

# THE BEST TOOL TO QUIET THE INNER CRITIC

*Move beyond all or nothing*



Each of us wants to be a good person.

But perfectionism, which is a major driver of social anxiety, wants us always to be a good person, a smart person, a competent person (or at least not be stupid, awkward, or inadequate).

**Perfectionism gives us only two options:**

**All  
Nothing**

So when we spill water on our colleague, get an easy exam question wrong, or accidentally say “orgasm” instead of “organism” in conversation, it makes us feel like we’re bad or stupid. Our Inner Critic might mutter: “You idiot!” It tips us over into “nothing.”

But trying to reassure ourselves with “all” doesn’t work either. Telling ourselves, “I’m competent” or “I’m smart” somehow feels like a lie because, inevitably, we’re going to experience struggle and make mistakes because we’re human.



Therefore, let's get out of all-or-nothing with something more balanced. Call it Recovering Perfectionist Mad Libs:

I'm a (positive quality) person who sometimes (negative action).

For example:

I'm a competent person who sometimes makes mistakes.

I'm a smart person who sometimes does dumb things.

I'm a capable person who sometimes doesn't know what they're doing.

I'm a reliable person who sometimes lets others down.

I'm a good person who sometimes does things I regret.

I'm a good person who sometimes is rude or thoughtless.

I'm a disciplined person who sometimes loses their willpower.

I'm a healthy person who sometimes eats a pint of Chunky Monkey in one sitting.

There. Turns out there's a whole lot of wiggle room between "all" and "nothing." Take that, perfectionism.

