it, one would likely fall short of one’s goals. (Hill et al., 2015) * “Perfectionism is in my opinion the only way to approach sport seriously if you’re looking for serious results.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I think if I wasn’t [a perfectionist] then I wouldn’t have achieved things.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I like to think it’s got me to where I am and to be a professional… if I’d just rested on my laurels when people told me I was good then you’d never have got to where you’re going.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “… an edge over other people in the competition because they’re not willing to accept something less.” (Hill et al., 2015) * “I released that [academic] was what I am good at, so I [thought] I might as well be the best.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “If you are going to be a perfectionist, you are going to accomplish a lot of things.” (Rice et al., 2003) * “… received good grades” (Rice et al., 2003) * “Accomplish a lot” (Rice et al., 2003)   They saw the future as dependent upon their perfectionistic behaviours because they needed good grades to achieve their career goals. Both the normal and neurotic perfectionists had similar career goals…(Schuler, 2000) |
| **Positive coping strategies**  **(n=6)** | **Coping strategies, methods for reducing perfectionism (n=6)**   * … successfully reduced or controlled their perfectionism. (Ashby et al., 2012) * Others reported how they are likely to cope through social interaction, citing family, friends, and professional counsellors as valuable sources of support. Exercise and sports were also mentioned as helpful coping strategies. (Merrell et al., 2011) * “I might think, ‘my work doesn’t get better than this!’, instead of thinking: ‘no, I can do even better.’ (Moore, 2018) * “If I had not decreased my expectations, every single treatment I delivered would have been unsatisfactory to me.” (Moore, 2018) * “… learned to deal with not always being perfect and not always being the best.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * … organisational skills (Schuler, 2000) * … they worked harder. (Schuler, 2000) * Positive coping strategies did not exist for them when they made errors. (Schuler, 2000) * “I tend to put things behind me right away, uh, I don’t seem to dwell on things… I would just be like you know what, that was a bad game, throw it under the table… I just tend to think to the next game… the sun still rises every morning. (Gotwals & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2014) |
|  | **Factors that decrease perfectionism (n=1)**   * … experienced a decrease in their perfectionism during their time at the Academy due to the school’s unique characteristics. (Neumeister et al., 2007) * Reasons included: homogenous grouping, challenging coursework, a school structure that discouraged competition through an elimination of class rank and grade point average (GPA) and the residential environment. (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “The Academy actually make sit go away in a sense because you’re used to being the top of your class at your old school before you show up, and then you’re thrown into a group of 170 students that all had the same bragging rights at their previous schools. So, you realise that you can’t be a standout anymore.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “Even though at my other school I was toward the top doing a lot better, these people are actually at the same level as me, or even better, so it’s helped bring [my perfectionism] down a bit.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “… pushed and challenged a lot more.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “There is a lot less competition, so I’m not constantly looking at my GPA and wondering who is in the first spot for Valedictorian.” * “There’s not the sigma of class ranks and GPA, so my parents are not saying, you’re still number one. So, I think they have taken a lot of pressure off of themselves.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “I think it’s a lot more difficult [to be a perfectionist at the Academy].” (Neumeister et al., 2007)   “My parents were always pretty controlling in the aspects of my social life. So, now I have this opportunity to be social as much as I want, or as much as other people want me to be, they come knock on my door, and they say let’s do this, and I usually go do it with them over any homework… so, I think the Academy has kind of had a negative effect on that.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) |
| **Perfectionism as a process (n=1)** | **Perfectionism as a process (n=1)**   * Perfection was also described by some students as a process that requires a patient and adaptive attitude and that it is not usually a result. (Moore, 2018)   “Perfectionism requires time… maybe too much time.” (Moore, 2018) |
|  | **Acceptance (n=2)**   * “They said a lot about just taking how you feel and accepting it and I really liked that.” (Kerrigan et al., 2017) * … acceptance included coming to terms with the idea that ‘we aren’t perfect’… constantly striving for perfect isn’t necessarily the most enjoyable or healthy approach to life. (Kerrigan et al., 2017) * … acceptance of what they could reasonably accomplish in a day…: “I don’t make lists anymore, which is really good because I don’t want to say that I’ve lowered expectations for myself, but I’m not unreasonable anymore, and I don’t get disappointed if I don’t do certain things… [the program] has helped me be more relaxed. It’s helped me be nicer to myself. It’s helped me look at the bigger picture more often instead of having each problem of mine be a microcosm. It’s more like does this really matter as much as I think it matters? It’s like probably not. I think it’s helped me develop better habits, yeah.” (Kerrigan et al., 2017)   “… now I can kind of take a step back and say it’s a tiny detail and it doesn’t really affect my entire life… you can just be content with the overall picture.” (Larsson et al., 2018) |
