

## **Perfection: An Ordinary Christmas is a Merry Christmas**

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I once had a couple seek counseling because he was convinced there was a correct way to decorate a Christmas tree. This created great misery for all the family members.

Sometimes the quest for significance consumes a person's life. This is particularly true in the life of the perfectionist. For the perfectionist, its imperative that whatever they have planned, even to the smallest dinner party, must go perfectly, without a hitch. They make lists upon lists; in order to make sure whatever they do is flawless.

In general, people who strive for perfection unknowingly want to be the best. They tend to be overly responsible and find it impossible to compromise the standards they have set for themselves. Whatever they do, it has to be the best, not almost perfect, but perfectly perfect.

It is important the perfectionist comes to grips with the tremendous price they pay. The perfectionist will be over-involved, over-extended, bringing high level of stress, and fatigue to their lives. For perfectionists, they reason its only human nature to "do your best." Perfectionists have such high standards they can never be happy, no matter how well things go.

Those who live and work with such a person often give up wanting to cooperate. They realize there is no way they can measure up to the high standards. Consequently, they may do nothing, and feel resentful of the perfectionist's "goodness of excellence."

A healthier approach to finding significance is by having the courage to be

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imperfect. Instead of striving to do your best, simply function, contribute, and let the chips fall where they may. Learn to accept mistakes as a part of life. The only way not to make a mistake is to stay in bed all day. More damage to our self-worth is due to the interpretation of the mistake than the mistake itself. To make a mistake gracefully and without shame is an essential requirement for living.

Real happiness is not possible with unrealistic standards. To gain some sense of inner peace, we need to have a degree of self-acceptance. The most tortured and miserable human beings are those who strive to convince themselves and others that they are something other than themselves. They fail to realize that happiness lies in being ordinary and having others to love.

If you live long enough, trouble will reach you. Some individuals experience more heartache than others. It is not equally distributed. Trouble will occur because we are human. Perfectionism will not prevent bad things from happening, just like it could not prevent the Titanic from sinking. Perfectionism will create criticism and self-blame that leads to greater misery in the world. We are all going to make some bad choices and mistakes along the way, but that does not mean we are a mistake!

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