

43: So, You Don't Think You're a Perfectionist?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Bonnie Koo, MD

43: So, You Don't Think You're a Perfectionist?

Welcome to The Wealthy Mom MD Podcast, a podcast for women physicians who want to learn how to live a wealthy life. In this podcast you will learn how to make money work for you, how you can have more of it and learn the tools to empower you to live a life on purpose. Get ready to up-level your money and your life. I'm your host, Dr. Bonnie Koo.

Welcome to episode 43. So, I recently made a discovery about myself that, apparently, was obvious to everyone else. Has that ever happened to you? So, I wanted to do a whole podcast on this topic in case any of you can relate.

So, are you ready? I just found out that I'm a perfectionist. Yeah, I didn't know that. So, first, let me tell you why I didn't think I am one already. So, here's the thing. To me, being a perfectionist was about wanting to be the best. Think being that gunner in medical school. I was not that person.

You know, there's always that person trying to get the top grade, the A-plus, will go the extra mile to get those few extra points. That was honestly never me. I mean, I wasn't going for the worst grade either, right?

And so, how did I discover this? So, the other day, I was getting coached around something. I don't even remember the exact topic. And then she asked me, "Are you a perfectionist?" And my immediate response was, "Well not really." But then I said, "Well, you know, I just feel like I just notice what's missing all the time and I always feel like it's not enough." To which, she replied, "Oh yes, you're definitely a perfectionist."

And in that moment, something clicked because I was already onto my brain, meaning that I had started noticing that I really do focus on what's missing, what's wrong, what's not enough; around money for sure. And I have already talked about money scarcity. But it's literally everywhere, meaning I notice it everywhere, in all aspects of my life.

It almost feels like my brain has a heat-seeking missile for what's not enough or what's missing. And so, what I've learned is that another way

43: So, You Don't Think You're a Perfectionist?

that perfectionism shows up, it's not just about always wanting to be the best. But it's also the flipside. It's never good enough. It's never enough.

Now, I get it. You're probably listening to this and thinking, "Yeah, I knew that. That, of course, is part of being a perfectionist." But I swear, I did not understand this for me. And this is just an example of many examples that I have from my life of why I love this work, why I love getting coached, because what's obvious to you as an outsider, it's really hard to do that when it's you, right? We've all been there.

So, I wanted to show you two ways how this might show up for you and also how to deal with it. Number one, you never think you have enough money. Like I said, I talked about money scarcity on a separate episode, but I want to talk about this again.

Scarcity just means that you don't have enough. Basically, you have an enoughness problem. No matter how much you make, have, it's never enough money. Meaning, you never actually feel good or secure about what you have.

Now, I've made different amounts of money since I was a teenager. I started working, gosh, I don't know, maybe age 13. So, I've made \$10, \$15 an hour and I've made a lot more money, multiple six figures. And I never feel like I have enough. And this is just what's default for me. This is classic money scarcity mindset, right?

Here's the second way that it might show up for you. And I know many of you suffer from this as well. You don't celebrate, or maybe you don't even acknowledge yourself, let alone your accomplishments because you're too busy moving onto the next thing. And besides, that accomplishment wasn't enough anyway, right?

This might show up in so many ways, but I definitely see, in my clients and in myself, this sort of reluctance to be able to celebrate what we have accomplished, what we have done.

43: So, You Don't Think You're a Perfectionist?

So, here's the problem with this type of thinking. You just keep telling your brain that it's not enough. Just a reminder, our brains are like self-fulfilling prophecies. Whatever we focus on, we find and prove it to ourselves. It's just how it was designed.

So, why not take advantage of this? Meaning, if all you need to do is refocus the brain on something else, then here are some ways to do that. Number one, and this was something actually that coach recommended to me that this was the first time I'd heard of it, and I think it's brilliant.

So, many of you are familiar with a gratitude journal or taking some time to say, "I'm grateful for..." one, two, maybe three things a day. Now, personally, that never really resonated with me. Not because giving thanks or being grateful doesn't feel good.

What the coach suggested for me was to do an enough journal. So, you basically take the same idea as doing a gratitude practice, but it's an enough practice, meaning it could be things like, "What did you do enough today? What do you have enough today?"

Whether you do this formally in your journal or take a few minutes in the morning or before you go to bed, I think this is so important for all of us perfectionists out there to remember that we are more than enough in this moment. We have enough money today. We saw enough patients today, whatever that is for you.

And the second thing I wanted to say is kind of an extension of this enough journal concept. But like I said, our brains want to prove whatever it focuses on to be true. So, whenever you notice yourself thinking not-enoughness thoughts, so first you have to be aware that this is happening. Because a lot of times, we're not even aware that this is happening. So, the first step is awareness, right?

Then, you have to consciously redirect your brain and focus on thoughts of enoughness. I also want to remind you that it is totally normal and expected for your brain to automatically offer these not enough thoughts, just in case

43: So, You Don't Think You're a Perfectionist?

you were the only one, or just in case you thought something was wrong with your brain or defective because these thoughts just keep popping up, it's not. It's working just fine.

In fact, it's working exactly how it was designed. Remember, our brains are wired for survival. And so, searching for danger is kind of its job. Unfortunately, that danger in modern times shows up as not-enoughness thoughts.

So, what was enough today? What did you do well today? Can you take a moment and just acknowledge yourself? Did you make a correct diagnosis on a patient today? Did you comfort a patient today?

The last thing I want to say about how important it is to help your brain recognize what is enough and to acknowledge the little things and the big things is that because if we don't do that now, it's not like it's going to, all of a sudden, change when that big thing happens, whatever that is for you.

You know, so many of us think that we're going to suddenly feel better and life will be magical once we have, I don't know, a million dollars, five million dollars, whatever that number is for you. Or, you know, "As soon as I get married. As soon as I have kids, then I'll feel better."

It's not going to be different, especially if you don't celebrate or acknowledge what you do have now. I'll see you next week.

Hey, if you enjoyed this episode and don't want to miss out on new episodes, please hit the subscribe button on your favorite podcast app. See you next week.