

MIŠO DUCHOŇ

STUCK DUE TO ■ PERFECT IONISM

GET UNSTUCK, ESCAPE
THE PRODUCTIVITY TRAP
AND LIVE COURAGEOUSLY



"For all of the most important things, the timing always sucks. Waiting for a good time to quit your job? The stars will never align and the traffic lights of life will never all be green at the same time. The universe doesn't conspire against you, but it doesn't go out of its way to line up the pins either. Conditions are never perfect. "Someday" is a disease that will take your dreams to the grave with you. Pro and con lists are just as bad. If it's important to you and you want to do it "eventually," just do it and correct course along the way."

Tim Ferriss

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www.misoduchon.com

Design: Michal Vydarený
Stylistics: Barry O'Donohoe

Hi!

I wrote this ebook for ambitious people who are stuck.

To be more specific, I wrote this ebook for:

- 1. millennials (aged 25-40)**
- 2. whose work life is already good**
- 3. but they want to have it even better,** for example:
 - having better business results in their current position,
 - getting a raise (better position and/or higher salary),
 - finding a better job in another company,
 - fixing a workplace / business partner relationship,
 - starting a new business venture,
 - explore freelancing as a side-hustle,
 - do some volunteer work and remain at their job,
 - getting more days off to fulfil their dreams,
- 4. at the same time, somehow, they can't,** because they:
 - don't have enough time
 - have a very difficult boss / colleague / business partner
 - don't know how to achieve these things
 - know how to achieve these things but procrastinate
 - don't have enough willpower to finish what they started
 - are too scared to do something, etc.
- 5. and they think the solution is being more productive.**

I coach people just like you and I am here to tell you that getting more productive is **not** the solution.

THE PRODUCTIVITY TRAP

Almost all of my clients think this:

"if I get more productive¹, I will get unstuck and manage to do everything I want to!"

They see that I am pretty productive (I used to blog about productivity techniques and gave lectures and ran workshops on this topic) and that I am not stuck in my work life (I got some great job positions, started some businesses and got enough time and money to travel around the world and do my hobbies).

It might seem logical that more productivity equals better work life. **But this is only partially true. Productivity only works AFTER you get unstuck.**



Giving a lecture on productivity / November 2019, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

¹ *productivity = output / input*

Being stuck means not moving forward for too long. How long is too long? That is subjective, but if you are stuck, you can feel it. It also means **not doing something important that you should be doing**. Getting more productive in this situation is like chasing your tail - you stay stuck, but you are chasing the tail faster - which only leads to more fatigue and being even more stuck. This is what I call the **productivity trap**. You cannot get out of the trap by being more productive. It is a vicious cycle.

“THAT’S ME! I AM STUCK AND I HAVE FALLEN IN THE PRODUCTIVITY TRAP! AM I SCREWED?”

Yes and no :). Yes, being trapped sucks, but I believe you can escape from the productivity trap, get unstuck and have a much better life. I mean, I don't know you, maybe you are a person that loves being a victim and has more excuses than dogs have hairs. In that case, you are probably screwed. Taking full responsibility is needed, blaming your external environment won't help.

But I have seen some of my clients (that are probably just like you):

- improving their businesses results tremendously (either as business owners / freelancers / employees)
- negotiating with their bosses for a bigger salary, a better position or more free time and getting it
- quitting the jobs they dislike and starting something they are passionate about
- fixing a complicated relationship at their work that annoyed them
- starting new business/volunteering/freelancing
- making (not finding!) extra time to fulfil their dreams and bucket list goals

So I am confident that it can be done. You can get unstuck, improve your work life and become happier and healthier in your private life.

But first, you cannot fall into the productivity trap and even if you have fallen in there already, you need to get out.

Signs that you are in the productivity trap:

- “I don't have time to do this”
- “I am going to do it after I finish this”
- “I have been procrastinating on this”

In order to get out of the trap, I believe people need to **understand the root cause** of their problem and then start **working hard on the solution to the problem**. Curing the illness, and not just treating the symptoms.