|  | **Mindfulness (n=1)**  Mindfulness was helpful for reducing anxiety. (Kerrigan et al., 2017) |
|  | **Non-judgement (n=1)**  Overall, non-judgement was discussed as one of the more meaningful aspects of the MBSR program by several students, emphasizing the importance of how an environment of non-judgement was established during each MBSR class by the instructor. (Kerrigan et al., 2017) |
|  | **Group therapy, support, feedback (n=2)**   * “… having a group and talking about the ideas of how you can change is different to reading a book.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * “Other people kind of like reassured us and said we have it too, you are not alone in this…it generated almost a kind of feeling of community in the group as well.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * “… it was good to see that everyone wanted to be perfect in different ways… you always think you are the only person, so it was nice to see that there were other people that felt the same.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * “We’ve been able to challenge each other outside of the group and kind of make it into a bit of an awareness of perfectionism in terms of what perfectionism is and its associated behaviours and thoughts.” (Larsson et al., 2018) * “… now I can kind of take a step back and say it’s a tiny detail and it doesn’t really affect my entire life… you can just be content with the overall picture.” (Larsson et al., 2018)   … This appears to not only have provided them with support and encouragement, but also valuable feedback on things that were essential for moving forward. Some also pointed out that they probably would have missed out on significant aspects related to the understanding of their ongoing problems without this feedback. (Rozental et al., 2020) |
|  | **Increasing awareness, insight, cognitive (n=2)**   * … becoming more aware of their own difficulties and a better understanding of the mechanisms that were driving their perfectionism. Many clients referred to this as a realisation that it was okay and possible to change – realising it is okay to change. (Rozental et al., 2020) * “It prompted me to broaden my view of success and meaning, such as through surveying people, and confronting my own beliefs about personal worth. It helped me recognise the importance of relaxing time, and that I shouldn’t feel guilty about doing things that aren’t directly related to achievement.” (Rozental et al., 2020) * Many patients described how the intervention also helped them to look at different points of view and ways of doing things, and to think more broadly and creatively. (Whitney et al., 2008) * In some cases, patients discussed the insight that was gained by the therapy (“looking back at how I have tackled the tasks and how I have approached problems has made me think about how I work – often focusing too much on unnecessary detail and losing the sight of the ‘bigger picture’”). (Whitney et al., 2008)   “… challenging the characteristics of the illness, which are mainly rigidity and perfectionism. I also feel it helped me to be less obsessional and wonder if this treatment could also help those suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder.” (Whitney et al., 2008) |
|  | **Behavioural strategies (n=2)**   * “… the behaviour experiments where we completely altered how we would normally do something. For myself, this was to not learn an entire script by heart like I would normally do, but instead only learn parts of it or focus more on the understanding.” (Rozental et al., 2020) * Patients often discussed that the therapy helped them to break their rigid behaviours, helping them to take risks to reduce their perfectionist tendencies and excessive attention to detail. (Whitney et al., 2008)   “I have utilised the therapy to replace some parts of my usual behaviours…(Whitney et al., 2008) |
|  | **Anonymous online platform (n=1)**  Apart from gaining more insight into their difficulties, the guide also offered a lot of encouragement and the reinforcement to keep going. A number of clients described the treatment format as comfortable, easy to use and navigate, and that the secure online interface was well designed. Some clients also discussed the fact that they felt more relaxed about bringing up sensitive issues thanks to the anonymity it provided, and two clients even mentioned having made better progress in their internet-based treatment compared with a previous face-to-face contact. (Rozental et al., 2020) |
|  | **Group therapy, support (n=2)**   * “… [the group setting] sometimes useful, sometimes kind of toxic. Like things you hadn’t considered or like didn’t want to consider, having to listen to them and sometimes I don’t think it’s very helpful.” (Larsson et al., 2018)   Not all clients were content about the guidance they received during treatment. A few reported having difficulties contacting the guide, which impeded their progress. Sometimes clients wanted support more or less instantaneously in order to clarify questions they had about the reading material or exercises. Some clients also complained that the questions sent by their guide being rhetorical, rigid or inhuman. (Rozental et al., 2020) |
