Perfectionist or Healthy Striver?

Where are you on the continuum?

Mark where you fall on the continuums below between being a perfectionist and a healthy striver:

PERFECTIONIST

I set standards for myself beyond reach and reason

I am never satisfied by anything less than perfection

I become dysfunctionally depressed when I experience failure and disappointment

I am preoccupied with fear of failure and disapproval which may deplete my energy levels

I see my mistakes as evidence of unworthiness

I become overly defensive when I feel criticized

HEALTHY STRIVER

I set high standards for myself, but just beyond reach

I enjoy the process as well as the outcome

I bounce back from failure and disappointment quickly and with energy

I keep normal anxiety and fear of failure and disapproval within bounds and use them to create energy

I see mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning

I react positively to helpful feedback

Strategies for becoming a healthy achiever:

- Increase your awareness of the self-critical nature of your all-or-nothing thoughts, and how they extend to other people in your life. Try to see the “grey” even in really small decisions or tasks.

- Be realistic about what you can do.

- Set strict time limits on each of your projects. When the time is up, move on: attend to another activity even if the project is not complete or “perfect.”

- When someone offers you feedback, don’t automatically assume it’s criticism. Remember, the healthy achiever can integrate this feedback, but also knows when to take it with a grain of salt!

- Watch out for “should” statements like, “I should never make mistakes” or “I should always be able to predict problems before they occur.” “Should” comes with a lot of value judgment. Instead try saying things like “I would like to complete this project today.” Or “I have put in my best effort.”