**Living with Perfectionism
group manual**

Living with Perfectionism Group Manual

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Introduction and development of the protocol

This manual outlines the protocol of a six session group intervention to target perfectionism, which has been developed and evaluated in the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust National eating disorder service with patients with Anorexia Nervosa. The working group for this manual included researchers, clinicians and individuals who participated in the perfectionism group within our inpatient programme.

There are already very good materials and protocols which exist for perfectionism work (for a review of evaluated perfectionism interventions see Lloyd et al, 2014a). We have found the resources listed below extremely useful in developing the 'Living with Perfectionism' group, along with workshops by Prof. Roz Shafran, Prof. Tracey Wade and Dr. Athea Fursland.

Egan, S. J., Wade, T. D., Shafran, R., & Antony, M. M. (2014). Cognitive-behavioral treatment of perfectionism. Guilford Publications.

Fursland, A., Raykos, B., & Steele, A. (2009). *Perfectionism in Perspective*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions: http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

Fennell, M. (2009). *Overcoming Low Self-Esteem: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques*. UK: Hachette.

Shafran, R, Egan, S, & Wade, T. (2010). *Overcoming perfectionism: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioral techniques*. London: UK: Constable and Robinson.

Perfectionism is regarded as a transdiagnostic construct, of relevance to a range of disorders and symptoms (Egan et al, 2011). We found in working with severely underweight and physically compromised patients with Anorexia Nervosa, that psychological interventions need adaptation to meet their needs. This protocol retains a transdiagnostic approach, in that it focuses generally on perfectionism rather than on the core eating disorder symptoms or perfectionism in relation to these symptoms. Our clinical work has also shown us the need to be flexible in delivering the perfectionism group protocol as patient groups, as expected, have varied in terms of motivation and engagement. For this reason we have also included a section on ''therapist tips'' aimed at helping to overcome some of the challenges and difficulties we have encountered in delivering the group intervention.

The overall aim of the group is to increase awareness of the negative impact of perfectionism through exploration of striving for perfection versus excellence, identification and reduction of perfectionist behaviours and challenging perfectionist thinking. The group consists of six weekly sessions which are each one hour long. The content of the protocol is outlined below. For each session, we have summarized the aims, themes and materials required, along with the key points of psycho-education (to be taught and shown in blue boxes), activities (green) and homework (purple). Materials and handouts for each session are given after the protocol for the relevant session. In our group delivery, psycho-education notes are written up on a flip chart and are expanded upon and discussed with patients.

Session outline:

Session 1:   What is perfectionism, advantages and disadvantages of perfectionism

Session2:   How did I become a perfectionist and what makes up perfectionism

Session 3:   Managing perfectionism, adapting/adjusting perfectionist behaviours

Session 4:   Challenging perfectionist thinking and adjusting unhelpful rules and assumptions

Session 5:   Re-evaluation of the importance of achievement

Session 6:   Review of group

Living with Perfectionism Group: The Protocol

Session One

Theme: Aims of group, introduction to perfectionism, advantages and disadvantages

Materials: flip-chart, questionnaires, paper and pens, sports quotes.
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  - The first session begins with welcoming members to the group and introducing the aims of the group, along with ground rules. Explore with group members, their hopes and expectations in relation to the group, along with any concerns they may have.
  - Explain the purpose of using outcome measures to evaluate the group and ask group members to complete self-report questionnaires (see outcome measures in the appendices).

Activity One: Drawing Exercise

This is an old projective test. However we found this simple object drawing exercise to be a good warm-up activity to create discussion and to introduce the activity based group sessions.

Materials: Paper and pens

Instructions: Ask group members to work in pairs or small groups to draw a tree, a house and a person in two minutes.

Discussion point: Discuss experience and approach to task, what they noticed and any difficulties. Explain that the task is used as there is no perfect way to do it as everyone's interpretation of perfect objects: tree, house, person are different just as our relationship with perfectionism will be.

Activity Two: Mind map of perfectionism

Materials: flipchart and pens

Instructions: On the flipchart, map together with the group their ideas about what perfectionism is.

Note: Mind maps are widely used in educational psychology. We have found this highly visual, experiential and personalised approach of asking patients to draw their own mind maps beneficial, through helping patients with conceptualization. This also creates the opportunity to think about perfectionism further outside of the sessions.

<u>Psycho-education</u>: What is perfectionism?

- • There are different definitions of perfectionism
- ➢ What is key to all definitions is that perfectionism is different from the healthy pursuit of high standards
- • Perfectionism is more problematic than simply having high standards for yourself
- • It is the pursuit of impossible goals and unrelenting standards i.e. perfection rather than the possible i.e. excellence.
- • Perfectionism can be present in one isolated area of your life, or many areas
- • It involves engaging in behaviours that are common to perfectionists.
- • Perfectionism has a significant negative impact on life.
- • Perfectionist standards can be self-imposed (self orientated), imposed on others (other orientated), or experienced as being imposed by others (socially prescribed).

A Definition of Perfectionism

<u>Unrelenting standards</u>

Relentless striving for extremely high standards that are excessive and personally demanding.

<u>Judging Self-worth</u>

Basing your sense of worth / how you feel about yourself as a person largely on your ability to strive for and achieve these high standards.

<u>Experiencing negative consequences</u>

Despite the huge costs to yourself you continue to set demanding standards and strive for them.

Therapist tip: Throughout the psycho-education encourage group participants to explore their ideas of what perfectionism is so that the key points resonate more fully with their own experience. This can make for a more lively, experience based discussion rather than a 'lecture'.

**Activity Three: Sports quotes and advantages and disadvantages of perfectionism**

Materials: Sports quotes (see Materials for session one), flip-chart

Instructions: Read out quotes from famous athletes. Draw a table on a flip-chart with two columns – advantages and disadvantages of perfectionism. Ask group members to identify advantages and disadvantages of perfectionism, both in relation to the quotes and more widely based on their own experiences.

Therapist tip: Note with the group whether they are identifying more advantages or disadvantages of perfectionism. In our experience of running the groups, in general group participants will identify more with the disadvantages of perfectionism which can lead to a discussion of the negative impact and, indeed, futility of attempting to pursue perfectionism. In the inpatient/daypatient programmes patients can find it difficult to engage and take an active role in the discussion. We try to use every opportunity to engage group members to avoid a didactic style (e.g. group facilitators talking most of the time) and within this activity we ask patients to read the quotes out which is a less threatening way to hear as many voices in the group as possible and making group members more confident to speak.

Psychoeducation: Reinforce the aim of the group

The aim of the group is to support group members in learning to reduce their perfectionism to a more manageable level. The aim of the group is NOT to move people to the opposite end of the scale but to reduce perfectionism to a more manageable level and use the drive towards perfectionism more effectively.

Excellence

↓

Not perfectionist   Perfectionist
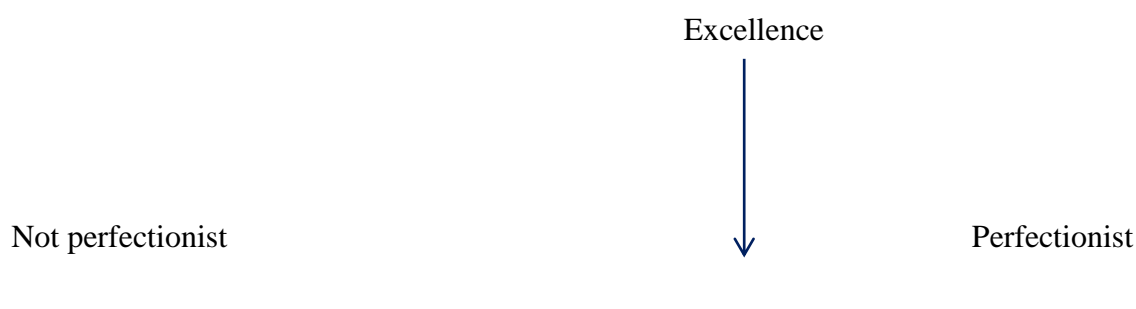
Homework

Give out Handout 1 (costs and benefits of being a perfectionist) which gives some costs and benefits of perfectionism identified in previous runs of the groups. Ask patients to keep a record / log book in relation to their perfectionism or perfectionism in general. Ask them to record what they noticed and any relevant sayings, images or mottos which they come across.). Ask them also to try to notice costs and benefits of perfectionism.

Note: We have found that some patients can find it very difficult initially to think about their own perfectionism. Therefore giving patients the option of exploring perfectionism more generally can be very useful.

Therapist tip: We describe reducing perfectionism as turning down the volume rather than taking the stance of the 'anti-perfectionist'. This needs to be highlighted and reinforced to challenge black and white thinking and working toward continuum thinking.

Materials for Session One

Activity 3: sports quotes

Jessica Ennis, athlete after she won gold in the heptathlon at the Olympic Games

''I can't believe it. After the javelin I knew I was on for a good score but… All this hard work and the disappointment of Beijing and everyone just supporting me so much. Honestly, I'm just so happy. I'm so happy. I'm so thankful that everyone helped me all this way. I just want to enjoy this moment, I'm wanting to make the most of this. It's been a long time coming and a lot of hard work's been put in and a lot of stress and so I'm just enjoying this moment and we'll see what happens after.''

Andy Murray, tennis player after he won Wimbledon and achieved the Grand Slam

''I don't know how I managed to come through in the end. I was very relieved, it was very close the last shot. So when I realised I had won I was very shocked. I was very relieved and very emotional for a few minutes afterwards. It was an incredible match. It means the world to me, it's what I've been working towards for the last ten years of my life. I've always wanted to try and win a Grand Slam and having come close a few times and the disappointment of the Wimbledon final a few months ago. To come back in the next Grand Slam and win it in a five set match against Djokovic on a hard court, he hasn't lost for a couple of years on a hard court in a Grand Slam. So its unbelievable.....I think I've kept improving, I've worked hard pretty much all of the time, even after the tough losses. I've had a fairly solid team around me for a long time... and my coach has been with me for a long time.''

