

Getting it together

A perfectionist's lot is not a happy one

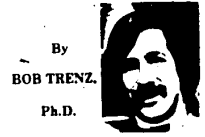
The pursuit of excellence has led to some of our finest accomplishments. You only have to watch an Olympic athlete listen to a concert performed by a master, or examine the work of a dedicated craftsman to appreciate the heights that human beings can attain when they dedicate themselves to a pursuit.

It is ironic that a close cousin to the pursuit of human excellence—perfectionism—is responsible for some of our greatest losses. It is an obstacle to love. It is a leading cause of depression. It is a destroyer of family harmony, an enemy to personal contentment, and a promoter of ulcers and heart attacks.

Perfectionism is an intolerance for imperfections—a sensitivity to flaws and failures. The perfectionist looks at an accomplishment but only sees what is wrong with it. He is aware of the subtle errors in even the most nearly "perfect" creation.

And not only is the perfectionist aware of imperfections he hates them. He has an emotional reaction to flaws, a mixture of anger and disgust. It is as though he feels that the flaw defiles an otherwise perfect piece of work. The more personally involved he feels in the achievement, the stronger is his repulsion over its failings. He is most critical of his own creations and those of his family, his students or his employees.

FOR THE PERFECTIONIST this sensitivity to flaws pervades his life. He is just



By BOB TRENZ, Ph.D.

as much a perfectionist about minor achievements as he is about important ones. The perfectionist father, for example, ignores the hours of effort that his young son has spent on weeding the garden. Instead, he points out the weeds that were missed. Having performed an excellent violin solo, the perfectionist musician is heart-broken over one missed note. The perfectionist husband points out that a very tasty gourmet dish needs more salt.

Perfectionism affects all facets of our lives because it is not just a little neurotic hangup; it is an engrained habit. It is an attitude that has been with us for so long that it feels like part of our personality. And that is because we learned it so early in our childhood.

How do you produce a perfectionistic child? Be a perfectionist parent. Focus on his mistakes. When he shows you his accomplishments point out his errors. "Cats don't have five legs" or "You always make a mess when you try to feed your self."

When he finally reaches an achievement plateau, remind him of the accomplishments he has not yet mastered. Well, you finally got your grade up in sci-

ence, now what about arithmetic and spelling?

PARENTS CERTAINLY MEAN no harm by such responses. They are just trying to be the best possible teacher, hoping to bring out the best in their child. Inadvertently though, the perfectionist parent is training his child to avoid making errors rather than to enjoy his successes.

Unintentionally, such parents are emphasizing their child's incompetence and starting a pattern of acute self-criticism and an endless quest for a flawless achievement.

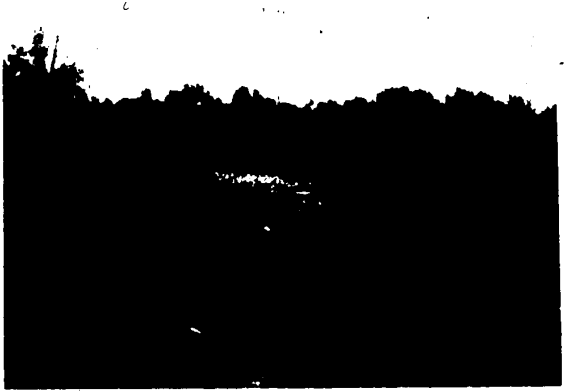
The child of perfectionist parents is likely to become a perfectionistic adult, caught on the treadmill of trying to be flawless. He is doomed to fail because of what so many clichés have told us: human beings are essentially imperfect. Even our supposedly excellent creations are susceptible to the microscope search for flaws.

Never satisfied with his imperfect achievements, the perfectionist is also doomed to discontent. He is unable to be satisfied with his accomplishments. He is not capable of enjoying a feeling of contentment, that cozy, relaxed reward for his worthy efforts. His inner peace is constantly disturbed by a nagging awareness of his failings.

Next week this column will look at more of the facets of perfectionism and will discuss its prevention and cure.

Bob Trenz is a Rochester psychologist and marriage counselor. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be addressed to Bob Trenz, Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 410 N. Main, Rochester 48663.

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Pap tests set in Troy

The sixth Oakland unit office of the Michigan Cancer Foundation will sponsor its first cervical cancer screening clinic in Troy, Sept. 13-15.

Pap tests, which aid physicians in detecting cervical cancer in its early stages, will be available at the Bethel Baptist Church, 394 Crooks between Maple and Big Brazer, Troy, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at three days.

Appointments can be made by calling 361-1866 weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Pap test is a simple, painless examination that can indicate the presence of cervical cancer before symptoms appear. Cervical cancer is curable if detected and treated early, and every woman over 18 is urged to make the Pap test part of her annual health routine.

The Michigan Cancer Foundation serves Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Monroe counties with programs of cancer research, screening and detection, and patient care and rehabilitation. In 1975 more than 11,000 Detroit-area women received free Pap tests through the MCF's screening programs.

Volunteers

This column describing volunteer needs in Oakland County is cosponsored by the Junior League of Birmingham and the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau.

Inquiries regarding volunteer needs listed here should be made to the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau at 642-7272.

Requests for volunteer listings also should be made through the volunteer bureau. COMMON GROUND in Birmingham is a crisis center particularly oriented to youth-related concerns but serving anyone in need. Individuals are needed to train as counseling volunteers and as greeters. Sensitivity to another person's needs is important.

Training is given in areas such as public relations and office duties.

TROY HISTORICAL MUSEUM needs

volunteers to assist the museum staff guiding tours, clipping newspapers, performing clerical duties, raising funds, working on displays and following through on research. Training sessions are provided.

The museum is open from 24 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursday and Sunday. Office hours are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

CHILDREN'S VILLAGE in Pontiac houses wards of the court. Volunteers are needed to work at the village as well as to take children home for weekends.

Volunteers are needed at the unit to share a particular interest such as arts and crafts, sewing or cooking. Those interested in taking a child into their home are interviewed by a senior counselor. The number of weekends is flexible.

Cancer-nutrition convention planned

A convention to discuss the relationship between cancer and nutrition will be held Oct. 2 and 3 in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Dearborn.

The event will be sponsored by the newly formed metropolitan chapter of Foundation for Alternative Cancer Therapies Ltd. (FACT).

Speakers at the two day convention include scientists, nutritionists and physicians. Among them will be Dr. Alan Neter, specialist in metabolic nutrition and author of "New Breed of Doctor"; and Clinton Miller, legislative representative of the National Health Federation. Dr. Albert Schatz, internationally known microbiologist and biochemist, will also participate. He is the codiscoverer of the antibiotic streptomycin, which provided the first effective means of treating human tuberculosis by chemotherapy. Also scheduled to give talks are V.E. Irons, a Yale University graduate who has been in the field of nutrition for 40 years. Founder of the National Health Federation, he is now vice-chairman of its board.

Another speaker is Marian Leonard Thompson, one of the founders of La Leche League International, and president since its inception in 1956.

Registration will take place at 8 a.m. Oct. 2 and 3. Cost of the two-days of lectures will be \$4. for one day \$5. Checks payable to FACT, Metro Detroit may be mailed to Box 682, Dearborn 48121.

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