If you're still with me, keep reading!

ROOT CAUSE

The COVID-19 outbreak in Slovakia (March 2020) made me stop doing all my live lectures and workshops. I had suddenly more time for coaching individual clients via Zoom (and other platforms), so I took many new clients and coached at least twice as much than before.

During this period I started seeing the same recurring patterns with my clients. I identified one key feature that directly predicted how deeply somebody has fallen into the productivity trap and thus how much they were stuck. That one feature is **PERFECTIONISM**.

Before that I didn't notice it, but this period of full-time coaching, undistracted by lectures and workshops, made me spot the root cause of the problem.

My previous 2 years of coaching had taught me how to identify the most suitable tools which would enable my clients to achieve their goals.

This ebook contains my methodology that I use when I identify perfectionism in my client.

"Great!, now tell me what to do!"

First things first. The better you understand WHY something is happening, the better you can deal with it.

Don't worry, I wrote the theory very concisely so please don't skip it.

Are you ready? Let's go!

WHAT IS PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism is defined as trying to achieve unrealistic high standards you have set for yourself and basing your self-worth on how well you think you achieve your standards.

It might seem at first that there's nothing bad about that, because you think that:

- having high standards is good. It is what has helped you so far to be where you are...
- of course you feel better when you achieve your goals, it is what motivates you...

And I agree, having high standards and feeling good about achievement is positive. But there is a subtle, yet significant difference that makes perfectionism so insidious.

The problems with perfectionism are:

- 1) unrealistic standards that are impossible to meet,
- 2) and the constant feeling of not being good enough.

Setting unrealistic standards prevents you from doing something important that would get you unstuck, because *"it is / I am not good enough yet"*, so you have to prepare endlessly.

At the same time it gets you into the productivity trap: *"I have to work on this more, but I don't have more time, so I have to get more productive"* - and here we fall directly into the trap.

"When the conditions are perfect, then I will do what I am planning to do" is playing on your mind. But the conditions will never be perfect.

Examples of such thinking in practice:

- "I need a perfect website before I can start my side-hustle" (you just need to start and that will help you improve, and it will be easier for you to make a website)
- "When I get perfect work results, my boss will give me a raise" (...and when he doesn't, you will be upset. Tell him you want a raise and ask what it takes to get it.)
- "I will learn everything there is out there, become perfect and then my customers will start paying me more" (no they won't, unless you sell it to them)
- "When I meditate long enough, I will feel no fear and then do everything and become unstoppable" (you will never get rid of fear, unless you become a psychopath or start taking drugs. A better way is becoming more courageous)
- "I just have to make this perfect and then I will finally do what I always wanted to do (no you won't, unless you actually commit to it by doing something now, like buying a flight ticket)
- etc etc etc

The second half of the problem is basing your self-worth on how well you think you achieve your standards. Since your standards are unrealistic, you will never feel good enough.

Your constant feeling of "never good enough" leads to frustration, which usually becomes your driving force for change, which is a good thing at first. BUT since you believe the solution is becoming more productive (which it isn't), you fall into the productivity trap and get even more frustrated.

It is no wonder that perfectionism correlates with depression, anxiety, eating disorders and even suicide². This is no joke people!

Where is this coming from? How come I am a Perfectionist and other people are not?

² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jopy.12333>

HOW A PERFECTIONIST WAS MADE

I believe you didn't choose to become a Perfectionist, but that you learned it. Usually in early childhood.

Here are the most common causes of perfectionism I found from my research:

- not receiving unconditional love from demanding parents, rarely being praised, mostly criticised
- on the contrary, getting everything, being spoiled and spared from difficulties by overprotective parents
- learning to fulfil criteria/expectations to get love, e.g.: school, behaviour, appearance, sport performance, etc.
- being criticised and constantly compared to other children or siblings
- learning that being playful and courageous and authentic is not OK, being punished for showing these qualities
- being bullied in the school by other children and being made fun of
- being betrayed in a relationship / or humiliated for expressing emotions
- social media and advertisement further promote perfection as a means to happiness.