Living With Perfectionism Group Handout Advantages and Disadvantages of Being a Perfectionist

Advantages of Perfectionism:

- I like to do things well
- It helps in learning new skills and achieving good results
- I get pleasure out of achieving what others cannot
- It makes me feel special
- I like to end the day leaving no tasks undone
- I get satisfaction knowing I've tried my hardest
- I like being top of the class
- I like being efficient
- I like being organized
- I like being prepared for every event
- It prevents me from being lazy
- I like to achieve
- I like to meet expectations of others
- I am never bored
- It helps my self-esteem
- It gives me opportunity to shine
- It keeps me motivated
- It reduces anxiety
- It focuses attention
- It gives me certainty

Disadvantages of Perfectionism:

- Relentless pressure leads to anxiety and stress
- Excessive drive to do well can impair performance = Perfectionism Paradox
- I have no free time
- No achievement is ever enough
- I never enjoy tasks as everything has to be "perfect"
- I can never relax
- I am very self-critical
- I over-analyze things
- I am always stressed
- I find it difficult to make decisions
- I often procrastinate as if I start something I might fail
- I blame myself if things aren't done just right
- I can't stand it when other people don't do things my way
- I don't trust others to do as good a job as I do so I end up doing it all
- I have to go over my work many times until it's acceptable to me
- I have to do more and more in order to feel accepted by others
- It is time consuming
- It is frustrating
- I have no satisfaction
- I have no spontaneity

Session Two

Theme: Where does perfectionism come from, what makes up perfectionism.

Materials: flip-chart, paper and pens, extract of text, ballet teacher 1 and 2 vignettes

Handouts: Cycle of perfectionism, perfectionism resources, tips and quotes on perfectionism

- Begin with a reflection on homework, any difficulties with this and anything group members have noticed this week.

Activity One: making notes task

Materials: extract of text (see materials for session two)

Instructions: Explain to the group that an extract of text will be read aloud and ask group members to write down what is being read as best as they can. Facilitator starts slowly and then speeds up making it difficult to write everything down.

Discussion point: Discuss with group members, their experience and approach to the task. How did they find the vague instructions? What was most important for them when completing the task – e.g. neatness, writing down everything. How do the strategies which group attendees used apply to real life? Discuss situations when there may be more of a need to be quick / obtain an overview rather than over-attending to detail and neatness.

Note on task: This task was suggested by a patient who had previously taken part in the group, while discussing research findings concerning difficulties in the trade – off between time and accuracy in perfectionism. We mostly only manage to read the first paragraph of text as patients find it very difficult, but you can judge for yourself how they are doing / finding it and decide.

Therapist tip: Explain to the group that this exercise was suggested by a former patient as this was an area she found particularly problematic at school in taking notes in lessons, getting behind because she could not possibly take down all the teacher was saying. When reflecting on the exercise, positively appraise the fact that group participants gave the exercise a go and took the risk of trying.

Psycho-education: How did I become a Perfectionist?

- Perfectionism can be both learned and a personality trait.
- Research supports the idea that such traits are present from early on in childhood and that whilst they tend to be quite stable they can still can be modified.
  - ❖ Direct Learning
  - ➢ Reward and positive reinforcement:

  Being praised for doing well > feel good > want more praise > try hard > more praise > People are proud of me if I am successful.

  But can become rigid and inflexible: People are <u>only</u> proud of me if I am successful.

  - ➢ Punishment and Lack of positive reinforcement:

  Absence of praise e.g. noticing parents do not praise you when you obtain a "B" > My parents

  don't like it when I don't get "A's"

  OR

  Being punished for mistakes > e.g. being criticized for making a mess > I must <u>never</u> make a

  mess. Or I must <u>always</u> be neat.

  - ❖ Indirect Learning

  Observing others e.g. noticing parents work very hard, bring work home, rarely relax, get

  frustrated when things aren't perfect > "Work is more important than relaxation" > "Succeeding

  at work is more important than anything else."

  - ❖ Temperament and personality traits

- Characteristic ways of thinking, reacting and behaving which tend to be stable over time. There are of course individual differences but research shows that other traits tend to co-occur with perfectionism: those who avoid novelty, are dependent upon rewards from others, are avoidant and persist towards goals despite frustration and fatigue are more likely to be perfectionist.
  - Regardless of how your perfectionism developed, it CAN be managed and adapted.

- ➢ Everyone can learn to reduce their perfectionism; by 'turning down the volume' perfectionism can

  be made more manageable and productive rather than all consuming and stressful.

Psycho-education: What makes up Perfectionism?

Perfectionism generally is made up of a particular style of thinking which involves:

- **Biased attention –** paying attention to failures more than successes, scanning for evidence of failure rather than success = find more evidence for failure and assume it's an accurate assessment

- **Biased interpretations –** high standards mean anything less than perfection is interpreted as complete failure = black and white thinking

Everyone has rules for living and personal standards but because of the tendency towards biased attention and interpretations, people with perfectionism tend to develop ones that are unhelpful.

Rules for living and Unrelenting High Standards

- Rules for living are unhelpful when they are based on inaccurate assumptions and are inflexible.

- Standards are helpful for motivating us but they become a problem when they are unrealistically high and inflexible or we can only meet them at considerable cost.

- Rules usually have assumptions connected to them. That is a belief about what would happen if the rule is broken.

Therapist tip: Again, during the psycho-education component of the session, reflect on each point with group participants to explore what resonates with them to make these more discussion points rather than a lecture/lesson delivery.

Activity two: ballet teacher vignettes

**Materials:** Ballet teacher 1 and 2 vignettes (see materials for session two)

Instructions: Read out vignettes, ask group to discuss what behaviours and thoughts would these elicit? Which one is most similar to how they speak to themselves?

Psycho-education: What maintains Perfectionism?

Thinking styles, rules for living and assumptions lead to ways of behaving which maintain Perfectionism.

This way of thinking, the rules and assumptions leads to two different kinds of behaviours:

1. Overdoing – checking, repeating, taking a long time, working slowly

2. Underdoing – avoiding because of fear of failure, delaying to postpone stress

I must …

Under-doing   Overdoing

Reasonable doing
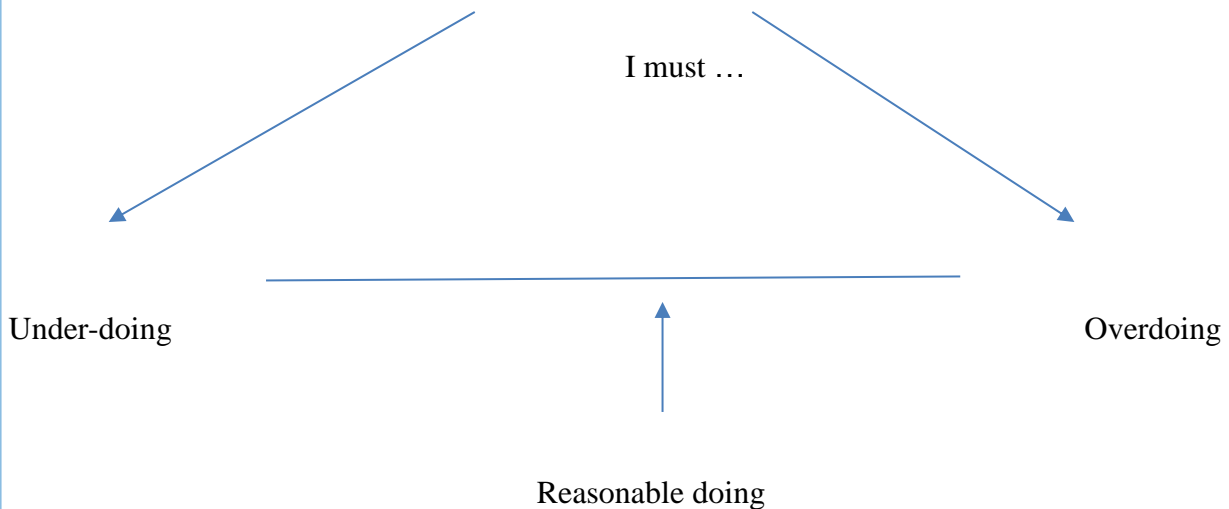
Note: Talk through the cycle of perfectionism. We use a large copy that we place on the wall.

- The cycle of perfectionism illustrates how standards, rules, perfectionist behaviours and thinking interact to maintain perfectionism and make it difficult to overcome.

- Perfectionism can be made more manageable if attempts are made to do a reasonable amount in relation to specific tasks. This can then help to adjust the rules for living because it challenges the beliefs and assumptions perfectionists have about what would happen if they did not follow perfectionist rules.

Therapist tip: When introducing the model, describe how the process works in some depth. Develop group discussion through asking questions/giving examples of how this works in practice for group participants. Explore emotional reactions/responses to the model. Explain that, although perhaps painful, gaining greater understanding and awareness can support motivation/determination towards change.

Homework

Ask group members to identify an area in which they underdo or overdo which they can start to work on and discuss the following week.

Give out the list of perfectionism resources with relevant talks, films and other resources on perfectionism which group members have found useful. Ask patients to look for other examples that they can add. Also give out list of tips and quotes about challenging perfectionism.

Note: We observed that patients can find it hard to identify goals to work on and to try out early on in the group. Getting them to think about areas they want to target and discuss during the following session (when we will ask group members to try a ''perfectionism challenge'' for homework), is something that we found useful at this stage.

We have had a lot of input from group participants themselves in developing this group and we would like to emphasize the collective and collaborative process in the development of the group content and its resources. Our impression is also that patients have found this motivating.

