

New research into perfectionism discovers links with OCD

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Researchers at the University of Hertfordshire have found that people with 'perfectionist' personality traits show remarkably similar problems in their thinking to those diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Highly rigid thinking

The study, led by Dr. Keith Laws, Professor of Cognitive Neuropsychology in the School of Life and Medical Sciences, examined people who described themselves as 'perfectionists'. All were drawn from the healthy population and screened by a psychiatrist for the presence of Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD), which is characterised by the trait of perfectionism. These individuals had no other previous or current mental-health diagnoses and were not seeking any treatment. The team found that on neurocognitive tasks, perfectionists displayed highly rigid thinking and problems on tasks requiring planning, but showed normal risk and decision-making.

Challenges when approaching problems

Professor Laws said:

"What we have found is that perfectionists get 'stuck-in-set' – that means they have a rigid way of thinking about and approaching problems. They continue to use the same strategy or approach to tasks even when it is obviously unsuccessful and despite being given feedback and understanding that feedback. This profile of impairment overlaps remarkably with that of someone with OCD."

Perfectionist Characteristics

Perfectionists will often set high standards for themselves and can be extremely self-critical if those standards aren't reached. The psychological impact of perfectionism can be very hard to manage. People with perfectionist tendencies are often preoccupied with details, rules or lists, they may put work or study above everything and have very strict opinions on moral ethical issues. Perfectionists often keep lots of old things when they have no sentimental value, are reluctant to delegate tasks or to work with others unless they work in the same way as them

and can be very stubborn.

While [perfectionism](#) may interfere with some aspects of day-to-day living, in other circumstances it may have benefits and although related to clinical OCD, it does not necessarily lead our being 'ill'. Indeed, nearly one in ten of us may express perfectionist tendencies to some extent.

More information: "The neuropsychology of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder: a new analysis." *CNS Spectrums* DOI: [dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1092852914000662](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1092852914000662)

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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