

HOPE THERAPY & COUNSELLING SERVICES

Perfectionism

When your best never feels quite good enough.

Qualified counsellors supporting people with perfectionism across England — online nationwide and face-to-face. The standards you hold yourself to aren't the problem. The cost of holding them is.

NCPS ORGANISATIONAL MEMBER

CBT & ACT APPROACHES

FROM £65

FREE 15-MIN CONSULTATION

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Therapy will not flatten you into someone who stops caring

"What distinguishes perfectionism from high standards is not the level of the standard — it is what the standard is attached to."

For someone with high standards, falling short is disappointing — requiring adjustment, perhaps — but it does not fundamentally threaten their sense of self. For a perfectionist, the standard is tied to self-worth. Missing it activates something much more destabilising: the fear of being revealed as inadequate, incapable, or undeserving. The standard isn't a useful benchmark; it's a condition for being acceptable.

This is why perfectionism is exhausting in ways that simple ambition is not. What looks from the outside like a drive for excellence is often, from the inside, a permanent state of managed anxiety. **The goal is never quite reached, because reaching it would require the underlying belief to change.**

THE ASYMMETRIC TRAP

Why simply deciding to stop doesn't work

When a perfectionistic standard is met, the relief is temporary — the standard either rises or shifts to a new domain. When it is not met, the self-criticism confirms the underlying belief that the standard was necessary in the first place.

The trap is symmetrical: success doesn't resolve it and failure confirms it. This is not a character flaw — it is the architecture of how perfectionism maintains itself. Understanding that architecture is what makes it possible to change it.

Professional registration: Hope Therapy & Counselling Services holds NCPS Organisational Membership. Sessions are confidential; limited exceptions apply and your therapist will explain these clearly at the outset.

PERFECTIONISM IS NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS

It wears many disguises – and some of them look like virtue

All-or-nothing thinking

If it isn't excellent, it's a failure. Small errors overshadow otherwise strong work. The distance between "not quite right" and "completely wrong" collapses entirely.

Procrastination through over-preparation

Delaying starting or finishing because conditions aren't right or the output isn't ready to be seen. Perfectionism often looks like procrastination from the outside.

Difficulty finishing things

Projects stall at 80% because finishing means exposing the imperfect result to judgement. Starting is possible; completing and releasing is harder.

Harsh self-criticism

A persistent inner voice that notices flaws, replays mistakes, and applies standards to yourself that you would never apply to anyone else. Often framed as "just being honest".

Difficulty accepting praise

Compliments are deflected, discounted, or attributed to luck. The same evidence others use to conclude you are capable is filtered out or explained away.

Anxiety about being found out

A persistent sense that if people could see the real quality of your work — or of you — the positive regard they have would be withdrawn. Closely related to imposter syndrome.

Over-planning and over-checking

Disproportionate time spent on preparation and revision — well beyond what the task actually requires. The checking is anxiety management, not quality control.

Applying same standards to others

Frustration when others fall short of the standards you hold for yourself — while the same compassion you might extend to them is not available for yourself.

THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES

Evidence-informed approaches — matched to your situation

CBT

Addresses the specific thought patterns that maintain perfectionism — all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophising, selective attention to mistakes, conditional rules about self-worth. Develops more flexible, accurate ways of evaluating performance and relating to oneself. From £65.

Counselling

A compassionate space to explore where perfectionism came from — the experiences and relationships that made it feel necessary — and build a sense of self-worth that doesn't depend on achievement or the avoidance of failure. From £65.

ACT

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy helps develop a different relationship with perfectionist thoughts — recognising them as mental events rather than facts about your worth, and building a life guided by values. From £65.

GETTING STARTED

Taking the first step

A note for perfectionists: the free consultation requires no preparation. There is no right or wrong way to show up to the call.

1 Free 15-minute consultation

A relaxed conversation — no preparation required. We listen to where you are and explore whether counselling could help.

2 Matched with a therapist

We match you with one of our 90+ qualified therapists based on your needs. If the fit doesn't feel right, we'll find someone else at no extra cost.

3 Your first session

Nothing needs to be perfectly articulated. The work happens in the room — not in preparing for the room.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

“

I always thought my perfectionism was just who I was — it had produced results my whole life. Therapy helped me see what it was costing me. More than that, it helped me see where it had come from. That changed everything.

CLIENT — PERFECTIONISM & ANXIETY

“

CBT gave me a framework for recognising the thoughts as thoughts rather than facts. I still have high standards. But falling short of them doesn't feel catastrophic any more. The difference is enormous.

CLIENT — WORK-RELATED PERFECTIONISM

“

I spent years not finishing things I'd started because nothing felt ready. My therapist helped me understand what I was actually protecting myself from. Since then I've completed more than in the previous decade.

CLIENT — PERFECTIONISM & PROCRASTINATION

Client experiences are individual. Results vary between people.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Will therapy make me stop caring about quality?

No — and this is one of the most common fears people bring to therapy. The goal is to untether self-worth from the standard, so that falling short is experienced as a setback rather than a catastrophe. Many people find their work actually improves when the anxiety reduces, because they can now complete things rather than endlessly revising them.

Isn't perfectionism just having high standards?

They are meaningfully different. Someone with high standards adjusts when they fall short. A perfectionist's self-worth is conditional on meeting standards — falling short feels like evidence of being fundamentally inadequate, not just a missed target. The distress, self-criticism, and restriction on life are what make it worth addressing.

Where does perfectionism come from?

Perfectionism typically develops early — through experiences where approval felt conditional on performance, or where criticism was prominent and praise withheld. Over time, the standards become internalised and self-imposed, making them feel like facts about what is required rather than learned patterns that can be examined and changed.

You don't have to keep earning the right to exist.

A free, no-obligation 15-minute conversation. No preparation required.

Book: calendly.com/hopetherapy/15-minute-consultation?month=2026-04 · **Call:** 07379 538411 · **Email:** contact@hopefulminds.co.uk

Please note: We are not a crisis service. If in immediate danger: **999** · **Samaritans: 116 123** — Free, 24hrs · **SHOUT: text 85258**

The standards aren't the problem. What they're attached to is — and that can be changed.

Hope Therapy & Counselling Services offers CBT, counselling, ACT, and a range of other evidence-informed approaches for perfectionism — online across the UK and face-to-face across England. Our team of 90+ qualified practitioners is here to find the right match for you.

TELEPHONE

07379 538411

EMAIL

contact@hopefulminds.co.uk

WEBSITE

www.hopefulminds.co.uk

FREE CONSULTATION

[calendly.com/hopetherapy/15-minute-consultation?
month=2026-04](https://calendly.com/hopetherapy/15-minute-consultation?month=2026-04)

ALSO FROM US

The Talk Room Podcast — including episodes on perfectionism, imposter syndrome, and the pressure to be perfect. Search **The Talk Room** on Spotify and YouTube, or find it at hopefulminds.co.uk.

Hope Therapy & Counselling Services holds NCPS Organisational Membership, which covers counselling and psychotherapy services. Individual practitioners are registered with the BACP, NCPS, and/or BABCP as appropriate. All practitioners hold appropriate professional insurance. Sessions are confidential, subject to the limited exceptions explained by your therapist at the outset. Results vary between individuals; we do not guarantee specific outcomes.