

# Recovery!

## Making Changes that Last

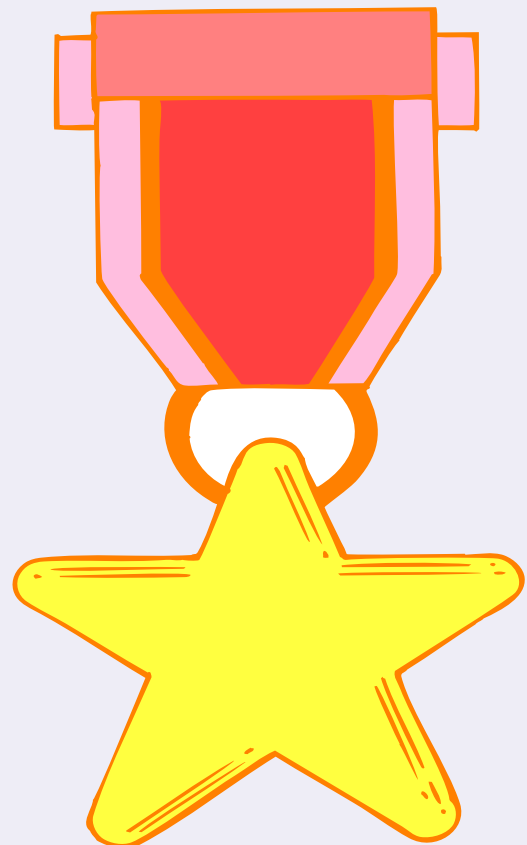
By Lynne Robertson

### Practice Makes Perfect - Or Does it?

I was once told that, "Practice does not make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect". Talk about the wrong thing to tell a perfectionist! I've spent many years striving for perfectionism in almost every area of my life - in school and work, my looks, as an equestrian, and even little things like making my bed. I remember at 9 years old, so excited to finally have a pony of my own, I was faced with the task of cleaning out her stall in the stable. After over an hour, my Mum found me crying over the pitch fork and wheelbarrow because I couldn't clean the stall well enough for my liking.

Unfortunately, perfectionism led me to be overly self-critical, hard to please, much more likely to become overwhelmed with and overanalyze things I am faced with, and a procrastinator when it comes to completing projects. But, I have learned that perfectionism doesn't have to be a barrier to my success, I can manage it and make it work for me in a positive manner. Let's look at some ways that might help you to get a grip on your perfectionism and make the new changes last for your benefit.

Perfectionism, quite often seen in sufferers of eating disorders, is a roadblock to letting yourself move ahead in life. It is an obsessive loop that causes you to get stuck in the minor details of what you are trying to do, which causes you to lose sight of the whole picture. Old habits, thoughts and behaviours are like broken records that play over and over in your mind. Instead of completing the task and allowing errors to reveal themselves later on as insights to be learned from, we get bogged down and claim not to be able to do it, not because



# Greetings!

*Winter is here to stay in Manitoba! Farewell to warm weather and welcome to frosty mornings and white snow.*

*In this issue of Recovery we've decided to include an article on the role of God in your grieving. You are not alone in your pain, God is walking beside you. While our viewpoint is Christian, we welcome other faiths, and we don't mean or wish to exclude other faiths, this is just the point of view we live within.*

*Being a perfectionist, I've struggled through life trying to be "good enough", being let down time and time again. Perfectionism doesn't have to stand in the way of your hopes and dreams. I've included this article on making changes that last to help you learn how to use your perfectionism to your advantage.*

*We hope you all had a safe, happy Halloween, and we wish you a warm and merry Christmas surrounded by loved ones and full of precious memories.*

*Lynne Robertson*

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**If you're climbing the ladder of life, you go rung by rung, one step at a time...Sometimes you don't think you're progressing until you step back and see how high you've really gone.**

**Donny Osmond**



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Subscriptions are \$13/yr US mailed to the USA, or \$15/yr CAN in Canada. Other countries are \$18/yr US. The newsletter is published six times per year. Subscriptions for past clients of Westwind eating disorder recovery centre are \$8/yr US mailed to the USA, or \$10/yr CAN in Canada.