Materials for session two

<u>Activity 1:</u> Text extract

The most resourceful period of Roman London lay in the years spanning the first and second centuries, but these were followed by an uneven period combining development and decline. That decline was in the past associated with the two great titular spirits of London, fire and plague, but there was also a steady alteration of imperial rule as the empire itself weakened and decayed. In approximately AD 200, some 50 years before the temple of Mithras was erected, the great wall was constructed around London. It speaks of an age of anxiety, but the very fact of its erection suggests that the city still had formidable resources of its own. Large areas within the wall were unoccupied, or used for pasture, but there were fine temples and houses in the more fashionable district close to the river. The first London mint was established in the third century, testifying once again to the city's true nature. In that century too, a riverine wall was constructed to complete the city's defences. What, then, was the nature and activity of the citizens themselves in the last decades of Roman London? They would be largely of Romano-British descent, and there were occasions when they were ruled by a British 'king.' But London has from its inception always been a missed city, and the streets would have been filled with the inhabitants of many nations including the native Celtic tribes who, over three hundred years, had naturally grown accustomed to the new order. This Roman city spanned a period as long as that from the late Tudors to the present day, but we have in general only the silent evidence of scattered cups and dice, bath scrapers and bells, writing tablets and millstones, brooches and sandals. How can we make these objects live again?

There were of course, in the passages of this long history, periods of turbulence and warfare. Many have gone unrecorded, but one or two powerful incidents survive. The darkness breaks and a scene presents itself, frozen for a moment, throwing into further confusion and mystery the historical process of which it is a part. A Roman leader named Allectus sailed to Britain in order to put down a local rebellion; having defeated the rebels he set up his headquarters in London. A Celtic chieftain, Ascelepiodotus, in turn marched against the imperial victor; outside the city there was a great battle in which the British were successful. The remaining Roman troops, fearing massacre, fled within the walls and closed the gates. Siege engines were brought, and a breach was made in the defences. The Celts poured in and the leader of the last legion begged for mercy. It was agreed that the Romans could withdraw and take to their ships but one tribe or group of tribesmen reneged on the agreement; they fell upon the Roman soldiers, decapitated them in ritual Celtic style and, according to the narrative or Geoffrey of Monmouth, threw their heads into a brook in the city in Saxon, Galobroc. Many skulls were, in the 1860s, found in the bed of the long-buried Walbrook River. The rest is silence.

From prehistory to 1066.

London: the biography. Peter Ackroyd.

Activity two: Ballet class vignettes

Amy is ten years old and has ambitions to become a ballet dancer. In every other aspect she is doing well, but she just cannot master the pirouette. Her ballet teacher thinks she has potential and Amy practices on her own at home every night trying to achieve it. In class on Saturday morning she tries her absolute best but falls over, grazing her knee. Amy feels so ashamed, embarrassed and such a failure that she can't help but cry.

Ballet Teacher 1

Oh Amy, not again! What is wrong with you? Why can't you just get this? You clearly haven't been practicing as hard as you said you would. Do I have to show you again? Stop crying … on your feet … we'll go again and again and again all lesson if we have to. Pull yourself together, off the floor, you've just got to get this or I give up!

Ballet Teacher 2

Amy, wow, don't cry. Let's have a gentle walk around the studio. Are you ok to continue? Ok, I can see you've been practicing really hard this week. I can really see the improvements. The one thing I could see was the movement of your head in the pirouette isn't quite centred which seems to be the reason you haven't been able to master this one yet. Let's practice getting that right and then I'm sure you'll do it. Now let's give it another go.

Previous experiences

Self-worth overly dependent on striving/succeeding; "I'm OK only if … …" (Pursuit of unrelenting standards)

Role of environment in reinforcing perfectionist beliefs

Perfectionist Thinking Style:

- Mental filter: focus on failure not success
- Black and white thinking (all or nothing)
- Shoulds, oughts, musts: "*I should do better*"
- Catastrophic thinking: "*It's a disaster unless I get 100%*"
- Unfair comparisons: "*they are doing better than me proving I'm hopeless*"
- Predictions: "*it's bound to be rubbish*"; "*I know I'm going to fail*"

Fear of meetings standards, avoidance.

Inflexible Standards

Rigid Standards and Behaviours:

- Excessive study
- Over-prepare/ repeated checking
- Preoccupation
- Procrastination
- Isolation and narrowed interests
- Avoid thinking about situations
- Giving up too soon
- Not knowing when to stop

Temporarily meet standards but…

Fail to meet standards

Avoid trying to meet standards

… decide original standards were not demanding enough

Self-criticism, low mood, anxiety.

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 3: Interesting resources on perfectionism

TED talks

- Maria Pascucci - Recovering Perfectionist...My Ass!

http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Recovering-Perfectionist-My-Ass

- Brené Brown

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4Qm9cGRub0

- Martin Antony - When Perfect Isn't Good Enough

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTbnBmwKuCI

Short films about perfectionism

http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/perfectionists-will-relate-to-this-stop-motion-short-film

Films which illustrate perfectionism

Black Swan (15)

Whiplash (15)

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 4: Tips and Quotes to Challenge Perfectionism

- Practice makes perfect. How many time have you repeated and checked something to make it perfect? Now you are being encouraged to practice being imperfect.
- Give yourself permission to make mistakes.
- Reward yourself – recognise your efforts and when you have accomplished something outside your comfort zone.
- Remember – striving for excellence eliminates the unnecessary details that overburden perfectionists.
- Winston Churchill – "the maxim 'nothing but perfection' may be spelled paralysis".
- George Leonard – Mastery; the keys to success and long term fulfillment – "perhaps we'll never know how far the path can go, how much a human being can truly achieve, until we realise that the ultimate reward is not a gold medal but the path itself".
- Guillermo del Toro – Cabinet of curiosities: my notebooks, collections and other obsessions – "in the end, perfection is just a concept – an impossibility we use to torture ourselves and that contradicts nature".
- Vironika Tugaleva – "The most dangerous way we sabotage ourselves is by waiting for the perfect moment to begin. Nothing works perfectly the first time, or the first fifty times. Everything has a learning curve. The beginning is just that – a beginning. Surrender your desire to do it flawlessly on the first try. It's not possible. Learn to learn. Learn to fail. Learn to learn from failing. And begin today. Begin now. Stop waiting".
- Winston Churchill – "They say nobody is perfect. Then they tell you practice makes perfect. I wish they'd make up their minds".
- David D Burns – "'Perfection' is man's greatest illusion. It simply doesn't exist in the universe … If you are a perfectionist, you are guaranteed to be a loser in whatever you do".
- Lionel Shriver – "But what's so great about being a perfectionist?... You do all this work, and then the stuff you've made just pisses you off".
- Josh Billings – "If a man should happen to reach perfection in this world, he would have to die immediately to enjoy himself".
- Jenni Schaefer – "In the past, my brain could only compute perfection or failure – nothing in between. So words like competent, acceptable, satisfactory and good enough fell into the failure category".
- Salvador Dali – ''Have no fear of perfection, for you'll never reach it.''

Session three

Theme: Managing perfectionist behaviours. This session looks at perfectionist behaviours and how to change them.

Materials: flip-chart, paper and pens, cards, paper and timer for Pictionary game, extra flip-chart paper.

Handouts: ''Reducing perfectionism in small manageable steps.''

- Begin the session with a reflection on the homework, any difficulties and anything group members noticed this week.

Activity One: Drawing game

Materials: word cards (see materials section), paper and pens

Instructions: Divide the group into two smaller groups. Ask group members to take it in turns to pick a card and draw for their group what is on the card (without others seeing the card). The other group members must guess what the picture is. Each group member takes it in turns to draw. The teams will have five minutes to draw as many words as possible, with five points for correctly identified picture and five points deducted for a pass. There is no penalty for an incorrect guess. The winning team is the one with the most points at the end.

Discussion point: After the game discuss the approach group members took to the task, what was difficult, did they find the game enjoyable. Discuss what type of approach is best for this type of task in terms of speed and accuracy and how this might relate to real life.

Note: This task is used to tap into difficulties in the trade off between time and accuracy associated with perfectionism, shown in our own research and that of others (Lloyd et al, 2014b; Stoeber et al, 2008).

Psycho-education: Reducing Perfectionist Behaviours

As we explained in the last session there are two types of Perfectionist behaviours:

Over Doing: actions aimed at meeting unrelenting high standards for self or others which may seem excessive to others but seem necessary to the perfectionist in you.

e.g. repetitive checking, excessive organizing or list making, correcting others

Under doing: in order to retain unrelenting high standards you may avoid doing or delay tasks which you fear you may fail to do perfectly.

e.g. procrastinating – putting off tasks or leaving to the last minute, avoiding doing altogether

<u>Activity two:</u> procrastination clip

Materials: clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4P785j15Tzk

Instructions: Show procrastination clip.

Discussion point: Ask group members what they thought of the clip and about their own experiences of procrastination.

Note: group members often describe having not identified procrastination as being perfectionism, and having regarded it as ''laziness'' or ''the opposite of perfectionism.'' We have as a result put focus on this aspect of perfectionism.

<u>Activity three:</u> goal setting

Instructions: Ask patients to mind map examples of what reasonable and manageable goals someone with perfectionism could begin to set themselves. Pick one behaviour from the list generated and facilitate discussion about how this could be broken down into steps – write up on flip chart. Acknowledge challenges and give encouragement. Stress the need for a balance between planning and doing, with the emphasis being on trying out something new and seeing how it feels.

Homework

Have a go at a perfectionist challenge, either based on what we discussed at the beginning of the session or from the list provided. Emphasise that this is all about doing. Give some time at the end of the session to discuss what group members would like to try out.

Notes: We have found that in this activity patients can get stuck on detail. Explain that this exercise is to give them a tool to set goals but that the focus of the group is on doing and having the opportunity to explore and come back and talk about it. We have found that patients can find it quite overwhelming to think of what they would like to target. Encourage patients to do their own challenge if possible but also provide a list of challenges that could be attempted if this proves too difficult. Group members have also emphasized the importance of having the opportunity to discuss how they found the task and what feelings it elicited the following week.

