

EXPLORING YOUR FULL SEXUAL POTENTIAL, PART 30: THE TWO-SIDED COIN OF PERFECTIONISM



Is being perfect a blessing or a curse? In paradox psychology, we view perfectionism as a two-sided coin. Both statements are true, in the same person and at the same time. This is the core of paradox psychology, a way of viewing human life as an array of opposites, which never appear to meet. They seem irreconcilable, and yet, they are there. All we need to do is to investigate them until the next paradox comes along, which we then investigate also. After some time, the original paradox just fades out of view, out of importance. We do not resolve the issue, we transcend it.



1. The bright side

What feelings does the striving for perfection bring about? To begin with, let us look at the bright side. When you demonstrate desires to be as good as you can, you will find yourself desiring growth, enjoying being challenged, and improving your problem-solving capabilities as well.

Life consists of more than passively highlighting problems; the ultimate goal is to achieve solutions and results. It is easy to complain and to drag the building blocks of problems and conflicts into the arena, it is harder to achieve outcome and success. That is when we men, who aim for perfection, come into view. We are essential for making life a peaceful and relaxed place to be.

2. Being perfect means 'work'

The desired outcome is 'No Worries', but that takes sweat, endurance and self-sacrifice. We usually do this with the greatest of modesty, in the hope that our efforts are seen and appreciated without our waving flags or bragging about ourselves. We do all we can, and we have but one chance to do it right. We grab that chance by the horns, and we strive for the best result that we can achieve. We need it, others need it, and we are not in this world just for our own sake.

In paradox psychology, however, we view striving for perfection as a paradox. We feel we are aiming for perfection, but at the same time, we also sense that we are not perfect at all.

3. A feeling of self-hatred

In that state of mind, it's all about self-worth, and that self-worth is deeply problematic. We need love, but deep down inside ourselves, there is hatred. As Melody Beattie puts it, *"we don't feel good about ourselves, we don't like ourselves, and we wouldn't consider loving ourselves"*.

In men who wrestle with their same-sex attractions, a feeling of self-hatred is usually the daily predicament. We hate how we look, we hate our bodies. We do not feel clever but incompetent and we are sure we miss talent. Dumb, stupid, wrong, and above all, unlovable. Our thoughts are inappropriate, our feelings are inappropriate. We believe we just don't matter. We may not even be aware that we have needs, and when we do, they are just not important. We feel we apparently are different, not unique, but oddly and inappropriately different. Make that: inferior. We don't tell anyone about it, but it is a nagging feeling that we drag around all day. Our inner world reflects our failure, our missing the mark.

4. The agony of the mirror

Perhaps it is our hair. Yep, it's our hair alright. Let's fix that hair. Many of us cannot face the human race unless we spend at least 15 minutes in front of the mirror, the image that says it all. We comb, and groom, and polish; then we turn at right angles to check it out. Okay, perhaps this will do. Guys like us can spend hours choosing our clothes, changing shoe wear, trying to rub those wrinkles away. How can anyone love a guy with such wrinkles? We are not a Technicolor movie, we are just an old black-and-white Laurel And Hardy Show.

Surely our home is not the right place, surely our job is not the right job. Okay, so my boss was quite positive about me last week at the weekly Friday afternoon get-together-drink, but as Melody Beattie reminds us in her book Codependent No More: *"underneath the trappings lies a dungeon where we secretly and incessantly punish and torture ourselves"*.

We feign to be honest about it, and we go about punishing ourselves openly, saying negative things about ourselves before anyone else gets the chance. We help others to be negative about us, feigning modesty like a nice and perfect person should be doing. Please beat me, see how generous I am about my flaws? Come on, sock it to me. No worries, I am so considerate to you.

5. Building our own grave

If others don't go down that trail, then we do: we pick on ourselves and create piles of stinking guilt on our person. We wouldn't dream of loving or treating other people the way we treat ourselves. We create our own private impossible situations, and we suffer in silence. Before others get the chance, we make degrading remarks about ourselves, leading the way for others to do the same. We appease beatings from others, but our own mind is the enemy: the worst beatings go on privately, inside our minds.