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we can't, but because we don't think we can do it well enough. But, doing it perfectly should not be the focus. A risk is worth taking simply for the sake of taking it. Here are some questions for you to ask yourself:

- Why do I have to be perfect?
- Do I really have to be perfect to get what I want?
- So what if I am not always perfect?
- Who says I have to be perfect? Are they right?
- What do I actually get if I am perfect?
- Do I have to be perfect at everything?
- When is good enough a reasonable answer?

In order to be able to change automatic negative thoughts you have to be able to recognize them when they start to influence your perception of situations. Distorted views and perceptions can affect your emotions and your actions. When you feel old thoughts and behaviours sneaking up on you, causing you to feel distressed, take a moment to examine your views more closely. Are they accurate? Do you have to adjust or replace them to make them accurately reflect reality? With time and effort you will be able to replace your old thoughts and behaviours with more effective and realistic ones. It might help to share your thoughts with someone you trust to learn what their perception of the troubling situation might be - sometimes things are seen differently through the eyes of others.

So, how do we go about doing this you ask? A good start is to regularly monitor your schemas (thoughts and behaviours during situations that cause you distress), to ensure that they are not taking control of your life once again. When you become upset, ask yourself if you are playing the "old broken record instead of your

updated CD". Stop yourself, make the necessary changes, and try again. It can also be useful to some to keep a continuous log of events that confirm your new views (eg. I am just fine, I'm doing my best, it will have to be good enough for now). Review the list from time to time when you are having any doubts about your ability.

Sometimes identifying the old automatic negative thoughts and behaviours when they are occurring can be difficult. The most obvious clue will usually be exhibited by experiencing a sudden change in your emotions (eg. from neutral to upset, or from happy to sad). In order to identify these situations more readily, it is a good idea to practice writing down your negative thoughts when you feel your mood changing. When you are upset, it is most effective to write down your thoughts logically and work through them in a systematic manner.

### *Oh No, Here We Go Again*

How do we make changes last without becoming overwhelmed and giving up? Even after you've begun to make changes, you will likely still encounter times when you fall back into old ways of thinking - particularly during times of stress. Instead of resorting back to "black and white" thinking and saying, "Oh great, here we go again", get to know yourself better by identifying triggering situations in advance. What are your vulnerability points? Does the time of year make a difference?

There is most likely a pattern that your thoughts and behaviours follow. See if you can identify the pattern and make certain you are prepared for it next time. After examining your patterns, develop a plan to avoid vulnerable situations and have a back up plan for how you will handle

unexpected situations that tend to set you back. Pay attention to your tendency to view situations with an overly negative view when things are going wrong. Counter the negative thoughts and behaviours by making the logical part of you do more of the work, by writing down your thoughts and feelings and exploring more appropriate ways of dealing with the situation, and make the emotional part do less. And please, practice! Practice will allow you to be more informed and prepared. But, remember, it will not make you perfect! If you strive for perfect practice every time you will only frustrate yourself.

### *Stumbling in the Dark*

Your perspective is how you personally view situations, events, actions, thoughts, etc. If you tend to get overwhelmed with things easily you might discover that part of the problem is that you lose perspective of reality - you lose sight of what is really most important.

Ideally you want to spend most of your time and energy (your physical, emotional, and psychological energy) on things that are most important and less on the smaller things. Unfortunately, sometimes, small and less important things eat away at us, and consume more energy than they are

worth, causing us to lose perspective and interfere with other, more important aspects of our lives. We can counter this by prioritizing. To get yourself started into prioritizing your responsibilities, ask yourself if you are spending your emotional energy wisely? The following exercise will provide you with some direction:

- Make a list of all of the things that have consumed your emotional, physical, or psychological energy in the past week or so.

- Rank the items in order in terms of how much energy they have consumed, with the number one assigned to the item you spent the greatest amount of energy on, and the last number assigned to the item that received the least attention. It can also be helpful to estimate a

percentage of energy that was spent on each.