Materials for session three

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 5: Ideas for perfectionism challenges

- Do something you have been putting off doing - write a CV, do a homework task
- Send an email or text without checking it (or check only once if this is too challenging)
- Read something for enjoyment alone
- Deliberately include typos in an email or letter
- Play a game you're not good at, just for the fun of it
- Leave part of your room deliberately messy
- Spend time relaxing
- Talk in a group without rehearsing first what you are going to say in your head
- Try a new activity
- Ask someone to teach you something new no matter how simple
- Do some doodling in rest period and then share it with someone
- Do hair only once and don't redo throughout the day

Bubble bath	Muscle	Crown	Radiator	Bucket	Doll
Stage	Feather	Island	Shoe	Clock	Skydive
Elbow	United Kingdom	Kite	Sew	Wheel	Sky
Pocket	Knot	Night	Time bomb	Witch	Wave
Wheel	Bucket	Smile	Hula hoop	Bell	Typewriter
Swim	Smile	Earring	Heart	Rich	Stadium

Robot	Bowl	Ear	Pen	Octopus	Chair
Snake	Bell	Bike	Bottle	Snowman	Glasses
Boat	Star	Hand	Ring	Kite	Wheel
Watch	Knife	Camera	Mouse	Carrot	Snail
Leaf	Ruler	Dress	Skateboard	Flag	Arm

Puppet	Photograph	Bridge	Instrument	Dinosaur	Shadow
Shark	Christmas	Fire	Honeymoon	Compass	Handstand
Surfboard	Polar bear	Camel	Safety pin	Letter box	Fire extinguisher
Puppet	Photograph	Bridge	Instrument	Dinosaur	Shadow
Umbrella	Tap	Candle	Tunnel	Ship	Dragon

Sun	Bow tie	Rainforest	Socks	Envelope	Car
Horse	Light bulb	Treasure	Bomb	Rainbow	Hat
Elephant	Spade	Banana	Tree	Book	Necklace
Spoon	Fish	Teapot	Key	Guitar	Flower

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 6:   Setting a goal to reduce a perfectionist behaviour

Choose a particular behaviour relating to over-doing or under-doing which is part of your perfectionism. Think about how you might begin to change this if you decided to try. Pick something small and manageable to start thinking about.

Goal:	
	Steps
1	
2	
3	

Try to make goals SMART

S - specific

M - measurable, meaningful, motivational

A - achievable, acceptable

R - realistic, reasonable, rewarding

T - time-based, trackable

Session four

Theme: Managing perfectionist thinking

Materials: flip-chart, paper and pens, cards, plasticine for Rapidough game, cards and dice for challenging thoughts game.

Handouts: Questions to challenge perfectionist thinking style rules;

- Reflect on homework, did anyone manage to complete their challenge? Or identify something they would like to do during the group? Can anyone share what they managed or discovered.
  - ➢ From research we know that thinking will change when we behave differently and discover that the assumptions we make based on our rules for living are inaccurate. Ask group whether trying things differently has highlighted rules and assumptions they live by.

Activity one: modelling game

Materials: word cards, plasticine

Instructions: Divide group into two smaller teams, ask players to take it in turns to pick up a card and model the word using the plasticine. 5 points per correct guess, 5 points deducted for pass. No penalty for incorrect guesses.

Discussion: Discuss approach to the task. Explore whether they experienced anything differently from the task last week and whether they were aware of any perfectionist behaviours and thoughts.

Note: We find that when facilitators join in with the activities it can make them more engaging, enjoyable and can be a good way of modelling doing something imperfectly.

<u>Psycho-education:</u> Adjusting unhelpful rules and assumptions

The focus of the session is on adjusting unhelpful rules and assumptions and focusing on specific types of thoughts that maintain perfectionism.

Perfectionist rules can be challenged by asking questions about them e.g. is this realistic, reasonable, fair etc. This kind of challenging can then help to identify more helpful rules that are flexible, balanced and realistic.

Unhelpful rules are:

Rigid

Inaccurate

Unreasonable

They are often based on:

- Fear of failure
- Shoulds, musts and all or nothing thinking
- Self-control
- Setting more demanding standards
- Constant checking

e.g. I must never make mistakes

Identifying Helpful rules

Reiterate that perfectionist rules can be challenged by asking questions about them e.g. is this realistic, reasonable, fair etc.

This kind of challenging can then help to identify more helpful rules, which are:

Flexible

Balanced

Realistic

Activity two: challenging thoughts game

Materials: 12 sided dice, challenging thoughts cards, list of rules

Instructions: Write the examples of unhelpful perfectionist rules on flipchart from handout:

1. Give participants the handout with the challenging questions cards and dice.
2. Roll the dice and ask the person holding the card with that number on to read out the challenging question on it. Continue this until enough challenging questions have been asked to help identify a more helpful rule. Write more helpful rule on flipchart.
3. Move to next rule.
4. Continue

Discussion: During this exercise encourage participants to be thinking about what rules they can relate to or what their individual rules might be. Ask participants to contribute rules to challenge if they would like to.

Note: This game can be played using two 6 sided die, group facilitators will have to shout out number one at random in order to include this question.

Homework

Ask group members to continue to try to challenge their perfectionism – try another perfectionism challenge or work on one of their own goals - and use some of the challenging questions to help with this when perfectionist thoughts arise.

Note: Again, it is good to create time at the end of the session for group members to share and discuss what they would like to challenge in the coming week.

Therapist tip: With the dice game encourage the group towards curiosity as, quite often, the rules can activate participants perfectionist beliefs which may make individuals want to defend their rules. If needed, name this, and describe how this is an exploratory, experiential exercise, to consider how it is possible to adjust the perfectionist rules so that they can become more helpful, reasonable and balanced. Explain that this will not happen immediately but, as long as we are aware of and able to question the rules, we can decide whether we want to continue following them. We want to support patients toward developing a tool kit and may need to clarify this, or else participants can feel they are being in some ways judged and attacked.

Materials for session four

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 7: **Questions to challenge perfectionist style rules:**

1. Is it reasonable?

2. Is it fair?

3. Is it helpful?

4. Is it realistic?

5. How do I know it's true?

6. Are their any negative consequences to living by this rule?

7. Are there other ways of viewing the situation?

8. Do I have any experiences that show this thought is not true <u>all</u> the time?

9. Are there any other explanations?

10. What thought might someone who is not a perfectionist have about this?

11. Would my friends/family agree with this thought

12. If I keep this rule what does life feel like?

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 8: Examples of Perfectionist and Reasonable Rules

Perfectionist Style Rules and Assumptions	Reasonable Rules and Assumptions
I must do things perfectly	I like to do things really well.
If I eat before noon it's proof I have no willpower.	It's reasonable to have a nourishing meal or snack when hungry, most people would eat something before noon it does not mean I lack willpower.
If I relax at all I will become lazy.	It's normal to relax occasionally and it doesn't mean I am lazy.
I must be certain of what will happen.	Prepare for a few possible outcomes but be flexible, you can't plan for everything.
I must not let myself have a treat because I have not worked hard enough.	If I have worked hard I deserve to rest and treat myself even if I haven't finished all my tasks.
I always need to push myself further.	Reaching a goal is a sign of success, deserves recognition and a pat on the back, not a moving of the goalposts.
I can't have others think poorly of me.	Everyone has different skills and abilities, good days and bad days as long as I know I've tried then what others think doesn't matter.

Session Five

Theme: Re-evaluating the importance of achievement in relation to self-worth

Materials: flip-chart and pens, game: Timeshock game, cards for 'Perfection vs Excellence' task; large print outs of model of perfectionism and model of appropriate self-standards

Handout: Model of appropriate self-standards, Areas of life and qualities that make up self-worth

- Begin by discussing the homework and how this went.

Activity one: timeshock game

Materials: Timeshock game (available from Amazon: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Tobar-TIME-SHOCK-Brainteaser-Game/dp/B00303ROS0)

Instructions: Ask each group member to take it in turns to have a go at game – 60 seconds to put as many pieces in correct holes as possible.

Discussion: How did group members find this game? Were they able to enjoy without thinking too much about performance? What kind of thinking arose during the game? How does it compare to playing other games in a team in previous weeks?

Note: Again we find it beneficial for group facilitators to also have a go at this game.

Therapist tip: If two people get the same number and request another try it is highly appropriate to permit this. However, then fully reflect on the process. Was it as fun and enjoyable with the element of competition included? What differences can they identify between being process versus outcome focused? Our observation from previous groups is that introducing the competitive element leads to patients feeling anxiety, performance pressure and lack of enjoyment on the second go.

Activity two: letter

Materials: Letter written to year 6 students

Instructions: Read out letter and generate discussion around this. What feelings might this evoke and why. Link to the focus of this session which is the links between perfectionism and over-evaluating the importance of achievement in relation to self-worth.

Note: We have found that this letter can evoke very strong feelings in some group members and that this can be very powerful in exploring not only the importance placed on achievement but the difficulties of challenging high standards and expectations of others.

Therapist tip: The letter can elicit quite strong emotions in the group participants and lead to discussions of school and societal focus on achievement and outcomes over determination and effort. Our experience suggests that this leads nicely onto exploration of other means by which individuals can gain a sense of self worth, to counteract and reduce the focus on achievement, which damages self worth and self esteem.

Activity three: mindmap of self worth

Materials: flipchart

Instructions: Ask group members to generate areas that people can gain a sense of self-worth from – this could be themselves or others. Explore how important achievement is to a sense of self-worth.

Note: We have found that group members can sometimes find it difficult generating areas or are reluctant to say/share. Some ideas to get started (generated from previous groups) could be: feeling like you belong, learning something, sense of purpose, others valuing what you do, asking your opinion, balance, school work, work, achievement, exercise, appearance, family.

Discussion point: If group members discuss what they base their self worth on, it can be useful to discuss whether they judge other people by the same criteria.

Psycho-education: **over-evaluation of importance of achievement**

Perfectionists tend to:

- ▪ Over-evaluate the importance of achievement
- ▪ Base a substantial part of their self worth on achieving their unhelpful rules
- Therefore achievement becomes a measure of who they are as a person so becomes overly important in their lives.
  - but
- Since the unhelpful rules tend to be unrealistic, achieving them is extremely difficult so a perfectionist way of living usually lowers self-worth rather than improving it.
- Basing self-worth on a small number of domains means that if something doesn't go well in that domain it has a big effect on our self-esteem. Having lots of areas that contribute to our self-worth means that even if something doesn't go to plan it does not have too much of an effect.