We create self-narratives where we have no choice but to feel bad about ourselves. We think, and then we hate our thoughts. We act, then we think negatively about it. We make decisions, and then tell ourselves what an asshole we are to make such a decision. In all this, there is a torture dungeon; it is called being me.

6. The opinion of others

We have been conditioned to seek the approval of others. What others think of us has become paramount. We see ourselves in the mirror of their eyes, and we always fear the worst. We are concerned about looking good and doing it 'right'. Their happiness is our goal. We feel happiest when we are making others happy. We fear conflict, avoid conflict and we go to great lengths to avoid upsetting anyone. We strive to be peaceful, kind, and generous.

We are especially concerned about pleasing women and being different from other men. We are the new-age guy, the epitome of the gentle giant. We rise and shine when women say we are so different from the harsh men around them. Their smile makes our day. We know for sure that by being perfect and generous, we will be loved and fulfilled in return.

There is something addictive about hanging on to this role. We feel more relaxed in the child role: *"the nice, sweet, boy"*, *"the charming boy"*, *"the helpless boy"*, *"the teacher's pet"*, so different and so above the abusive boys in the class, or in society to go with it. These are false roles and identities, but the current attitude in society is to indulge and wallow in your own *"identity"*. Identity says it all, and identity explains it all, so we believe. In identity, we seek comfort, a niche in social life.

And this role-playing provides the narcissistic pleasure of feeling dramatic and special. We stroke ourselves in our loneliness, in not being understood, we become an old-fashioned Hollywood actress saying *"never mind me"* and then retreat from the scene, back to our good old lonely dungeon.

7. Are you different?

What is this feeling of being "different"? There is no need for a mythical homosexual "nature" to explain it, as Van Den Aardweg has pointed out. A boy who lingers too long in what we call

Squaw Camp instead of riding out with the male warriors as part of the gang, who still clings to his mother, everyone's first attachment, who was overprotected, or had no father or manly influence in his tender childhood, naturally would feel "different" when confronted with other boys who had been able to develop their boy inclinations and interests.

Feeling different is not the dubious privilege of men who later come to experience an array of same-sex attractions; the majority of 'non-homosexuals' who describe themselves as compulsive nice guys experience it in their youth as well. In other words, there is no reason whatsoever to see a homosexual disposition in it.

8. Science proves no special genes exist

Science now knows that there is no such thing as a separate homosexuality. In 2019, the results of the most incredible research ever into the molecular sequence of the human genes were published (magazine "Science", 29th August 2019, Andrea Ganna). The genetic make-up of a half million, randomly chosen, persons was documented.

Under scrutiny, no correlation with sexual interests, feelings, or gender identity could be established. There is no pattern of genes which show up more often in one group than the other. There are no distinct patterns, hence there are no separate groups. Hence, homosexuality can only be identified as a label of temporary behavior, not as a fixed entity. Sexualities in the plural do not exist, there was not a pattern to be found. Same-sex behavior: yes; identifiable same-sex genes: no.

9. One indivisible sexuality

There is one very broad sexuality and everyone is endowed with it. Everyone can experience homosexual feelings and everyone can experience heterosexual feelings, and those are not two different groups. There is only one group: the human race. Feelings come and go, fluidity has been demonstrated over and over again. Homosexual feelings are what they are; their existence is undeniable, but they do not stem from, or point to, a separate sexuality. The borders between same-sex attractions and opposite-sex attractions are fluent and fluid.

Therefore, since 2019, the days of the 'born-that-way' ideology are over. Homosexual feelings exist as a phenomenon, but an innate and immutable underlying physical property does not. Homosexual feelings are a software issue, and a software issue only. It took science a long time, but the result is there. Sigmund Freud pointed it out more than a century ago, based on a small array of subjects. Now that a half million people have been investigated, we need to acknowledge that he got it right, all along.