- In the grand scheme of life, ask yourself, "How important is each of these things to me?" Rank the most important as number one, the second most important as number two, and so on.

- Now, compare your rankings between how much actual time and energy is spent, versus how much you should be spending, on each item. Take a look at your rankings, they should be fairly similar.

**“Remember to set SMART goals for yourself. That’s specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goals.”**

If your rankings are not fairly close, you might need to adjust your attention to each item of importance accordingly. If you fail to do so, you might find that you are spending an excess amount of time talking the situation over with others, overanalyzing it, or losing sleep over it. You only have so much time in a day, therefore you have to make sure that your energy expenditure is well balanced! Periodically stop and complete this



exercise to ensure that your priorities are in line.

### *Bumps in the Road*

Making changes that will help you to perceive things in a more realistic manner isn't easy. As you may well have learned in other areas of your life, there will likely be things that interfere with your progress. It helps to prepare for them. Permanent changes take time, they don't happen over night. It takes time, effort and practice to put these exercises into play at work, home and socially. You might have to try more than once to find the right answer. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!

If you are generally used to placing a lot of pressure upon yourself, you will most likely experience frustration easily. Remember to set SMART goals for yourself. That's **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**ealistic, and **t**imely goals. Progress occurs with baby steps.

You might want to ask family and friends to be a part of your self-improvement plan by asking them to be patient and not to judge your progress in an all-or-nothing way. Many families and friends don't comprehend that progress doesn't happen in a set period of recovery time. Everyone is different, therefore the length of time it takes you will vary depending on several factors including your level of motivation, your environment as well as the support you have available to you. They can be helpful in monitoring your emotions, actions and perspective for signs of difficulty.

If your perfectionism is only a symptom of other more serious issues, you might want to seek professional assistance. Perfectionism is a problem when it begins to consume your mental and physical

energy and keeps you from being able to manage your life.

Being a bit of a perfectionist, you are probably highly motivated to be successful in controlling your perfectionism. Remember, practice does not mean, or make, perfect. Practice means that you have tried your best. Practice ensures that you are making changes that are going to last. It is possible to have a great life, even if you are not perfect - redirect the energy consumed trying to be perfect toward rewarding yourself with a relaxing activity and having some fun. I would like to leave you with one more thing to think about. If you didn't have to do it perfectly, what would you try...

Reference:

Ramirez Basco, Monica, Ph.D. (1999). *Never Good Enough: How to Use Perfectionism to Your Advantage Without Letting it Ruin Your Life*. Simon & Schuster, Inc.: New York, NY.

### ***What's New at Westwind?***

#### ***Westwind Support Groups***

Eating disorder support groups are held every Monday evening at Westwind at 7pm. For more information please contact Westwind at 204-728-2499. Join our on-line support group at <http://groups.msn.com/westwindeatingdisordersupportgroup>.

#### ***Welcome***

We would like to welcome Lauren Paquette to our staff at Westwind. Lauren will be filling in as our dietician while Barbara is spending time at home with her young family.



## **- The Dash -**

I read of a man who stood to speak  
at the funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on her  
tombstone  
From the beginning - to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her  
birth  
And spoke of the following date with tears  
But he said what mattered most of all  
Was the dash between those years.

For the dash represents all the time  
That she spent alive on earth...  
and now only those who loved her  
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own:  
The cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
And how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard...  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left,  
(You could be at "dash mid-range.")

If we could just slow down enough  
To consider what's true and real,  
And always try to understand  
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,  
And show appreciation more  
And love the people in our lives  
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,  
And more often wear a smile...  
Remembering that this special dash  
Might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy's being read  
With your life actions to rehash...  
Would you be proud of the things they  
say  
About how you spent your dash?

-Linda M. Ellis



When tragedy strikes and pain comes into our lives we are drawn to question it. Why me? Is God competent? Why doesn't he seem to care about pain? Where is God when I need him most? Painful experiences can cause us to question God and demand an answer. It can be hard to imagine how a loving God can allow so much pain or even tolerate it himself as a being who is compassionate and loving. God can appear absent, uncaring and vengeful when faced with the reality of the suffering in our world. Children dying of starvation, innocent people imprisoned and heroes dying without justice. Tragedy strikes close to home when someone close to us loses a child or a friend dies tragically. What is God doing while pain is running rampant?