The model of appropriate self standards brings this together, along with what we have learned over the past 5 weeks.

Discussion point: Discuss the new model, how its compared to the previous model. What do people think about this model?

Activity four: **areas that make up my self-worth**

Materials: handout (see Materials for session five)

Instructions: Ask group members to complete the handout of areas in their life and qualities elicited from these.

Discussion point: Generate a discussion about which ones are performance based and capacity to gain self worth and enjoyment from other activities including those that might be neglected. Emphasise that focus on a wider range of domains means that if difficulties are experienced in one domain, this has less impact on self esteem.

Activity 5: Excellence versus perfection

Materials: excellence versus perfection cards / post-its

Instructions: Place cards showing thoughts, rules, behaviours and assumptions around the room and ask group members to divide them into whether they reflect excellence or perfection. After completing the task, ask group members which seems more attractive to them.

We find it good to use post-its for this exercise so that one wall will represent perfection and one wall excellence. Group members can then be asked to go and stand next to the one they prefer.

Therapist tip: With the inter-session work for this session, ask participants to actively engage in an activity during the week that they have identified as either eliciting or potentially eliciting self

Homework

Give out list of pleasurable activities (we generated a list of pleasurable activities across the groups we have run in the inpatient setting – for more detailed information - **Brief Group Psychotherapy for Eating Disorders: Inpatient protocols (Paperback) - Routledge Mental Health ISBN** 978-1-13-884891-7

http://www.routledgementalhealth.com/books/details/9781138848917/)

Ask group members to think about and have a go at increasing domains of self-worth and come up with their own list of pleasurable activities. In addition, in relation to the new model, ask group members to try to think of a time when they were able to be less perfectionist or were able to use more appropriate standards and thinking.

Encourage people to keep going with attempts to challenge perfectionist behaviours and thoughts during this final week.

Note: The idea of thinking of a time when group members may have been able to use more realistic and non perfectionist thinking in their own lives was suggested by a patient who previously attended the group. She suggested that whilst the new model makes sense, it can be difficult to shift thinking. Therefore trying to think of a time when one was less perfectionist or was able to think in this way may facilitate applying this to other situations.

Materials for Session Five

Activity two: Letter

Dear Year 6 pupils

Next week you will sit your SATs tests for maths, reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation. We know how hard you have worked, but there is something very important you must know:

The SATs test does not assess all of what makes each of you special and unique. The people who create these tests and score them do not know each of you the way that we do and certainly not in the way your families do.

They do not know that some of you speak two languages or that you love to sing or draw. They have not seen your natural talent for dancing or playing a musical instrument. They do not know that your friends can count on you to be there for them; that your laughter can brighten the darkest day or that your face turns red when you feel shy. They do not know that you participate in sports, wonder about the future, or sometimes help your little brother or sister after school. They do not know that you are kind, trustworthy and thoughtful and that every day you try to be your very best.

The levels you will get from this test will tell you something, but they will not tell you everything. There are many ways of being smart. You are smart! So while you are preparing for the test and in the midst of it all, remember that there is no way to 'test' all of the amazing and awesome things that make you, YOU!

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." (Aristotle)

Sleep, Rest, Believe!

Good luck!

Mrs Brown, Mrs Quinn and Mrs Brierly

(Buckton Vale Primary School)

(Printed in Daily Mail 10 May 2015)

: Areas of life and qualities that make up self-worth

Listed below are some areas which a person may base their self-worth upon, along with some qualities which are known to contribute to a strong sense of self-worth. Fill in the table for yourself based upon what you currently base self-worth upon and the potential for each of these areas to contribute to the qualities listed below.

Area	Contribution to current self-worth - rank	Pleasure / enjoyment	Interest	Sense of purpose	Connecting with others	Learning / sense of achievement	Other feelings elicited
Work / study							
Household – e.g. tidying							
Hobbies							
Leisure activities							
Self-care and relaxation							
Social and friends							
Family							
Community							
Personal qualities							

Appearance						
Skills and abilities						
Other (specify) …………….						

- Is my self-worth balanced in terms of contribution to self-worth?
- Which of these are standard / performance orientated?
- Which areas are neglected? Do these appear to have potential to contribute to a stronger / better sense of self-worth?
- Are there any areas that seem like they would be more healthy / rewarding to base self worth upon?
- Can you identify some areas that you would like to increase / expand / place more emphasis upon?

Activity 5: Cards for Excellence versus Perfectionism game

I am never satisfied with my accomplishments	There is nothing better	Controlling	Self-compassion
Motivated	Being willing to be wrong	Fulfillment	I am only human
Contentment	Giving	Process focused	Journey
The best we can hope for	Achievable with effort and planning	Sense of achievement	Confidence

Accepting of mistakes	**Taking a risk**	**I would like to….**	**Flexible**
Inflexible	**I tried my best and I can learn from this**	**Spontaneous**	**Good enough is good enough**
I am able to celebrate my achievements	**I enjoy activities, if I do well at them it is a bonus**	**It was a difficult exam and I tried my best**	**I'm one of the best**
It was a complete failure	**Self criticism**	**Taking**	**I must always be the best at something**

It was a complete failure	**Self criticism**	**Taking**	**I must always be the best at something**
I always need to push myself further	**Doubt**	**Unattainable**	**Results focused**
I didn't get full marks so I failed	**Destination**	**I should / I must**	**I am not able to accept my weaknesses**
Being right	**Despondent**	**Ill never be good enough**	**Fear of mistakes**

Depression   Can't tolerate   Anger and   Its good to have
                  mistakes   frustration   high standards

Failure is   I must do things
inevitable   perfectly

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 10: **Adaptive model of appropriate self-standards**

New experiences	

My self-worth is partly dependent on the pursuit of high but achievable standards and doing my best. I'm ok if….

Role of environment and effort in managing perfectionist beliefs

My perfectionist thinking is challenged. I evaluate my performance objectively looking out for successes or signs of achievement**.**

Helpful thoughts
- I am more than my achievements
- I am human and I have the right to make mistakes
- There is no need to act perfectly
- What I am doing is good enough.
- I am supposed to make mistakes, its how people learn
- I accept myself for who I am at this moment,
- I have a right to just enjoy rather than always strive
- Aim for excellence not perfection.
- My imperfections bring me closer to others since they are imperfect too.

Standards are flexible, realistic and balanced

Perfectionist behaviours are reduced to manageable levels which do not take up all of my time**.**

- Keeping perfectionism in check – you do not need to achieve perfect results to be good enough.
- Recognise achievements.
- Do things for enjoyment
- Practice – it takes practice to be imperfect and feel ok

Meet standards and…	**Fail to meet standards**	**Avoid trying to meet standards**

… feel good

Ask if standard is reasonable and adjust standards to be more realistic and achievable.

Living with Perfectionism Group Handout 11: List of pleasurable activities

Doing Crafts

Personal treats

Watching films

Reading Books

Being with positive people

Visiting museums

Looking at photos

Standing on the grass with bare feet

Having a bath

Someone liking our work and wanting it

Small Conversation

Writing a diary

Walks in the forest, around a lake, river or on the beach

Visiting places in London

Relaxing

Laughing

Reading magazines

Making things

Drawing

Taking photos

Making sculptures

Making jewellery

Writing cards to old friends

Window shopping

Attending tester class

Going on free gallery tour

People watching

Finding local club

Going to open gardens

Session Six

Theme: Review of group

Materials: flip-chart and pens, art materials, questionnaires

- Begin the session with a review of the homework.

- Outline of previous sessions:

  Session 1:   What is perfectionism, costs and benefits

  Session 2:   How did I become a perfectionist – learning direct and

  indirect, temperament, what maintains perfectionism

  Session 3:   Managing perfectionism, adapting perfectionist behaviours

  Session 4:   Challenging perfectionist thinking and adjusting unhelpful
  rules and assumptions

  Session 5:   Re-evaluating the importance of achievement, pursuit of

  excellence vs perfectionism

- Discussion points:
  - ➢ What would you like to take forward
  - ➢ What has been most helpful
  - ➢ What has been least helpful
  - ➢ Is there anything you will change as a result of the group

Activity one: art activity

Materials: modelling clay and tools

Instructions: ask group members to make something which represents what they have learned from the group. Explain that this is an opportunity to try and challenge some of the perfectionist thoughts and behaviours using tools we have learned over the past few weeks.

- The group finishes with completion of outcome measures.

Outcome measures

There exist a large number of self-report measures of aspects of perfectionism. The following measures are used pre- and post group in order to evaluate change in perfectionism.

Frost Multi-dimensional perfectionism Scale (Frost et al, 1990)

Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (Riley et al, 2007)

Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire (used routinely within the inpatient eating disorder service).

FMPS

Please put a cross in the box that best matches how much you agree with each sentence. For example, if you agree strongly with the sentence, put a tick in the box marked 'agree strongly'. If you don't mind either way, put a tick in the box marked 'neutral'

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly
1. My parents set very high standards for me					
2. Organisation is very important to me					
3. I have been punished for doing things less than perfectly					
4. If I do not set the highest standards for myself, I am likely to end up a second-rate person					
5. My parents never try to understand my mistakes					
6. It is important to me that I am good enough at everything I do					
7. I am a neat person					
8. I try to be an organised person					
9. If I fail at school/work, I am a failure as a person					
10. I should be upset if I make a mistake					
11. My parents have wanted me to be the best at everything					
12. I set higher goals than most people					
13. If someone does a task at school/work better than I do, I feel like I failed the whole task					
14. If I fail partly, it is as bad as being a complete failure					
15. Only outstanding performance is good enough in my family					
16. I am very good at focusing my efforts on attaining a goal					
17. Even when I do something very carefully, I often feel that it is not quite right					
18. I hate being less than best at things					
19. I have extremely high goals					

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree strongly
20. My parents have always expected excellence from me					
21. People will probably think less of me if I make a mistake					
22. I never feel like I can meet my parents' expectations					
23. If I do not do as well as other people, it means I am a less good person					
24. Other people seem to accept lower standards for themselves than I do					
25. If I do not do well all the time, people will not respect me					
26. My parents have always had high expectations for my future					
27. I try to be a neat person					
28. I often have doubts about the simple everyday things that I do					
29. Neatness is very important to me					
30. I expect higher performance in my daily tasks than most people					
31. I am an organised person					
32. I tend to get behind in my schoolwork/studies because I repeat things over and over again					
33. It takes me a long time to do something "right"					
34. The fewer mistakes I make, the more people will like me					
35. I never feel like I can meet my parents standards					

Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire is concerned with "perfectionism". **By perfectionism, we mean trying to meet really high standards whether or not you actually succeed in reaching them.**
In this questionnaire we are only concerned with perfectionism that affects areas of
life other than your eating, weight, or appearance.

