

HEALTHY MINDS – Parent Supplement

Module 6 – Procrastination, Over-commitment, and Gratitude

Key Concepts

- This session looks at three obstacles that perfectionism can throw up at us:
 - Procrastination – putting things off or avoiding doing them because we think we won't be able to do it to a good enough standard. If we see a work task as needing to be done perfectly, or for conditions to be perfect before we start, then the task eventually feels overwhelming and too hard. This is a common reason for students to delay doing work or not handing it in.
 - Over-commitment – having the belief that one must always say 'yes' to others out of a need to be liked and accepted by everyone.
 - A general negative bias in thinking and attention. Focusing too much on the negative can alter our perception of our lives and the world around us. In this module we look at the antidote to this: cultivating gratitude.
- *Optimalism* is a healthy mindset between perfectionism and unbridled or unrealistic optimism. Where a perfectionistic mindset is focused on needing everything to be perfect, an optimistic mindset is about always expecting good things to happen. While each of these mindsets may have their benefits at certain times and in certain situations, a more realistic and helpful world-view is optimalism - a focus on enjoying and making the best of what does happen in life, even if it sometimes involves life not always going exactly to plan.

Key Student Activities

- Students are required to compose an email advising a procrastinating perfectionist (Simon) on how to break his cycle of avoidance when it comes to keeping his house clean. They are also tasked with reflecting on their own areas of possible perfectionism and procrastination.
- The problem of over-commitment is explored with the example of Carly. Students are asked to try to identify her unhelpful belief, and to determine a more helpful, and flexible alternative.

- Classes discuss differences in a comparison between perfectionism and optimalism.
- Gratitude letters – students are asked to think about someone who has had a very positive impact on their life, but who they have never properly thanked. They are asked to write a letter expressing their gratitude in detail, explaining why they are grateful and the benefits of that person’s positive influence on their life. They are then asked to deliver, send, or read their letter to the person for whom it was written!
- The ‘homework’ task for this is to keep a gratitude journal, writing down 3 things daily that they are grateful for.

Discussion Points

- Ask your son or daughter to talk you through their workbook page on the difference between perfectionism and optimalism.
- Who did they choose as the recipient of their gratitude letter? Why?

Parent Self-reflection Questions

- Is there anything I avoid doing because I’m concerned I won’t do it perfectly?
- Am I comfortable saying ‘no’? How might my ability to say no have influenced my child’s sense of assertiveness and/or boundaries?
- If I do succeed at something, do I have a tendency to re-evaluate that goal as not having been high enough anyway? Do you know anyone who does this?
- If someone was to observe the dinner-table conversations in our house, would they notice a theme of gratitude? If not, what would be the main theme(s) of your dinner table conversations? Is this a helpful focus, or not? Why?