

# One-Page Summary

## 3 Things You Might Not Know About Perfectionism

Perfectionism is not all bad. Healthy perfectionism means setting high goals or standards for oneself and working hard to achieve them. Unhealthy perfectionism occurs when those goals are so high as to be impossible to accomplish. This is where we see dancer mental wellness suffer.

## Classroom Exercise

Choose a few well-known pieces of art to share with the class. Ask dancers to look at the work of artists such as Salvatore Dali, Georgia O'Keeffe, Alma Thomas, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Ask dancers to choose which piece of art which they feel is the most perfect, which is the most interesting, and which is the most powerful.

Take time to discuss the idea that powerful art does not need to be perfect - in fact, sometimes the power lies in the imperfections.



### Perfectionism and Anxiety

A meta-analysis published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology highlights the link between anxiety and perfectionism. People diagnosed with anxiety tend to be more likely to display perfectionistic traits than those who were not. Young dancers who view the world in extremes (i.e. the turn section of that solo has to be perfect, or it's all ruined) can become anxious about making a mistake. This anxiety can lead to overworking, obsessing over details, and overall unhappiness with their dancing.

### Perfectionism and Gifted Youth

According to the National Association of Gifted Children, around 20% of gifted children suffer from levels of perfectionism that impact their everyday lives. Children and youth with exceptional intellectual abilities show a tendency to set higher criteria for success and can, thus, hold themselves to an unattainably high standard.

### Perfectionism and Overactivity

Perfectionistic thoughts and tendencies can cause young dancers to participate in excessive performance-related behaviors and over-activity. Because young people struggling with perfectionism might be worried about "messing up," they can spend more time than is healthy with exercising, practicing, stretching, or obsessing over details of choreography.