|  | **Scheduling, not being able to follow through, conflicting commitments, feeling overwhelmed (n=1)**   * Scheduling issues, not being able to follow through as planned, conflicting commitments (Rozental et al., 2020) * “I really wanted to get involved in this study but I have just been through quite probably the most terrifying few months of my life and I did not have the head space for this at all. (Rozental et al., 2020)   … felt overwhelmed with the sheer workload they needed to put in…(Rozental et al., 2020) |
|  | **Not finding benefit in the program (n=1)**  Experiencing problems with regard to self-improvement in general… they already knew a lot about perfectionism, which made the treatment programme feel less informative and helpful. (Rozental et al., 2020) |
|  | **Perfectionism (n=1)**  Some clients believed perfectionism itself hindered them from engaging with treatment: “The only difficulty I had was to do with my own perfectionism in completing the course, everything else was fine.” (Rozental et al., 2020) |
| **Predisposing factors**  **(n=6)** | **Parents and early parenting (n=6)**   * “If my father says, ‘that’s unacceptable’ that means that thing is going to change right then, right now, or else something big is going to happen. And, if he thinks something is unacceptable, then it is just not okay at all.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * They believed their parents’ perfectionism also contributed to the development of their own self-oriented perfectionism, but in a different way than described by the socially prescribed perfectionists. The parents of the self-oriented perfectionists did not expect perfection from their children. Rather, their influence on the development of their children’s perfectionism appeared to stem from their modelling perfectionistic behaviours: “He’s definitely much more of a perfectionist than I’ll ever be.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “My parents were always pretty controlling in the aspects of my social life.” (Neumeister et al., 2007) * “[Dad] is the person I look up to with perfectionism. He’s the type of person that if you write something and the letter does not look just right, he will rewrite the whole thing… so, most of my perfectionism influences have come from him.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * Parental influence was regarded as playing a considerable role according to participants… high-achieving parents influenced the development of perfectionism. (Petersson et al., 2017) * … careless and disorderly parents resulted in perfectionistic children. (Petersson et al., 2017) * “You don’t become perfectionistic if you have perfectionistic parents.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * “I think that it has always been like that because I didn’t want to be troublesome, and I didn’t want to be a burden to my mum… while all the time striving to be the nice daughter as far as possible… I still think there’s a connection with wanting to please everybody, and make it easier for everyone, and not be in the way for anyone.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * “I don’t think that you’re born with it but comes from something when you’re growing up.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * Because their parents encouraged them to do their personal best, all of the normal perfectionists believed that their parents had a major effect on their perfectionism. (Schuler, 2000)   … parents as a source of their perfectionism. (Slaney & Ashby, 1996)   * An authoritarian, rigid parenting style emerged as one of the most prominent findings among the participants scoring highly on socially prescribed perfectionism. Four out of five of the participants described growing up in a household with one or both parents exhibiting an authoritarian approach to parenting. This approach included emphasising obedience, trying to control their children’s behaviours with punitive threats, and restricting communication of love and support. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “When I was a kid, he coached my team, and if I messed up, he would really tell me. He would yell at me from the dugout and stuff. I didn’t yell back at him… he was too intimidating.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * … punished for not having performed perfectly. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Family (n=2)**   * Major influences included: …family…(Schuler, 2000) * One participant said her perfectionism had come from “competition with brother” (Slaney & Ashby, 1996)   Grandparents were referred to… and siblings…(Slaney & Ashby, 1996) |
|  | **Not being challenged (n=2)**   * John believed his ability to master the curriculum with ease had a strong influence on the development of his perfectionism. He said: “My perfectionism now might have come from the fact that I never really did fail at anything when I was younger. The expectations [for perfection] just grew.” (Neumeister, 2004a) * “I was just simply bored. There was nothing to do… I saw perfectionism in my math… I was very good at math, I wouldn’t accept anything below an A, so I obsessed over my grade – the perfect grade. I become dependent on that.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) |
|  | **Other**  Advertisements, media, and social media were also indicated as mediators for development of perfectionism. (Petersson et al., 2017) |
