Space to Breathe Therapy

ADHD Perfectionism

Six books that can help

Books to explore perfectionism, fear of mistakes and the pressure to get everything right.

The Perfectionism Workbook

By Taylor Newendorp

A practical workbook exploring the beliefs and habits that keep perfectionism going. It uses exercises to help readers notice harsh self-judgement, challenge impossible standards and practise more flexible responses.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

Especially useful when fear of getting something wrong leads to checking, redoing or delaying tasks.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

Try one exercise on a task you have been putting off; choose a realistic stopping point before you begin.

When Perfect Isn’t Good Enough

By Martin M. Antony and Richard P. Swinson

A cognitive behavioural approach to understanding perfectionism, including unhelpful rules, self-criticism and anxiety around mistakes. It offers structured ways to test expectations and reduce perfectionistic behaviour.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

Helpful for all-or-nothing thinking and the feeling that a task only counts if it is done flawlessly.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

Notice one rigid rule such as “I must never make mistakes” and write a kinder, more accurate alternative.

The CBT Workbook for Perfectionism

By Sharon Martin

An accessible, exercise-based guide to recognising perfectionist patterns, setting boundaries and responding more compassionately to yourself. It considers the emotional cost of constantly trying to meet very high standards.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

A useful choice when perfectionism is tied to people-pleasing, guilt or feeling never good enough.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

Practise defining “good enough” for one everyday responsibility rather than raising the standard as you go.

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More recommendations connecting ADHD, self-compassion and realistic expectations.

How to ADHD

By Jessica McCabe

A relatable guide to understanding ADHD and working with an ADHD brain. It covers common difficulties with motivation, executive functioning, emotions and everyday systems, with practical ideas for making life more manageable.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

Helpful when perfectionism overlaps with task initiation difficulties, shame or inconsistent productivity.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

Choose a smaller first step and make the task easier to start rather than waiting until you can do it perfectly.

Taking Charge of Adult ADHD

By Russell A. Barkley

A detailed, evidence-informed guide to adult ADHD and its effects on organisation, time management, self-regulation and daily life. It offers strategies for building external supports instead of relying solely on willpower.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

Useful for readers who blame themselves for ADHD-related difficulties and respond by setting increasingly strict expectations.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

Identify one task that needs a reminder, checklist or environmental support—not a higher standard.

The Gifts of Imperfection

By Brené Brown

A reflective book about shame, self-worth, authenticity and the pressure to meet other people's expectations. It encourages readers to question the idea that being worthy depends on constant achievement or approval.

WHY I RECOMMEND IT

Helpful when mistakes trigger shame or when personal value feels tied to performance.

ONE IDEA TO TRY

After a difficult moment, ask: "How would I speak to someone I care about in this situation?"