

# Gift of Imperfection

Very often a submissive or slave struggles with perfection and approval seeking. This wonderful writing comes to us from one who has often struggled with perfection, and the lessons she has learned along the way. My thanks to soumise for sharing this with the world.

## Perfection is the only standard...

...this quote (attributed to George Balanchine), greeted me on a plaque in the practice studio that I trained and rehearsed in numerous hours a day, often 7 days a week. It didn't take long for the message to sink in and then worm its way even deeper into the pleaser part of my psyche.



Praise came with movement towards "perfect", it made the people who were important to me happy (food for the pleaser in me), and there was peace (so important for the conflict adverse part of me). Even better, what was considered "perfect" was spelled out in black and white in my contract. Weight, hair length and color, schedule, skin tone (tan or no tan) and more were explicitly stated. How i maintained the

requirements were my responsibility. Was it easy to maintain these areas, not really ... was it healthy, not usually ... did i do it – yes, but looking back i'm not sure how sometimes.

i then started to the idea of perfection into my schoolwork and other areas of my life. The problem there is that the standards weren't set out the same way, so i had to decide what was "perfect" and this is where i found that i could be harder on myself than anyone else would ever be. It made me feel virtuous when i "succeeded" and devastated me when i "failed". For someone who hates amusement park rides, i put myself on quite the roller coaster. Then one day it all went "poof".

## **Change Shatters the Illusion**

An accident took away my career, greatly affected my health and ability to take care of myself for a substantial length of time, but by this point, the pursuit of perfection was how i lived my life. So i put that effort into my rehabilitation and my relationships. There were even fewer "objective" marks of perfection in these areas, so i spent the majority of my time and effort trying to attain targets that moved at the whim of others. i looked for relationships with people who had strong opinions of what "perfect" was and then couldn't understand why things didn't work out.

The whole truth of perfection being an illusion had not penetrated my brain. Instead i kept trying to convince myself that if i tried harder, did more, did better, i could make up for the broken parts of the relationship and "fix it". i would drive myself to the end of all of my resources – time, energy, finances, emotions to try to create "perfection", only to leave myself so drained that it would create additional tension in the relationship. i felt taken advantage of, domineered, drained and exhausted that i had nothing positive left to contribute to the relationships. Not because my

partner insisted on these things, but because i put the pressure on myself, because to me, they deserved something perfect.

During this time, i never expected perfection from others. i was always (and still am) quite empathetic when it comes to others. Looking back, this is a bit narcissistic. What makes me special and deserving of being perfect over someone else? Not that it matters, because perfection really doesn't exist. The "perfect" bodies we see are airbrushed and photo shopped; the perfect home still will have cracks somewhere and a dust bunny or two hiding in a corner; the perfect relationship can't be maintained 24/7/365.

## **Embracing Imperfection**

What does exist is excellence. As my Master has worked hard to teach me, excellence is doing the best that one can with the resources they have in the here and now. One can achieve excellence in their physical being, their career, their relationship and their home. What is important is to be realistic about what the reality of excellence is and not allow the illusion of perfection to create shadows of discontent and self doubt.

Hanging onto perfection can be a means of procrastination – after all why bother starting something you know can't be achieved. It's a form of avoiding closure or change – the standards of "perfection" will always keep moving further away so we give ourselves a reason to keep chasing down the same path, even when it is not productive. When we ruminate about perfections past that we failed to meet we create depression in our thoughts and when we plan out what we need to do to be "perfect" at something we create anxiety. All of these actions take away from our resources – time, energy and emotional at the very least, and that limits what we have to use in the rest of our life.

Acknowledging excellence as an acceptable level of "imperfection" allows us to find success in our activities, improve ourselves (and actually reach our goals) and more importantly live in the moment. Using our time, energy, emotional and financial resources to enjoy the journey as opposed to being depressed or anxious about the destination. It allows us to keep enough of our resources to make positive investments into our relationships and hopefully find peace and happiness as gifts to ourselves and partners.

-soumise