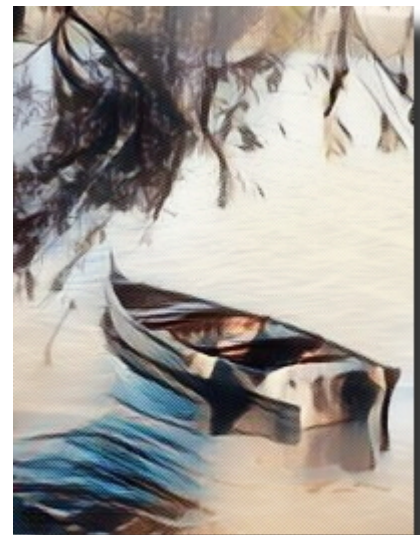
10. "Never mind me"

The Hollywood actress (that would be us) is caught saying “*never mind me*” and then we retreat from the scene, back to our good-old lonely dungeon. What feelings overcome us when we dwell there?

Deeply inside, we feel that we don’t deserve our success. We doubt that we’re as intelligent, creative, or talented as we may seem. It is the suspicion that our achievements are down to luck, good timing, or just being in the “*right place at the right time.*” And it is accompanied by the fear that, one day, we’ll be exposed as a fraud. Life in the dungeon involves a constant fear of exposure, isolation, and rejection.

Dungeon life often strikes at moments of success: starting a new job, receiving an award or promotion, or taking on extra responsibility such as teaching others, starting our own business, or becoming a first-time parent.

We need to work hard. That would be us! We peddle our lonely boat like mad. These feelings inspire us to work harder, so as not to be “unmasked”. This leads to further success and recognition – and feeling like an even bigger fraud. But often, they lead to “down-shifting.” This is when we revise our goals and become less ambitious, which in turn, prevents us from fulfilling our true potential. People like us, people of high ability, often have a low awareness of that ability. When we experience success, we find ourselves thinking “I’m not worthy,” or “I don’t deserve this.”



11. Unreachable goals

At the end of the day, we set unreasonably high goals, and then feel shame or disappointment when we fail. We are never satisfied with our achievements; we prefer to focus on our mistakes and failures. We are haunted, not by ghosts, but by the coldness and loneliness of our dungeon.

We are haunted by the fear that not only are we not good enough but also that our co-workers and managers are sure to find out – if they haven’t done so already. We push ourselves to the limit so as to prevent “exposure,” yet somehow refuse to accept that our efforts have been good enough. This creates a vicious cycle of effort, dissatisfaction, and fear, which further damages our self-esteem.

We find ourselves downplaying our achievements. Often, we will use negative self-talk to con-

vince ourselves that we don't own our success. This self-talk often provides seemingly rational support for irrational ideas. We tend to pass off something we've done as "easy," even if we have spent a lot of time and effort on it. For example, on completing an assignment successfully, we may think, "Well, anyone could do this just as well or better." We say, "Well, I was just lucky and had a lot of help."

12. Next time...

We believe that next time, we wouldn't have the luck, talent, or skills to replicate our current success. Nope, not us. We find ourselves comparing unfavorably with others, and we use self-denouncing statements such as "I'm not sure I know what I'm talking about, but..." or "It might just be me, but..." When we hit rock-bottom of our dungeon, we stand face to face with our striving for perfection. And it hits us in the face: we fear failure and we fear incompetence.

It is in that very moment that the image of, or confrontation with, a youth who has none of this, zaps us in the eyes. How gorgeous he is, how amazing his attire. Will you have a look at that! No worries, no appeasing, just being yourself. That look on his face, that body, he even has his shirt off and does not worry about it. He just IS. How does he do it? How come I don't? He is indulging in the joy of imperfection. And in no way does it upset him. Can I have another peek at him? From the bus window during the day, from the website at night, at the office at lunch-break? How I crave, how I need, how I admire, how I want.

13. Sexualization

Then this feeling becomes sexualized, not fulfilled, but sexualized, and same-sex attractions set in. They are not an entity, neither are they innate, but they constitute a coping mechanism to come to grips with the possibility that all this could not only be *his* fate but *mine* also.

Same-sex attractions are an expression of hope, and in this sense, you are on the right track. There is nothing inherently wrong with them. You are a cowboy on horseback, riding through. The ultimate goal is self-love, humility, and a deep appreciation of our maleness. We can leave Squaw Camp. We can leave the dungeon, we can grow at whatever age that awareness and acceptance of paradoxes set in.

Sexuality is never fixed like a stone, it is sand that can move and ultimately acquire new configurations.

To be continued.