And voilà!, now we have an adult Perfectionist, who is:

- 1) constantly feeling not good enough (doesn't matter how successful)
- 2) setting unrealistic standards that are impossible to meet (for self and others)
- 3) afraid of rejection or failure, spending way too much time preparing, getting stuck
- 4) falling into the productivity trap, which leads to frustration or burnout.

ps: let's not forget that **parents don't do it on purpose**. They are trying their best, but **they probably learned this unknowingly from their parents** and they are just passing it on to their own children. You just make sure that you work on YOUR perfectionism issue and don't pass it on to your children.

Alright, that is enough of the theory, now let's get going!

SOLUTION

I believe there is a theoretical and a practical part of the solution. The practical part - actually doing something instead of just reading about it - is what matters most, but we must start with the theory to make sure you don't end up doing futile activities just for the sake of doing them, without even knowing why you are doing them.

THEORETICAL PART

It has 4 parts:

1. The productivity trap
2. Virtues
3. A better alternative
4. Progress, not perfection

Let's go!

1) THE PRODUCTIVITY TRAP

I wrote about this in the beginning, see the chapter "the productivity trap". When working on your perfectionism, focus on how you are working on it. Are you trying to be more productive? Chances are you will at first. It is OK. Notice it. And stop it. Do what matters instead.

2) VIRTUES

When people mention "perfectionism" as their weakness on a job interview, they secretly believe that "yes, it has some shortcomings, but generally it is positive." (otherwise, why would they admit it in a job interview?).

The truth is, it is not positive. At all. And you need to stop thinking that it is an overall positive characteristic. It is not.

There was this guy, Hamachek, who in his paper in 1978 described "adaptive perfectionism" as a healthy and positive form of perfectionism that helps people achieve more. This has been widely disproved by other re-

searchers and shown that he wrongly named "adaptive perfectionism". When It is actually industriousness and the need for achievement (both are healthy features)³.

Unfortunately, this term "adaptive perfectionism" persisted. And yet, It is like saying that there is a positive side of **anorexia** because of being mindful about what you eat and not overeating.

Perfectionists have many problems caused by perfectionism. Among others:

- they procrastinate and rarely get anything done
- even when they do something, they don't enjoy it
- because they focus only on the end-goal and not on the process
- they tend to be workaholics and neglect loved ones
- more prone to cheating and breaking rules
- In a constant state of hurry,not having enough time, under too much stress
- so they also aren't happy with their health and fitness
- they are very demanding and critical with others
- how something looks is more important than how something is
- they fear rejection and criticism, their self-esteem is pretty low
- they have problems with being their authentic selves
- they are either "ALL-IN" or "WHY BOTHER"
- their mind is a hell where you don't want to be...
- as a result they are anxious and depressed...

We need to separate the virtues that many Perfectionists have (and which have helped them get to where they are) and understand that you can still have the positive aspects WITHOUT the negative aspects (perfectionism) and that perfectionism is a negative thing that keeps you trapped in aforementioned problems.

3) A BETTER ALTERNATIVE

Even when you accept that perfectionism is not good, it might seem that there are two alternatives to perfectionism that are even worse:

- 1) getting rid of your ambitions. I call this one a **COUCH POTATO**.
- 2) just doing everything fearlessly, no matter what.
I call this one a **KAMIKAZE**.

3 *Hewitt, Paul L.. Perfectionism. Guilford Publications. Kindle Edition.*

A lazy couch potato might be happier, yes, but their lack of ambitions brings a new set of problems, such as boredom, often being unhealthy and living a pathetic life nobody else wants to be part of (except other couch potatoes). It is just a different extreme and no wonder that this alternative is not appealing.

The second one (kamikaze) sounds more appealing and some authors sell this idea of being "fearless", not being scared and doing everything that you want. But you cannot get rid of fear. **EVER**. Fear is your friend, it is a signal that gives you a lot of useful information. If you don't fear anything, you will probably die quickly - and in a stupid and preventable way. The only people who don't feel fear are called psychopaths.