Have you been trying to achieve high standards over the past month whether or not you have succeeded (excluding standards for your eating, weight or appearance)?
Please delete YES or NO.
        YES / NO

If so, in what areas of your life (other than eating, weight or appearance) has this applied?
- for example, it might have been in your performance at work, at sport, at music, at home, etc.
Please note these below:
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

Now, please place a 'X' in the column below which best describes you over the past month.
Remember, do not count standards for your eating, weight or appearance.

	Over the past week…….	Not at all	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1	Over the past month, have you pushed yourself really hard to meet your goals?				
2	Over the past month, have you tended to focus on what you <u>have</u> achieved, rather than on what you have not achieved?				
3	Over the past month, have you been told that your standards are too high?				
4	Over the past month, have you felt a failure as a person because you have not succeeded in meeting your goals?				
5	Over the past month, have you been afraid that you might not reach your standards?				
6	Over the past month, have you raised your standards because you thought they were too easy?				

	Over the past month …….	Not at all	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
7	Over the past month, have you judged yourself on the basis of your ability to achieve high standards?				
8	Over the past month, have you done just enough to get by?				
9	Over the past month, have you repeatedly checked how well you are doing at meeting your standards (for example, by comparing your performance with that of others)?				
10	Over the past month, do you think that other people would have thought of you as a "perfectionist"?				
11	Over the past month, have you kept trying to meet your standards, even if this has meant that you have missed out on things?				
12	Over the past month, have you avoided any tests of your performance (at meeting your goals) in case you failed?				

Group Feedback Questionnaire

1) Name of group…………………………………………………Facilitator/s…………

   •

2) How many sessions did you attend? ………………

   •

3) How much did you enjoy these sessions?

   •

Did not enjoy at all		Quite enjoyed		Really enjoyed
1	2	3	4	5

4) How useful were these sessions?

   Not useful   Quite   Really
    at all   useful   useful

   • _____

   • 1   2   3   4   5

   •

5) Have you used any new thinking skills or strategies as a result of what you learnt in the group?

   •

   • No, none   Some   Yes, lots

   _____

   • 1   2   3   4   5

   •

6) **What did you think about the length of the group (i.e. number of weeks)? Was this too long, too short or appropriate?**

   • Too short   Just Right   Too long

   _____

   • 1   2   3   4   5

   •

7) What did you like the most about the sessions?

   • …………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………...............
   ....

8) Please give your ideas about how we could improve the group in the future:

- …………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………….....................
....

9) What other groups have you attended on the ward?

- ………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………….....................
....
....

-

South London and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

What we have learned

Focus groups

We have developed focus groups in order to involve patients in further developing the group. We also find that this is an important opportunity for patients to take ownership and independence and also to reflect more on what they have learned from the group and what they can take forward. The data generated from focus groups with 12 members in total, is outlined below in terms of relevant themes. The themes which have emerged from these data have been incorporated into the protocol and the therapist tips of this manual.

Focus groups are intended to be informal and open to the experiences of group members. However we follow the following topic guide:

- In what ways was the group useful / beneficial? What did you like about the group?
- Any particular aspects you found useful
- What will you take away from the group?
- What do you feel we could do to improve the group?
- Anything else you want to tell us about the group?

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, with a number of themes and subthemes emerging. Figure 1 shows the key themes and subthemes within these, which emerged from analysis of the focus groups. The themes are explained below, along with illustrative quotations from group members.

Figure 1. Themes and subthemes from focus groups

Theme	Subtheme
1) Perceived benefits	**a) Awareness of perfectionism** **b) Recognising the negative impact of perfectionism** **c) Identifying perfectionist behaviours**
2) The group setting	**a) Benefits of the group setting –** **i) Sharing experiences and learning from others.** **ii) Awareness of similarities and differences in experiences of perfectionism.** **iii)Extension beyond sessions.** **b) Challenges of the group setting.**
3) Activities and interactive task element	**a) Engagement and enjoyment** **b) Activities as illustration of traits and discussion point** **c)Importance of extending and applying activities outside of sessions** **d) Need for more support with activities outside the group and personal**

	goals
4) Handouts	

1) Perceived benefits

a) Awareness of perfectionism

A common theme was that the group engendered a better awareness of perfectionism in terms of what perfectionism is and associated behaviours and thoughts. Many group members discussed this as being a way in which they had benefitted from the group.

''I think it exposed perfectionist ways which I might not have been aware of before. It made me more aware of how much of my life is dominated by perfectionism.'' (M6)

''I think for me again it really helped to highlight what my perfectionism looked like for me. To enable me to think about it and.'' (M11)

''Just recognising the triggers for perfectionism, knowing which behaviour is perfectionism and then basically just working through it every day in life, recognising, taking time to sit down and think what it is that you're doing. Just basically recognition of certain things…And It was just very useful to see that, you know to see that different patterns of thinking, having information about different patterns of thinking and knowing, ok, basically when you do this, this means perfectionism. You know I couldn't link behaviour with the cause and effect so that was very useful I found that. Because then when you know what it is you are doing and why, it helps you know what happened here. I found that particularly useful.'' (M2)

''I hadn't really thought about perfectionism in terms of how it affects different areas of my life before.'' (M2)

b) Recognising the negative impact of perfectionism

Several group members described how the group had enabled them to e recognise the negative impact of perfectionism. Several members described becoming aware of the detrimental impact perfectionism has upon their lives, with perfectionism having been something which they valued. Contrasts were made between positive and negative aspect of

perfectionism, with a number of group members acknowledging both of these aspects of perfectionism.

''That perfectionism has both costs and benefits, I would have seen it as being quite good to have, but obviously sometimes when you always strive for perfection you lose the bigger picture and it can be quite unhelpful.'' (M1)

''You can never get to a perfect goals because when you have that theory of mind, you'll always want something more, and its really draining. So it helped me to think a bit more about what is acceptable and what is good enough but I'm still working on trying to apply that into my life.'' (M8)

''Just I think to reflect really on perfectionism, because it has always been a big thing for me. Well not a big thing, but it has always been something that I've recognised as part of my personality and erm it can be a lot more extreme than I would like it to be. So its nice to reflect on the fact that yes it is a good thing, and it isn't – you know so everyone is sort of like jokes and says its OCD and its this and its that and makes it really negative and its actually recognising no it is positive thing and it can be very beneficial but having to look at how to try and manage it in a way that it doesn't become detrimental.'' (M4)

''It really helped me to understand what my perfectionism does for me in terms of my life and how its detrimental to my life, how it makes my life miserable, erm and which I suppose is similar to how I see my anorexia. Because I see my anorexia as something which helps me cope with life, yet again it is so detrimental to me and it is basically ruining me, like my perfectionism, because I'm constantly not good enough and that affects my self esteem and my confidence. But actually really looking at how it affects my life in a negative way gives me more motivation to challenge it because I want things to be different. And its only if you get that motivation that you can challenge it because if there's no motivation, there's no point.'' (M10)

''Just having it highlighted the difference between perfection and excellence and actually realising for the first time, the massive impact that perfectionism actually has on my life. If I'm honest and I sit here and actually think about it, the reason I don't have a full BSc is because of perfectionism Because every time I tried in my third year, I could not submit

one assignment because they weren't perfect and they were too long. And that's quite a big thing.'' (M11)

c) Identifying behaviours as being perfectionist.

''When I first heard that there was a perfectionism group running I thought, oh well it doesn't apply to me, I can let things be a bit messy, it doesn't matter about it. And then when I went to it pointed out places to me in which perfectionism in the sort of non conventional sense was a part of my life. In making decisions, I'd struggle to have full confidence in a decision I'd made because I wasn't sure it'd be the right one and I'd try weighing up all the different factors. That was one of the elements of it and there was other elements, like if I do something you know, you do try, you try and do it to the best of your ability if you really get into it. And where to draw the line and be like, no that's ok, I can stay there, that's good. erm So its really helpful at identifying the places in which it does affect you.'' (M12)

Several group members discussed procrastination in particular as a behaviour which they had not previously identified as being perfectionist, with the group leading to the realisation that this behaviour was part of their perfectionism.

''I also thought it was really really great the fact that procrastination as a kick back from perfectionism was addressed too. Cos you know, that can be something that I think a lot of people are guilty of in life. You know I did it a lot during 'A' levels and I was a good worker and I did know the stuff but the mental stress of having to actually get down and start thinking about it. If you set my mind off on a tangent, it just goes and goes and goes and I will not give myself a break. And so it was good, it was to to see that recognised as not being you're lazy, you cant be arsed to do that.'' (M10)

''And I also found it really interesting, talking about procrastination as part of perfectionism. Because normally when people say to me that I'm a perfectionist. I always feel like a fraud when they say that, because I procrastinate so much on certain things. And how can they think I'm perfectionist when I'm lazy, I'm just lazy. So to be able to talk about procrastination in terms of worrying so much about being able to do something perfectly that you just keep putting it off, cos you're so scared of starting it and not being able to do a perfect job. Its just really, I've never linked before the procrastination I have and the

perfectionism. I've never made that link before, so I found that really useful, that is a bit of a revelation to me to realise how that fits into my perfectionism.'' (M3)

2) **The group setting**

a) **Benefits of the group setting**
i) **Sharing experiences and learning from others.**

A number of group members discussed the benefits of the group setting and working with others. One of the ways in which this was described was in terms of sharing experiences and learning from others' experiences and ideas.

