

HOW TO RECOVER FROM PERFECTIONISM with **Caroline Garnet McGraw**



If you want more information on Caroline
and overcoming perfectionism, please check
out her website at:

<https://awishcomeclear.com>.

STEP 1

Change is a Spiral, Not a Straight Line



We tend to think of progress as starting at point A and ending at point B. We imagine a linear, very smooth trajectory from one to the other.



However, it is actually more like a spiral or like a spring that rises upward. If you picture a spiral, you go around in circles as you ascend. So what happens is you keep encountering the same issue. It's not that you no longer face perfectionism or that you no longer struggle with it. However, every time, you are approaching it at a different height, at a different place on that change spiral.



It's a comfort to think, "Okay, success doesn't look like you never struggle with this again; instead, it looks like I keep learning." You keep growing, and each time you approach it from a different point on the spiral.



STEP 2

Really Understanding Perfectionism

Caroline considers the two best definitions of perfectionism to be from Liz Gilbert and Anne Lamott.

In Elizabeth Gilbert's [Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear](#), she describes perfectionism as fear in a fancy fur coat. It's just dressed up fear. It may look very complicated and very fancy, but at the core of it, at the root, we're just afraid.

It helps you have compassion for yourself and others when they're in that mode. You're going to be okay; even if you make a mistake, you're still going to be okay. And know that when you're afraid, what you need is not more judgment, but love and reassurance.

The second definition is from Anne Lamott in [Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life](#). She describes perfectionism as the belief that if you hit every stepping stone just right then you won't have to die.

It's this idea that if you just get everything right, then you can be in control, and you can stop bad things from happening. Once again, bringing compassion and humility that of course you want to control everything; you feel safer that way. When you're in control mode, what you need is not more judgment or more shame, but a sense of safety and being able to create a space of safety within yourself.



STEP 3

How Can You Create a Feeling of Safety within Yourself?

When you start to hit that obsessive perfectionism, you can go back.

Ask yourself:

- Even if I mess up, even if I make a mistake, will I still be okay?
 - Can I still trust myself?
 - Can I still be on my own side?



There is a path forward and you can make it to the other side.

Continue to rise along the spiral. Keep working at it and you'll stay on the journey.