

Tips for Evaluating a Perfectionist Employee Has Unrealistically High Expectations of Herself and Is Too Self Critical

When evaluating a high-performing employee who is also a perfectionist and overly self-critical, it's crucial to provide feedback that both validates their achievements and helps them develop a healthier, more balanced view of their performance.

1. Start With Specific Praise — Not General Compliments

Perfectionists tend to dismiss generic praise. Highlight **concrete achievements**, such as:

- “Your presentation to the board last month was the most well-researched and highly rated of the year.”
- “You’ve met 100% of your project deadlines while maintaining above-average quality standards.”

✅ **Tip:** Use data or examples whenever possible. Specificity gives their brain proof to counteract their inner critic.

2. Gently Challenge Their Self-Evaluation

If she downplays her contributions, don’t gloss over it—use it as a coaching moment:

- “I noticed you rated yourself lower on collaboration, but your teammates consistently list you as the go-to person. Can we explore why there’s a disconnect?”

✅ **Tip:** Phrase this as curiosity, not contradiction. You’re helping her **recalibrate**, not invalidate her feelings.

3. Reframe Mistakes as Learning, Not Failure

Perfectionists often see anything less than perfect as unacceptable. Normalize learning:

- “You made a judgment call that didn’t pan out, but the way you handled the fallout showed real leadership.”

- “Mistakes like that are expected when someone is stretching their skills — and that’s how you grow.”

✓ **Tip:** Model this thinking yourself. Share a time *you* messed up and learned from it.

4. Help Them Set *Realistic* Goals and Expectations

Perfectionists overcommit or set unsustainable goals. Help them aim high *without burning out*:

- “Let’s pick two stretch goals this quarter instead of five. Focused effort delivers better results.”
- “What would ‘good enough’ look like in this case — not perfect, just successful?”

✓ **Tip:** Introduce the idea of *progress over perfection*. Encourage a “done is better than perfect” mindset when appropriate.

5. Encourage Self-Compassion and Celebrate Progress

They likely minimize their wins. Encourage reflection and reward:

- “Before we wrap up, I’d like you to list two things you’re proud of from this past quarter.”
- “You don’t need to prove yourself — your performance already speaks volumes. You deserve to feel proud.”

✓ **Tip:** Recommend reflection prompts or tools like journaling or performance tracking apps to help them see their growth over time.

6. Keep an Eye on Burnout Risk

Perfectionism often leads to overwork. Ask directly:

- “How are you managing your workload?”
- “What can I do to help you maintain a sustainable pace?”

✓ **Tip:** Let her know that asking for support is a sign of professional maturity, not weakness.

Summary:

- **Validate** her accomplishments with evidence.
 - **Coach** on self-awareness and calibration.
 - **Support** goal-setting that's healthy and sustainable.
 - **Model** balance and vulnerability.
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