'So its good to reflect on that and share others' thoughts an ideas and lots of different ways of thinking and challenging that. ..And I think its good just to reflect on that and share ideas.'' (M4)

'It was really good to hear feedback of others. I think the material itself was very good and also having the communication with others, having the feedback from others was very good as well. Knowing the experiences, those are the high points for me.'' (M2)

'It was maybe just quite nice to interact with other people on the subject and see what you can add and take from the group…..Yeah it's the participation with other people because then its nice to add to the group or take from the group, the sharing of things is always interesting cos you get to see how things work. It shows how important it is, each group member has their own techniques and ideas that they bring to the group. Looking at different ideas and stuff and working with different people in them.'' (M5)

'I do like hearing other peoples' opinions and I like seeing other peoples views, getting other peoples advice'' (M6)

'I thought the, the thing that sticks in my mind is when we did the thing when we stuck the things on the wall, that always sticks in my mind. Because it made it very clear and it was interesting that different people, found different things occasionally that were perfectionist, we had different ideas about what was and wasn't.'' (M5)

ii) Awareness of similarities and differences in experiences of perfectionism.

A number of members spoke specifically about the group setting being beneficial through highlighting perfectionist behaviours. A number of individuals discussed this in terms of gaining awareness of the fact that perfectionist behaviours can vary widely between individuals.

''Being able to see from those activities that people's perfectionism can kind of be apparent in very different ways. Two people can be perfectionist and have completely different ideas about what that might mean and completely different judgements of other people and their perfectionistic traits.'' (M3)

''And then think what is it about my own perfectionism, you know its very different for different people isn't it. Cos you know a lot of people … I know she wouldn't mind me mentioning her name would say that she procrastinates and she would avoid doing stuff rather than get it wrong. Whereas I'm more of a push push push, dig down dig down and that kind of stuff so there are you know very big differences but then if you look at that in goal setting and reviewing then you are targeting the individual but you are also looking at it in a group setting. And I think the group may raise issues and make aware of things they could bring to those sessions as well.'' (M4)

''Cos what weve said in here already, some peoples' perfectionism is completely different to other peoples' perfectionism. There are things that I struggle with that other people would think 'what?'. But vice versa as well there are things which other people struggle with which I don't. So mindmaps (as a group) are really good, because then its not just focusing on things in the session that might only be helpful for one person.'' (M9)

In contrast, another member described how hearing the experiences of others made her realise perfectionist behaviours she also engaged in but had not been aware of.

''And then the feedback and discussion was very good because some of the things about yourself you might not recognise but when other people were bringing similar issues and experiences it was quite helpful to see what you were doing. So it was really the reflection time of the group.'' (M2)

Another member discussed being comforted by knowing others experienced similar traits.

''I think it was useful to know that others….I though the perfectionistic traits that I had, I didn't realise how widespread it was, how many other people were also affected by that so its kind of comforting. Erm yeah that was really interesting.'' (M1)

iii) Extension outside of sessions

There was also some evidence that the benefits of the group setting extended beyond the group, with some members talking about continuing to discuss perfectionism outside the group and support each other.

''Cos I was just thinking you know when you said, we've been able to challenge each other outside of the group.'' (M3)

''I just thought you know that its quite interesting to, when you took the sheets away and we were talking about stuff outside of here, people were doing and we made a bit of a joke about it as well. How perfectionist can you get or whatever…..The quiz (activity outside of the group), we really enjoy the quiz you know don't we, we like the banter. We like the banter of that whole process don't we really, you know it causes a bit of erm, that always shows up our perfectionist qualities and we have a good joke about it at the same time.'' (M5)

''Its nice as well to be able to support the group to challenge things as well.'' (M9)

''Erm, I think we all recognise the perfection issues and we discussed and things outside of the group as well which was very good and helpful.'' (M2)

b) Challenges of the group setting

Whilst the experience of group members in relation to the group format of the intervention was on the whole positive, some members discussed negative aspects or challenges of the group setting.
One group member discussed the issue of attendance, with there being only small numbers in some sessions:

''Attendance wise, its nice to have more members in the group because I think once or twice we only had very small numbers of people and I think the experience of sharing and reflecting reduces, you don't benefit as much as when you have more people in a group but I guess you cant really change that because its voluntary attendance so it will probably be different each time.'' (M2)
Two members also spoke about it sometimes being difficult or unhelpful to hear others' experiences and opinions.

''It's (the group setting) sometimes useful, sometimes kind of toxic. Like things you hadn't considered or like didn't want to consider, having to listen to them and sometimes I don't think its very helpful.'' (M7)

''I don't know whether it was very balanced in that people would join in and then not join in. I didn't like the fact that sometimes it just became a wallowing kind of ''ive got so

many perfectionist behaviours blah blah blah…'' But I do like hearing other peoples opinions and I like seeing other peoples, getting other peoples advice, but its also hard, like x said, when you hear other peoples' things and think' I don't want to hear it, I don't need it.' I mean it was good overall.'' (M6)

3) Activities and interactive tasks

The majority of group members discussed enjoying and benefitting from the interactive tasks within the sessions and those which were set for homework tasks. Several members discussed the way in which the tasks were engaging and enjoyable to take part in.

a) Engagement and enjoyment

''Instead of switching yourself off, it can give you that initial reaction like oh so how does it feel to be able to do that and its something that you can't necessarily, its an emotion that you can't actually bring up unless you are in the situation'' (M10)

''And like it encourages you to want to go as well, because, I'm, not going to lie, most of the time its much more fun to go to perfectionism group than it is to sit on rest. (M12)

''I thought it was actually the best group that I've done whilst being here. I think that the whole interactive, practical side of doing things was really helpful. Its really boring when you're sitting in a group and theres just talking. But we actually played games and had playdoh and it was really fun to do so it meant that you were able to kind of completely immerse yourself in the group.'' (M12)

b) Activities as illustration of traits and discussion point

Members described the way in which tasks highlighted perfectionist behaviours and thinking which they could then work upon in the group. The way in which tasks generated this appeared to be related to the role of tasks as a stimulus to further discussion of what group members experienced whilst carrying out the tasks.

''I think being aware of how hard the tasks were was quite striking.'' (M7)
''It was how we'd play a game at the beginning and it would spark off the rest of the group and the one that I thought was really effective was Timeshock, because I didn't really see the point of it, I thought 'oh its nothing to do with perfectionism' but actually it really did. Its easier to talk about perfectionism when youre not thinking about oh what do I need to

change or this and kind of thinking of it as a whole and not trying to make it too personal. Its really good.'' (M6)

I think being aware of how hard the tasks were was quite striking.

''I think acknowledging when perfectionism was … erm when you gave us the challenge when you were reading something and we had to write it down and it got faster and faster, it was quite interesting to see how infuriated and angry I got when Ii couldn't do it perfectly. Quite interesting and quite fun as well. I think I learned how perfectionist I was and how competitive I was and what I could try to target.'' (M1)

''I enjoyed the interactive tasks and games, I think they're very good. And erm I think the especially good element in that is when you doing that you can actually see what your attitude is.''

''I think that some of the activities we've done in the group, I think what I found helpful from those activities was the conversation it then generates like I said for me, that's been really apparent from the activities that weve done and being able to talk about it, and you know how that brought out our traits.'' (M3)

''I think the tasks itself was good to experience but I think it was very good that we had reflection time, that was very useful because that's the time when actually you produce results and you go oh what happened so yeah that was good.'' (M2)

c) **Importance of extending and applying activities outside of sessions**

Several members discussed the benefit of the group coming from being able to apply what they had learned in the sessions to their everyday life outside of the group and the setting. Going beyond the group and doing so was something which was seen as important in challenging perfectionism.

''What I found most useful was erm, like erm, at the end when we sort of discussed something we could do perhaps if we got home leave or were on the ward. Something that we could challenge ourselves to do in challenging that perfectionist erm view. I've been having home leave so, and here, on the ward you don't have to make as many decisions on the ward, you know, your food is like put in front of you, its not like, you know, shall I not eat it, you

know. Things like that and the routine of the day is very structured so my perfectionism is more around decisions and its not so apparent on the ward,. But at home it really is, I really struggle and by exploring how it is those perfectionistic traits sort of came about and then working on how you challenge them with things at the weekend, I found that really useful.'' (M10)

''But I think just generally thinking about things in a practical way as well, you know doing activities, which made it quite fun but you know actually made what we were talking about a bit more transferable if that makes sense. To think about and have those discussions. (M4)

d) **Need for more support with activities outside the group and personal goals**

One theme which emerged was group members wanting further support in challenging their perfectionism using activities outside of the group and applying what they had learned. In general individuals wanted more tasks and challenges and support in what to choose and in their own personal goals.

