



Anna Tullemans

ASD Tips

Consultant – Author – Presenter



The Importance of Being Perfect

By Anna Tullemans
Asperger Consultant and Author

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can, and usually have a problem with, perfection and everything being perfect. That is perfection as perceived by them.

Due to their literal thinking styles and unconventional ways of problem solving, their concept of something being perfect is very different from ours. This can lead to many problems at home and especially at school. In the school situation this manifests itself in their refusal to attempt new concepts and activities such as in Physical Education and Sport. Apart from the fact that they are usually uncoordinated and don't like change, they need to know that they can do it well before they will attempt the activity.

They will usually watch this new activity from the sidelines (pretending not to watch). They will watch other student's attempts, successes and failures and try to pattern themselves on this behaviour. If they perceive they cannot do this activity perfectly they will not attempt it.

Sport

It is important to teach them each individual step leading up to a new activity so they can see for themselves that they can actually do it. For instance if tennis is the sport for the term then while others are actually playing games choose one student who is good at tennis and ask him to hit the ball back and forth with the ASD student until he can master hitting and returning a short volley.



Assignments

Some students will not attempt assignments as they seem such a huge task and they can't be finished perfectly. When handing out assignments show examples of "A" and "C" grades. This way they can literally see what the 'perfect' assignment looks like. The task then becomes more tangible and visual and the idea of perfection has some good parameters.

Making Mistakes (role modelling)

Teachers, it's OK to make a mistake!

As a teacher it is important to 'make' mistakes in front of the student and to show how you cope with making that mistake. For example: when writing on the blackboard make a mistake in spelling and say: "Oh..... I've made a mistake" loudly, in a matter of fact voice and to the whole class. Make a point of crossing out the word and continue your lesson. You are modelling how to neatly cross out a mistake at the same time (instead of the scribble that would normally appear).

It is important that this is done in a matter of fact tone of voice to reinforce that:

- Mistakes happen.
- We fix the mistake.
- We then move on.
- Everyone can and does make mistakes.

Doing this several times a week reinforces that you don't have to be perfect all the time and that it's OK to make mistakes.

Parents (role modelling)

Parents, it's OK to make a mistake!

As parents we can reinforce the idea that:

- Mistakes are OK.
- They are just a part of life.
- We move on from them and learn something all at the same time.



Successful Strategy

A good opportunity to model reactions may be when driving to a destination, make a deliberate wrong turn. Acknowledge out loud that you made the wrong turn. “Oh! I’ve turned right instead of left. Oh well, I’ll fix that mistake by doing a “U” turn at the next intersection”.

Reinforce with:

“Luckily, no one is perfect. We all make mistakes”

This is just one example. Remember to be creative and use what works best in your classroom or your family.

Go ahead and try and if it doesn’t work the first time remember:

**“Luckily, no one is perfect all the
time”**