| **Perpetuating factors (n=12)** | **Parents (n=3)**   * … desire for success and perfection was motivated by their relationships with siblings and extended family members, in addition to their parents. (Augsberger et al., 2018) * “If I didn’t get an A, I would be punished or just have privileges denied until I could make that grade – ‘no phone, no music, no guitar’ – for not meeting her expectations. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… a good man but a hard man. (Neumeister, 2004a) * … perceived their parents as setting the high expectations for their academic and social realms. (Neumeister, 2004a) * “… mom has always hounded [me] to do things right and the correct way… increased [my] level of perfectionism.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “Sometimes it is a guilt thing… when I quit, he was really upset because he was like, this is something I’ve always wanted to do, and he cried, and I was like ‘Oh, my gosh.” So, I started playing piano again.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) * “My mother is the perfectionistic queen. She’s non-stop cleaning our house. Perfect. Perfection. she wants nothing less than perfection.” (Neumeister et al., 2009)   “Being closer to my mom, it’s kind of made me more of a perfectionist.” (Neumeister et al., 2009) |
|  | **Family (n=1)**  … desire for success and perfection was motivated by their relationships with siblings and extended family members, in addition to their parents. (Augsberger et al., 2018) |
|  | **Teachers (n=1)**   * Teachers who fostered neatness, doing well on assignments, and organisation reinforced their need for order and organisation. (Schuler, 2000) * … perfectionists expressed the belief that, since elementary school, some of their teachers have put pressure on them to perform. They interpreted teachers’ statements as burdens to be perfect and to be “the best”. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Other people (n=2)**   * … feels like others are always “breathing down her neck” and it is hard to live without making an effort to please them. (Merrell et al., 2011)   Major influences included: self, school, family, and community. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Perfectionism (n=1)**  “The mere fact that I am a perfectionist, because it would be very hard to meet that standard… because it’s always just out of reach.” (Egan et al., 2013) |
|  | **Believing perfectionism is stable and unchangeable (n=3)**   * “I think it’s sort of inborn… it depends on how much you’re allowed to exercise it when growing up, whether those with whom you grow up show that you don’t have to be perfect, so you don’t have to follow those impulses, then you won’t become so perfectionistic when you grow up.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * “In a way it would be better if [perfectionism] was learned, then re-learning would be possible.” (Petersson et al., 2017) * … a character trait…(Robb et al., 2018)   … believed that perfectionism was a part of their personality, and all had early memories of perfectionistic behaviours. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Drive for improvement (n=1)**   * “… there’s always something that you should be reading and there’s always a sense of self-improvement that should be happening and it’s very easy to never switch off.”(Robb et al., 2018)   Tina’s sense of being driven to constantly pursue improvement speaks to the underlying perfectionism… chasing the “perfect piece of work”…(Robb et al., 2018) |
|  | **Impaired attention, focus (n=2)**   * “I think you need to have flexibility no matter what you do because you can’t always stick rigidly to what you want to do because there might be other factors outside of what you have control.”(Egan et al., 2013) * … impaired attention (such as problems focusing or negative feelings about failure…) showed signs of perfectionistic concerns. (Svensson, 2015) * Respondents who put in more effort after failure showed positive-striving perfectionism. (Svensson, 2015) |
|  | **Not seeking help (n=1)**  These students did not want to admit they needed help. This was reflected in responses such as ‘I am afraid that the therapists will judge me, that I’m not perfect.’ (Ting, 2011) |
|  | **Sustaining positive reputation (n=1)**  An additional pressure they experienced was sustaining a positive reputation. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Competition (n=2)**   * … perceived competition as another pressure to perform without errors. (Schuler, 2000)   “[I] didn’t test well as a child… ended up in a lower section [at school]… [I] thought I’ll show them. (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) |
|  | **Conceptualisation of self (n=1)**  … grades defined who they were. (Schuler, 2000) |
|  | **Other psychological diagnoses (n=3)**  *Trichotillomania*   * … several participants described the reinforcing consequences of achieving a sense of mastery by striving for perfection in their hair quality. Participants reported feeling anxious and physically tense until they could begin creating more symmetry by removing hairs that felt ‘out of place’. (Rehm et al., 2015)   *Eating disorders*   * Most participants described perfectionism as developing during childhood. The onset of perfectionism was most commonly regarded occurring at secondary school or 6th form. Some participants saw a connection between perfectionism and a growing bodily focus/awareness during secondary school. Others underlined the pressures of academic achievement (i.e., grades) as causes for a perfectionistic development… others described the development of perfectionism as a combination of constitution and environmental influences. (Petersson et al., 2017) * … eating disorders… (van Staden et al., 2009) |