''But I was thinking when it comes to the activities, I see the activities we've done and I view them as kind of an icebreaker to facilitate discussion which is really really useful in my opinion to facilitate that discussion. But I think I kind of have in my head, for example you know, playing Pictionary, … I can sit here and think well this is just a bit of fun I don't need to challenge my perfectionism with this, I'm absolutely fine with it cos its just a bit of fun…I don't know how to find some activity in this group, of being able to challenge that fear of doing something and making a bit of a fool of myself in front of other people because that's such a big thing for me. And I remember even at school, I would never do my classwork at school, I would always save it and do it at home because I couldn't do it in the class cos what if I wasn't doing it right and what if the teacher saw and commented and how embarrassing and shameful would that be. So I'd really like some kind of activity where I could challenge that. Something that would be a good halfway measure before I go out into the big wide world.'' (M3)

''I think it would be a good idea to have a set idea for individual research at the end of each group, rather than that's that so try it, have a set idea of how youre going to challenge it. (M12)

''I think in some ways though, it is handy picking up on them and being like ok so this is where my perfectionism is, you know cos for me in a work situation it would be really bad. But I still wouldn't know how to even stop that because especially if it is in a work situation and you are submitting something to be judged then I would still want to make sure that every single criteria was ticked and ticked and ticked again so it would be perfect. So maybe yeah focusing on that and how to deal with that would maybe be something that would be good to be addressed in future sessions.'' (M9)

''I found some of them ok, like picking a small thing and changing but I actually think we needed more time on the steps, breaking it down. And I think maybe we should have kind of, if we talked about it in a group, it might have happened more. And I know it's hard and no one could think of anything but after I left that group I thought no, I couldn't do it by myself. Im not sure, maybe that needed more time in that group.'' (M6)

''Hmm, I think more sort of active homework tasks, ones that really sort of, not force you to change but encourage us to try breaking our rules a bit and seeing the outcome, what that's like, sort of thing. In the group would be good, like little games to challenge ourselves.'' (M1)

'' I think all the interactive stuff is brilliant. I don't know how you would do this but maybe have small tasks… I mean we did have the homework tasks and stuff but maybe have a bit more of how can you relate that a bit more to what youre doing outside the group. And having a bit more discussion, we did the homework stuff and that was touched upon but it wasn't really explored in detail. You know come back and try and do this, how did that feel, and just maybe having more challenges in how to use those skills outside the group. That's really difficult to do as obviously that's something that patients are going to have to take responsibility for but I think just having that. Because I think its always just good to learn how to transfer those skills.'' (M4)

4)Handouts

Group members differed in their thoughts on the handouts provided in the group. Some group members expressed valuing having the handouts to take away.

''I really liked the handouts and I liked having some materials to take away so you can look at it later. .. So found that very helpful because for some of the groups its talking and experiencing but there isn't really much to take back and got through it and I feel like I would actually like something, some sort of record so I could go through it. Its like now, I though well since Ive been back it would be good to go through some things and just kinda recap''. (M2)

''So what I found helpful was actually taking the handouts actually reading them and doing the homework and being able to come back and discuss it the following week. I found that really helpful.'' (M3)

Others didn't feel that they needed or benefitted from the handouts:

''Also the handouts I kind of put them down and don't pick up again. Im probably just going to throw that away when I, discharged, you don't really look at it very closely.'' (M12)

''Or if people could ask for handouts actually, that's really useful, cos I've got a massive folder of paper that I've been given from here, and a lot of it I haven't read, some of it I have.'' (M9)

In contrast, other individuals who attended the group felt that it would be beneficial to have more material to take away.

''I'd quite like more handouts at the start. I know in some of the other groups we have a timeline of what we're going to do. It would be quite nice to know what was coming up. It would be good as well if on the handout we had a summary of what we'd done, if it kind of had a reminder of what exactly the point of the homework is. Cos I think it's a lot to take in in the group and you forget that you actually need to do something''. (M6)

''Yeah handouts as well. I know they're in the folder as well but actually being given them so that we can be looking at them while you're speaking and have them straight away when you leave as well….Just kind of a concise summary of what the session was about. Just a summary basically of the session would be good.'' (M7)

Quantitative feedback

Self-reported perfectionism data are collected pre- and post-group using the Frost Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Questionnaire (FMPS) and the Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire (CPQ). Data were analysed using repeated measures t-tests and are shown below. Data for the previous group protocol (outlined in Lloyd et al, 2014c) are also shown for illustrative purposes. Changes in perfectionism in those attending the new format group are comparable to those with the previous protocol. However, qualitative findings outlined below suggest a number of specific perceived benefits of the format of the new protocol beyond those captured by the self report measures, and it is anticipated that larger effect sizes will be achieved with a larger sample size.

Figure 2. Change in perfectionism between pre- and post-group

The below graph shows pilot data for change in self-reported perfectionism between pre- and post-group for N= 15 participants completing the perfectionism group in line with the protocol listed in this manual. The below data are very modest in sample size but promising findings suggestive of achievable effect sizes for larger sample sizes.
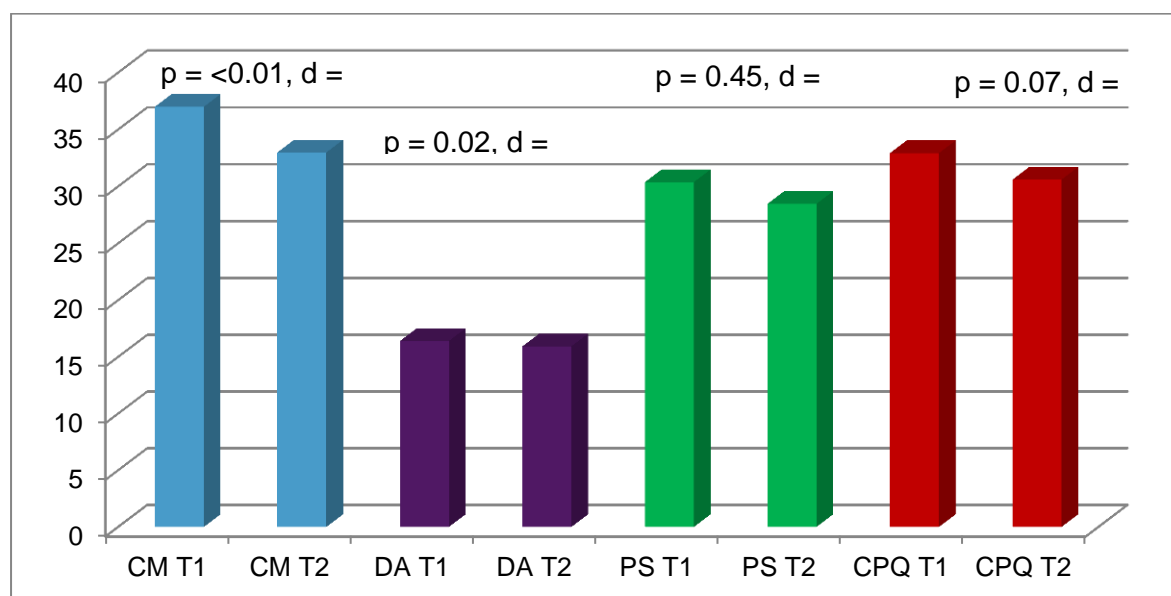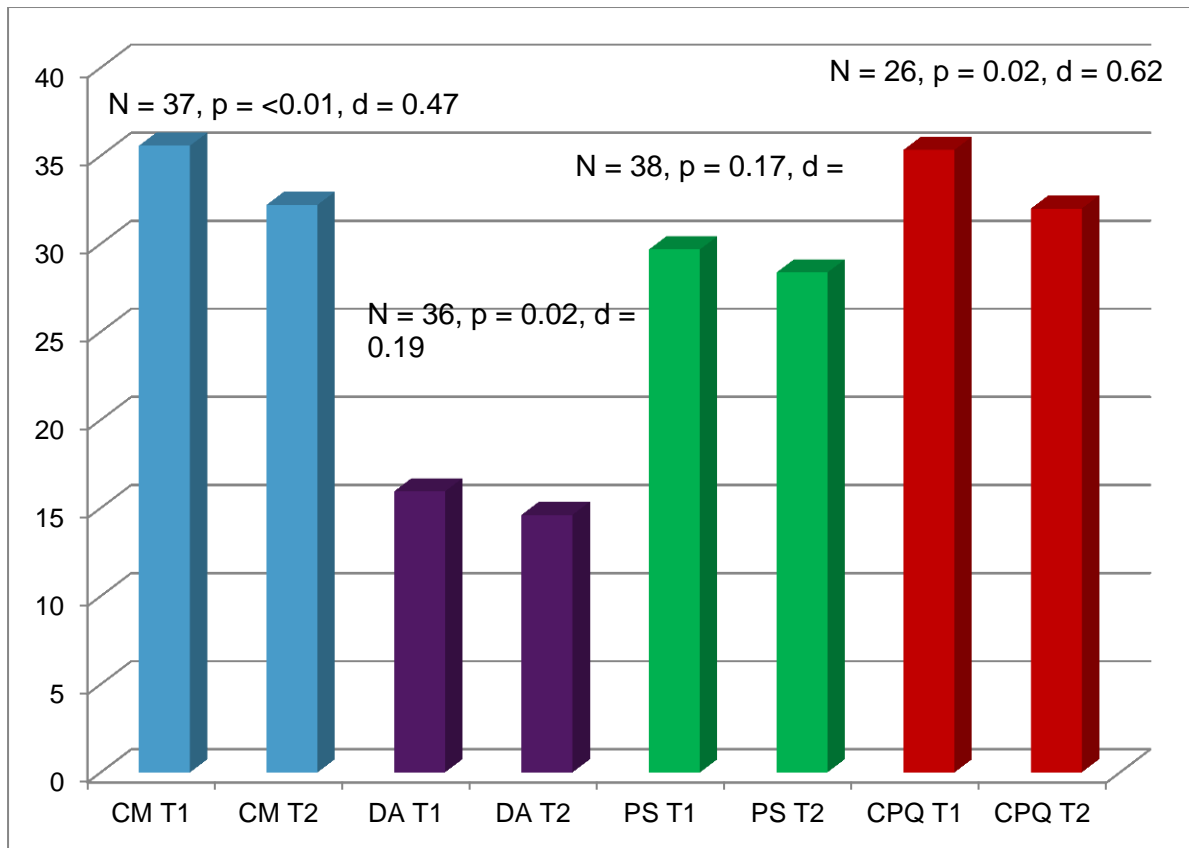

Figure 3. Change in perfectionism between pre- and post-group: previous protocol.

The graph shows change on the following aspects of perfectionism between pre- and post-group using a previous protocol described in Lloyd et al (2014c).

CM: Concern over Mistakes; DA: Doubts about Actions; PS: Personal Standards; CPQ: Clinical Perfectionism Questionnaire.

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