Seeing only these two alternatives might give you an impression that despite perfectionism being bad, the alternatives are even worse. But what people don't see is that there is a third alternative and it is being an **ADVENTURER**. It contains the positives from the previous ones, but not the negatives.

An Adventurer is somebody who:

- feels "good enough" and still has high ambitions, that are realistic
- understands they cannot please everyone and avoid criticism
- faces their fears
- focuses on the process more than on the end result
- Accepts their strengths and weaknesses, which gives them healthy self-worth
- doesn't compare themselves to others, goes their own unique way
- goes voluntarily into discomfort to grow and get better
- looks for multiple ways to tackle a challenge instead of "EITHER-OR thinking"
- often gets more results over the long term.

I am going to explain my process of becoming an Adventurer in the practical part of the solution, but before you get your Indiana Jones hat and whip, you need to understand the last theoretical part:

4) PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

So here is the thing. I explain to people that the healthy alternative to perfectionism is being an Adventurer and they say:

"Great, let's do it!, I am buying 3 adventurer books, a video course, an adventurer retreat in the jungle and become the perfect adventurer!"

Even though this enthusiasm will make you feel better (for a while), it won't help you with your perfectionism. On the contrary, it will only reinforce it.

You cannot become an Adventurer by doing everything as a Perfectionist.

That being said, you need to understand one more thing: It is never EITHER-OR when talking about Perfectionist vs. Adventurer. It is a continuum. You will never become a perfect Adventurer or get rid of perfectionism fully.

That might sound demotivating at first, but it is liberating. Knowing that there is no perfection to attain, you can embark on your journey without too much pressure and know that as long you are improving, you are fine.

This way, you don't quit, you will have more fun along the way and get paradoxically even more adventurous than those who wanted to become perfect Adventurers but who gave up a week later when they weren't perfect yet.

Chances are that you catch yourself acting as a Perfectionist from time to time. It is OK. Notice it. And stop it. Do what matters instead. Keep building your adventurous muscle. And this is what the practical part is about:

PRACTICAL PART

Why is it not enough just to read about perfectionism and DECIDE not to be a Perfectionist and be an Adventurer instead? Because it doesn't work that way. I mean, right now, it would probably work, because you are **motivated**, but we want to make sure that it becomes your lifestyle.

Perfectionism has been ingrained in your brain probably since early childhood as an operating system and you act and think like a Perfectionist subconsciously.

It will take some time. It will not be easy. But as far as I am concerned, it is definitely worth it!

Practical part has 4 sub-parts as well. They are:

1. Self-worth
2. Goals
3. Resourcefulness
4. Discomfort

I am going to give you a list of my favourite exercises for each part. Some of them you might know, some of them might be totally unknown to you. But here is the thing - even if I described every exercise to the last detail, reading it is not enough. You have to do it! I am not saying you have to do all of them - pick one and start there. Feel free to pick your own exercises to do.

Are you curious about some of them but don't have any idea how to do them? Approach me for a 1-on-1 coaching. Or wait until I describe them on my blog/podcast. Nonetheless, here I want to introduce you to my framework and at the end, I will give you specific tips on what you can start doing today. Let's go!

1) SELF-WORTH

The aim of this part is to work on being OK with yourself. Building an unshakeable mental base. This is easier said than done.

Perfectionists like to compare themselves to others and they often focus on everything they could be doing better. Now you need to be careful not to switch to narcissism, which is another form of comparing yourself. I am talking about getting rid of comparison when talking about self-worth altogether.

Your self-worth should be unquestionable, no matter your surrounding, or your results. You are you. Total acceptance. With your strengths and weaknesses. Yes, you should aim at being better, but because you have a potential to be better (like everyone else) and because it is our natural desire to be better and not because you suck. Abundance thinking instead of scarcity thinking in terms of own self.

