

Being Enough

Many of us carry an idea of who we should be, what we should have accomplished, or how well we should be handling life. When we feel we are falling short, it can lead to a powerful belief:

“I’m not enough.”

But what does **enough** actually mean—and who decided where that line should be?

Our sense of being enough can be influenced by our thoughts, comparisons, expectations, accomplishments, mistakes, and the approval of others. Over time, these influences can create standards that are difficult, or even impossible, to meet.

Thoughts About Being Enough

“I’m not enough” can become such a familiar thought that we stop questioning it.

It may sound like:

- I should be doing more.
- I should be further along by now.
- I should be better at this.
- I should be able to handle this.
- I should have accomplished more.
- I keep disappointing people.
- Nothing I do is good enough.

A thought is just that—a thought. Having a thought does not make it true or real.

Our minds produce thoughts throughout the day, and some thoughts become familiar through repetition. Having the thought *“I am not enough”* does not prove that you aren't.

Comparison

Comparison can quietly change our definition of enough.

We may compare our appearance, relationships, careers, finances, homes, abilities, parenting, health, accomplishments, or even how well we seem to cope with difficult situations.

The problem is that we usually compare what we know about **our entire life** with what we can see of **someone else's life**.

Someone else's accomplishments do not erase your own. Their strengths do not make you weak. Their progress does not mean you are behind.

Everyone begins from a different place, experiences different circumstances, faces different challenges, and moves through life at a different pace.

Expectations

Some of the standards we hold ourselves to did not begin with us.

Expectations can come from family, relationships, school, work, culture, social media, past experiences, or messages we received when we were younger.

Over time, those expectations can become part of our own internal voice:

I should...

I have to...

By now I should have...

We can carry an expectation for so long that it begins to feel like a requirement. But an expectation is not automatically reasonable simply because we have carried it for a long time.

Accomplishments and Productivity

It is easy to connect our worth with what we accomplish.

A productive day can make us feel successful, while a day when very little gets done can leave us feeling as though we failed.

But being a person and being productive are not the same thing.

Resting does not erase what you have accomplished. Needing help does not erase what you can do. Having limitations does not erase your strengths.

There will always be another task that could be completed or another goal that could be reached. If “enough” always requires **one more thing**, the finish line will continue to move.

Other People's Approval

Sometimes feeling good enough depends heavily on how other people respond to us.

We may look for reassurance, praise, acceptance, or recognition to tell us that we are doing okay.

Positive feedback can feel good, but another person's approval cannot be the only measurement of your worth.

People have different expectations, preferences, experiences, and opinions. It is impossible to meet all of them.

Being enough does not require being enough for everyone.

Making Mistakes

Making a mistake can quickly become something much bigger in our thoughts.

“I made a mistake” can become **“I always mess things up.”**

“I didn't handle that well” can become **“I'm a failure.”**

There is an important difference between something you **did** and who you **are**.

You can acknowledge a mistake, take responsibility, learn from it, and make changes when needed without turning the mistake into a definition of yourself.

Enough Does Not Mean Perfect

Being enough does not mean believing that you have nothing left to learn or change.

You can want to grow while appreciating who you are now.

You can have goals without using them as proof that your current self is inadequate.

You can recognize weaknesses without ignoring strengths.

You can have difficult days without deciding that you are failing at life.

Being enough does not require perfection, constant accomplishment, or everyone's approval.

Perhaps being enough isn't a finish line you finally reach.

Perhaps it begins with questioning the belief that you had to earn your place there in the first place.

Barbara Watt, MSW LCSW