

Mini Lesson by Timothy Tetz, 6th Grade Teacher, Gordon Russell Middle School

Story: “Too Perfect” By Trudy Ludwig

Rationale for selecting lesson:

In the United States, academics are important. In the United States, often times we focus intensely on grades and test scores while compromising the individual’s overall well being (emotionally, mentally, and physically).

Learning Targets:

- I can identify how to be myself; work to my potential, not to perfection.
- I can apply the information from the story “Too Perfect” to my school, home, and relationships.

Time needed to execute:

- 45 minutes

Tasks for facilitation:

- Share the vocabulary words from the text
- Read the story
- Go through the reflection questions/talking points using any/all of the strategies listed below:
 - Turn and talk with your neighbor
 - Small group discussion and share-out
 - Partner role play

Key Vocabulary Words to share w/ learners:

- Perfectionism: what one thinks he/she must do
- Excellence: what he/she can do

After reading the story

Orally or in writing, answer the following discussion prompts(s):

1. When Kayla kicked the ball and missed the goal, was she right to blame Ana, her teammate? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever wanted to trade places with someone else? Why?
3. Do you think everyone has something they don't like about themselves? Explain.
4. Do you think TV shows, movies, and magazines also tell us about how girls and boys should look? Do most people look that way in real life?
5. Does being rich, smart, pretty, or handsome make a person happy? Why or why not?

Orally or in writing, answer the following statements:

1. The fear of imperfection is overwhelming. It leads, defensively, to chronic pressure to perform and to blame others who might appear to interfere with that performance.
2. Research consistently demonstrates that perfectionism can be a fellow traveler to depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and disturbances in intimacy.
3. The pursuit of excellence, which can certainly involve high motivation, strenuous effort, and critical self-reflection, parts company with perfectionism when the underlying motivations are understood.
4. Perfectionists believe themselves to be conditionally acceptable.
5. A winner-take-all, you're-either-first-or-you're-nothing perspective and a hypercompetitive attitude lead naturally to the conclusion that you are either perfect or you are basically worthless.
6. We are quick to say what we don't like and to offer critiques. But we are not practiced in the art of encouragement, or of simply stating what we like or appreciate about someone.

Rank yourself from the list of coping strategies:

- A. Good at it.
- B. Room for improvement.
- C. Not an option.

- ___ 1. Accept your mistakes.
Invest energy in being good at things you like to do without the conviction that only perfect will suffice. And experience the relief that this attitude will bring.

- ___ 2. Turn away from perfection and strive toward excellence.
This creates healthier & more reasonable standards that achieve a more balanced life.

- ___ 3. Being kind and less critical of myself and others.
Nobody is perfect.

- ___ 4. Allow for mistakes;
They're an important part of the learning process.

- ___ 5. Take pleasure in what I'm doing.
Enjoy the journey, not just the destination.

- ___ 6. Don't overcommit myself.
Allow for some personal downtime.

- ___ 7. When I feel overwhelmed, take a break and do something else.

- ___ 8. Focus on my strengths & celebrate my accomplishments.

- ___ 9. Take a risk by trying something new; just for the fun of it.

- ___ 10. If I get stuck, I'm not afraid to ask for help.

Recommended Readings:

Adderholdt, Miriam, PhD, and Jan Goldberg. *Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good?* Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1999.

Greenspon, Thomas, S. PhD. *What to Do When Good Enough Isn't Good Enough: The Real Deal on Perfectionism: A guide for Kids.* Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2007.

Tuledge, Jill Zimmerman, MSW, LCSW. *Picture Perfect: What You Need to Feel Better About Your Body.* Deerfield Beach: HCI Teens, 2007.

Freeland, Claire and Jacqueline Toner. *What to Do When Mistakes Make You Quake: A Kids' Guide to Accepting Imperfection.* Washington, D.C.: Magination Press, 2015.