A good indicator of strong inner self-worth is the ability to be **vulnerable**, which is for me one of the main conditions for building honest relationships and doing courageous acts. If you are interested in this topic, reach for the book ***The Gifts of Imperfection*** by Brené Brown, it is amazing, it also includes a lot of useful information about perfectionism theory.

This part should not be skipped, because before we build your courage, ambitiousness and resourcefulness, you need to believe that you are worthy of your goals, that you deserve more and that you are good enough to go on the journey to achieve these goals. Otherwise it is not *Flow*⁴ where you get during the adventure, but anxiety.

My favourite exercises:

- Practicing Shame Resilience Theory
- Doing Psychometric Exercises
- Practicing Self Acceptance
- Crucial Conversations with parents
- Surrounding Shift
- Doing the Identity Map
- Low-Comparison Diet
- Journaling Achievements and Learnings
- Building a Positive Support Group
- Cognitive Restructuring

2) GOALS

Perfectionists subconsciously aim at unrealistic goals. Sometimes they don't even have those goals defined, the only thing that they know is that now it is not good enough and it must be better.

The other thing is that Perfectionists often aim at artificial goals that they believe others want them to achieve. They don't pursue much of what they WANT, but rather what they think they SHOULD. This can get very depressing, finding out at the end of the life that you have pursued goals that others expected from you and totally forgot about what you wanted⁵.

A better mindset is being excited about your goals but also admitting that it is not 100% in your hands. Anything can happen. A fucking pandemic can spread out in the world!

An Adventurer admits this and thinks: *"I am going to give my best and see what happens! This I can control"*.

My favourite exercises to cultivate better goals:

- Listing 101 life dreams
- Goal letting (not setting, but letting!)
- Building a Vision and an Anti-vision
- Fear Setting Exercise
- Setting SMARTER goals
- Instant Lead Domino
- Post-game analysis

3) RESOURCEFULNESS

H: *"What are your choices when someone puts a gun to your head?"*

M: *"What are you talking about? You do what they say or they shoot you."*

H: *"Wrong! You take the gun, or you pull out a bigger one. Or, you call their bluff. Or, you do any one of a hundred and forty-six other things."⁶*

Resourcefulness is the ability to find more options on how something can be done. Creativity is a very similar word, but I am not talking about creating new things, I am talking about the ability to search and find multiple ways - they don't have to be creative, but you need to see that there are plenty of ways.

A Perfectionist almost always thinks that something is either-or. And gets stuck. An Adventurer approaches the problem playfully. *"What if I tried this?"* / *"What would my idol do?"* / *"How could I make it 10x better in half the time?"* and other questions always pop into the mind of an Adventurer. Be like an Adventurer and do exercises that are designed to inspire resourcefulness.

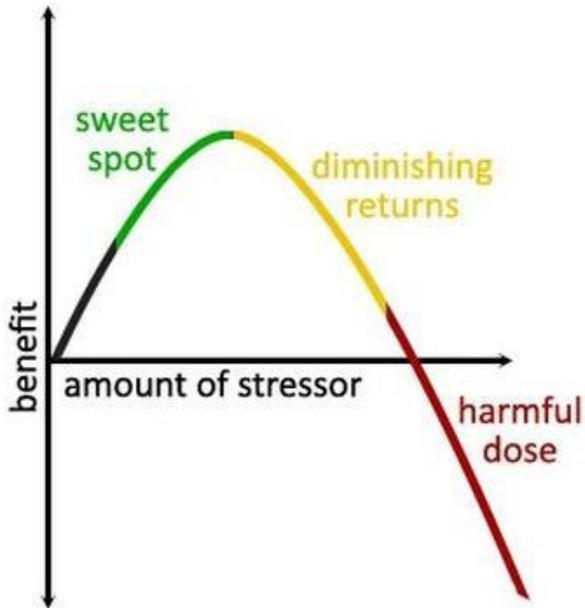
My favourite exercises:

- Quantity-based brainstorming
- Changing the frame of reference
- Asking the public for advice & surveys
- Planned boredom
- Lowering the bar
- Prioritising sleep and relaxation
- Practicing minimalism for resourcefulness
- Setting voluntary constraints
- Finding a mentor / trainer / coach

4) DISCOMFORT

An Adventurer deliberately puts themselves in **voluntary** discomfort to train, so they are ready when the situation arises.

