

# What's Good Enough?

by Tara Diversi

When we hear the phrase “Good Enough”, as busy Australian’s we commonly align this to results that are not really good enough. Why be good enough when you can be great – right? Why do good enough to get through when you can push yourself to perfection?

In the modern-world we are led to believe that good enough is not good enough anymore. Everything has to be better, bigger, quicker, stronger, and cheaper.

This is not true when it comes to weight loss, health and in fact, many other aspects of a happy life, including career success and relationship success. It seems the strive for perfection brings with it guilt, blame, stress and when others don’t acknowledge our extra effort, one of the most dangerous emotions – resentment.

I used to be a firm believer of perfection. I would try to do everything I could perfectly. I would worry about whether I had done everything I could to ensure perfection. I would feel guilty if I indulged in simple pleasures - whether it were eating delicious food, enjoying a night out with friends or simply taking some time for myself.

When I started working as a dietitian, counsellor and coach, I started to notice patterns in my clients. The first thing I noticed was how guilt was getting my clients nowhere fast. They would feel so horribly guilty when they didn’t exercise or eat as I prescribed, but the more guilt was mentioned, the less compliant they were. So, like any good nerd, I decided to research the effect of guilt and other emotions on health, success and happiness. I also decided to give it up and focus on doing things that positively contributed to my life.

There are lots of articles telling you how to achieve your goals in life, and in short they tell you to work hard, and work smart. On talking to successful people, I have found that a big part of working smart is knowing when enough is enough.

We all have limited resources, and the most limited of these is time. When we work to a level of good enough, we get fantastic results, positive feedback and a sense of satisfaction without burning ourselves out and without unnecessarily taking time resources from other parts of our lives. I find it amazing the number of working mums and working dads that are in a constant state of guilt. They feel guilty when they leave the kids to work, and guilty when they leave work to see the kids. Never being truly present at either, because they are too worried about their competing responsibility. They are yet to realise that being ok with imperfect is the new perfect, and if they focused on the important stuff and being good enough, they would actually be more efficient and effective.

So, how do we get this balance between work and life? When we think of balance, or work/life balance, it’s easy to overly focus on physical health and spiritual health. This is just as unbalanced as a person who solely focuses on improving their career. A strong overemphasis on physical health is not a balanced approach, and may in fact be detrimental to your career, your relationships, social health, financial health, spiritual health, and/or community health – all of which are essential to be striving as a human being.

There are some things that can help us get to a level that is good enough. These techniques sound simple enough, but I

am amazed how somewhere between childhood and adolescence we have lost these abilities and skills.

## Stop when you’re at Good Enough

When you are looking at achieving maximal sustainable success and happiness, there is a certain point where more effort doesn’t increase results. In fact, more effort can actually produce lower results in many situations. How many times have you seen someone write a report and continually refine it, yet in truth, it was probably good enough before the additional hours that were put in – and sometimes even better? Working towards perfection can also put you at risk of burning out, and not being able to sustain performance over a long period of time. We see this in weight loss all the time. Those who lose weight slowly keep their weight off longer and have less impact on other aspects of their life. In the workplace, those that push themselves too far, often end up wasting hours that they could be investing in other areas of the business, or if doing over time, their lives. Overall this means that long-term results are sacrificed to fulfill the short-term self-indulgent craving that the strive for perfection brings.

## Treat yourself like you’d treat others

Once you have learnt what is good enough, the next step is to simply be nicer to yourself. If you look in the mirror and criticise your appearance, imagine if your daughter did this. Well, chances are if you do, they will, after all kids are brilliant mimics. If you have the habit of self-criticising, imagine



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saying some of the things that you say to yourself to someone you dislike – chances are there are some things you say to yourself that you would be horrified to say to anyone else. At first, treating yourself as well as you treat your children, partner and/or co-workers may be difficult. The more practice you get – the better you will be.

## Accept compliments

One good way to start to feel more comfortable about treating yourself well is by accepting compliments. When someone says something nice about you, your appearance, your work or your personality, instead of holding a mirror up and reflecting with a “I am not” or “It could be better”, hold a magnifying glass and allow yourself to believe compliments from others.

## Forget about guilt

You may be reading this, after setting your new years resolutions, and possibly fallen off track. Feeling guilty is not beneficial to long-term success. In fact, it has been shown that when people focus on guilt, they are less likely to stick to positive behaviour changes and also less likely to resist temptation.

## Focus on your art

To get great results with a Good Enough approach, you can't simply do Good Enough at anything and/or everything and expect to reap the rewards. If you strategically spend your resources on focusing on your art, you will find success, balance and happiness is easily within reach.

We are all gifted with an art that is a unique combination of our talents and attributes, mixed with experiences that collide with opportunities. The collision point is where maximal gain occurs.

We cannot speed up the excellence and intuition that comes from experience (cited as in excess of 10,000 hours). The 10,000 hour theory argues that to be an expert, you need to do the skill for 10,000 hours or more. However, there are some things that you may never be an expert in, regardless of the number of hours you put in. Luckily, there will also be other things that you are an expert in, with much less time and simply due to your art colliding with an event or circumstance seen as valuable at that time. We can say that these people are ‘Born With It’,

and I agree that everyone is born with an ‘it’, or an ‘art’. If someone is working in their art, when asked how they became what they are, they will often talk about being “lucky” or “falling into it”. The more people you meet who are working in their art, the more you can recognise the patterns. Finding your art is as simple as determining your unique combination of three E's. Excellence, Ease and Enjoyment. The more aware you are of these attributes and skills, the more easily you can determine your art and the more easily you can focus on the important things that help develop this art.

Excellence encompasses those things that you are good at, or attributes you naturally have. What type of smart are you – book smart, people smart, pragmatic smart, street smart? What are you always complimented on? What comes naturally to you? What do you excel in when compared to others?

Determining what you find easy is the next step in finding your art. What can you do quickly, or without thinking that other people find difficult and take a long time to complete? What can you do with limited stress that causes grief to others?

Finally, what do you enjoy doing? What activities or tasks do you like doing which others tend to dislike? What brings you joy, regardless of the financial (or other) reward?

Finding your art is a perfect example of Good Enough. If you spend your time focusing on things you are naturally excellent at, things you find easy and things you enjoy, you are focusing on the right areas. You will be rewarded without unnecessary stress, guilt or shame that comes with pushing yourself against your natural world rather than with your natural world.



Tara Diversi is an accredited dietitian and author of *Health Management Dietetics: A Special Diets Manual*. [tara@taradiversi.com.au](mailto:tara@taradiversi.com.au)

*“Don’t be afraid to take a big step if one is indicated. You cannot cross a chasm in two small jumps.”*

— David Lloyd George

*“If you want a place in the sun, be prepared to put up with a few blisters.”*

— Abigail Van Buren

*“Here is a simple but powerful rule... always give the people more than they expect to get.”*

— Nelson Boswell

*“While one person hesitates because he feels inferior, the other is busy making mistakes and becoming superior.”*

— Henry C. Link

*“Reading, after a certain age, diverts the mind too much from its creative pursuits. Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking.”*

— Albert Einstein

*“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.”*

— Paul J. Meyer