### God: Feeling the Pain

God promises that He sees the pain we experience and grieves with us. When we hurt He hurts. Every tear we cry is noticed by Him and touches Him. When pain comes into our lives we want to be comforted more than we want an explanation. If your friend is sick and dying the most important thing he wants is not an explanation, but for you to sit with him because his greatest fear is being alone. God knows this about us and has not left us alone. What is God doing when the pain in your life seems to be running rampant? He is sitting beside us and grieving with us.

### God: Creating a Hope

We can take comfort in the fact that every pain we have experienced, God has also experienced. When He died on the cross it says that He experienced every suffering that had occurred in the history of the world. When God saw His creation suffering He responded by suffering Himself in order to create a hope for us, a hope for a future free from pain and suffering. “For whatever reason God chose to make man as he is - limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death - He had the honesty and courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with His creation, He has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that He has not exacted from Himself. He has Himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair and death. When He was a man, He played man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace and thought it well worthwhile.” (Dorothy Sayers) As Dorothy says, with pain running rampant, God prepared a resting place for us when it is over at the cost of His own comfort.

### God: Working with Us

God also responds to our pain by telling us He knows best. Often, promises of eternal glory and ‘the greater good’ can sound hollow and trivial in the face of great suffering. However, when we are privileged to get a glimpse of God’s reasoning it can help us understand that He really does have our best interest in mind. Imagine that a hunter happens upon a bear that is caught in a trap and decides that he wants to be merciful and let the bear go free. After much time of trying to gain the bear’s confidence he finally has to shoot it full of drugs. The bear takes

this as a threat against his life and does not understand that it is actually an act of compassion. Then, in order to release the tension on the springs the hunter must push the bear farther into the trap. If the bear is at all conscious it will probably be even more certain that the hunter is out to cause him pain and suffering. Because it is a bear and not a human being, it cannot understand the hunter’s reason. This is often how God works with us. As different as we are from bears, we are even more different from God. Sometimes painful experiences also provide an important way to become intimately involved in the lives of others. When we hurt, a void is created for comfort. Other people can then come into our pain with us to fill this void. We can also do this for others when they are suffering. How lonely the world would be if no one ever needed anyone else. What is God doing while pain is running rampant? He is acting in our best interest out of compassion and mercy.

When pain and suffering is running rampant in the world where is God and what is He up to? He is sitting beside us in our hospital bed, our jail cell and our turmoil, grieving with us. He created a resting place at the cost of His own comfort. He is keeping our best interest in mind, and acting with compassion and mercy. God understands what it is like to experience pain. He was shunned by his own people, betrayed by friends, and unfairly judged. He does not trivialize the pain in our lives but offers His presence and the hope of a wonderful future.

#### References:

- Strobel, L. (2000). *The Case for Faith*. Zondervan publishing House: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Yancy, P. (1999). *When Life Hurts: Understanding God’s Place in Your Pain*. Multnomah Publishers, Inc.: Sisters, Oregon.

# Bananaberry Bombs!

1 cup quick-cooking rolled oats  
1/2 cup each all-purpose flour and whole wheat flour  
1/4 cup wheat germ  
1/2 cup sugar  
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1-1/2 cups mashed bananas (ripe)  
2 egg whites  
1/4 cup reduced-fat butter or margarine, melted  
1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Combine oats, flours, wheat germ, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Stir well and set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together bananas, egg whites, and melted butter until smooth. Add banana mixture to dry ingredients and mix until just moistened. Gently fold in blueberries.

Spray large muffin tin with non-stick spray (or use paper muffin cups). Divide batter evenly between 12 muffin cups. Bake for 20 minutes, or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.

Reference:  
Podleski, G., Podleski, J. (1996).  
*Looneyspoons: Low Fat Food made fun*. Granet Publishing Inc.: Waterloo, ON.