The Dose Matters



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Another reason for this is that an Adventurer wants to grow and they know that growth happens outside of your comfort zone, so sometimes they intentionally raise the stakes to increase the negative motivation and get more out of themselves.

I believe these exercises help build courage. Without courage, the ability to do something, it doesn't matter how grounded you are, what goals you have and how many options you see, you need courage to do the uncomfortable things that you are avoiding. Fortune favours the bold and being prepared helps being bold.

My favourite exercises:

- Rejection Therapy Exercises
- Role playing exercises
- Practicing Memento Mori
- Premeditatio Malorum
- Exposure Therapy
- Raising the stakes
- Physical training
- Practicing stoic poverty

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The result of the practical part should be **more action**. Yes! Doing things. With courage. Asking a boss for a raise. Starting the side-hustle. Selling your services. Standing up for yourself when somebody annoys you. Facing your fear and doing something.

That is the way of an Adventurer. And that my friends is my way out of perfectionism.

"But where is the step by step guide?"

There is no step by step guide. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. There is only a framework I am using and the framework is pretty complex.

By looking for a step by step guide, you are missing the point! You are being a Perfectionist, instead of being an Adventurer!

The Adventurer asks himself this question:

"What would I do if I were not afraid?"

Then they do what is necessary - maybe reminding themselves that they have managed something similar in the past. Maybe adjusting the goal so it is more achievable. Maybe they google ideas on how to do it. Maybe practicing the conversation with a friend in a role-play. Whatever is necessary. And then they stand up and do it.

And this is what your next steps are going to be:

NEXT STEPS

1. While reading my ebook, I am pretty sure that you have realised at least 1 thing that you are postponing and can do right now. My advice is: go do it! Don't wait. Want to practise being an Adventurer? Then be an Adventurer! Wanna reinforce the Perfectionist? Then wait for the perfect conditions... It's your choice. It has always been your choice and it always will be your choice. Do something now! Anything.

2. Now that you have done the thing you were postponing, commit to being an Adventurer! You don't have to get a tattoo. There is no ideal way. You probably already know what you need to start doing on a regular basis. You knew when you were a child and you still know today, you just need to commit. A commitment to somebody. Or a public commitment. It doesn't matter, you just need to show YOURSELF that you are serious. Just don't postpone it like a Perfectionist. Improve later.

3. Re-read this ebook and do an honest check with yourself. Set a notification in one week from now to check how you are doing. Do you believe that you are good enough or need to spend more time on this one? Are you chasing artificial goals to look good or do you pursue what truly makes you excited? Do you spend time searching for options? And finally, are you choosing your discomfort, or is the discomfort choosing you? Then do something immediately, change something and continue.

FINAL NOTE

Thank you for reading my ebook! I hope it gave you some new insights. But even more, I hope you will now do something about it (and don't wait a day longer).

I will end with a quote from the animated movie UP!:

"Adventure is out there!"



ABOUT

My name is **Mišo Duchoň** and I am a **life coach**.
I help people live courageously.

For full bio, go to misoduchon.com



Stay subscribed to my newsletter at misoduchon.com (which should have happened automatically for downloading this ebook - if it was forwarded to you, go to my web and subscribe if you want to stay in touch).

I am going to share more on this topic, helping people being less stuck and living more courageously.

If you are really serious about getting unstuck and living adventurously, schedule a free strategy coaching session with me via Zoom.

We will talk about your situation and your ambitions, I will explain to you how I work and based on mutual expectations we might start a coaching cooperation.

Go to www.misoduchon.com/coaching, book your date and time, write a bit about yourself and let's start the adventure.

Thank you once again for reading my ebook!

Let me know what you think! Go on!
Drop me a message,
I'll be happy to find out how you liked it :)

miso@misoduchon.com
whatsapp: +421948496765