

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Keri Martinez**

SEE THE SHOW NOTES AT: <https://kerimartinez.com/3>

[Perfectionist Professional Woman Podcast](#) with Keri Martinez

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

Welcome to the *Perfectionist Professional Woman* podcast. This is Episode 3, The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2.

I'm Keri Martinez. I'm a wife and mother of three children and three bonus children. I'm also a certified life coach and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For a good portion of my life, I equated perfection with happiness and success. I thought that striving to *be* perfect and *do* things perfectly was the key to feeling happy and to being successful. I've since come to realize that perfection *isn't* necessary to achieve either one of those--quite the opposite, in fact--and that has made such a difference in how I think, feel, and experience life. So if you're a professional woman and you'd like to know how to release perfectionism so you can trade self-doubt for self-confidence, stop beating yourself up, and start enjoying your life more, then come with me. Let's do this together.

---

Hello. Welcome to the second episode in a three-part series about the lies of perfectionism. I'm covering two lies in each episode, and if you haven't already done so, you might want to listen to part 1 first just so you have more context around what I'm sharing here. But if you don't want to do that, that's also totally fine, and I trust you'll get what you need no matter the order you listen. And if you stick around to the end of this episode, I'll tell you how you can grab a free handy bonus that complements this podcast series quite nicely.

OK. So, before we dive in, how's it going? What's happening in your neck of the woods? I have to say I have been riding the struggle bus lately, and it's been an arduous, exhausting trip. I don't recall ever dealing with trials on this scale before, and it has been hard. I feel like my life and the lives of many

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

people in my family have been flipped upside down and sideways, several times over, and I'm still not sure when they'll fully settle down.

A friend recently described all of this as a roller coaster, and that's pretty much what it feels like--a crazy roller coaster of emotion. Slowly climbing and fine one minute, and plunging and scary the next. I'm just still trying to make sense of it all.

But I say that because an interesting thing happened as I was prepping for this episode today. As I was mapping out the two lies of perfectionism I'm going to discuss, I suddenly realized I've been unconsciously believing one of them. I saw it in how I've been responding to these challenges. The good news is, just recognizing that brought me some relief. The challenges are still there to be sure, but I can see how I've been holding myself back in some ways, and I can see more of a path forward.

This wasn't at all what I had planned to discuss, but I thought I'd share that to highlight a couple of things:

1. A lot, if not most, of our thinking and beliefs are unconscious. We don't realize what we're thinking and how it's affecting us until we intentionally examine it. There's lots of value in dumping out our brains and interrogating what comes out. And I teach you how to do that in episode 1 of the podcast, and I'll put a link to that episode in the show notes of this one if you're interested in checking that out.
2. Learning to manage your mind is not a one-and-done thing. It's not something you learn or do once and then never have to revisit. Mental hygiene is like dental hygiene--you have to do it regularly. Brushing your teeth today won't prevent morning breath tomorrow. Morning breath comes every morning regardless of past brushing, right? So

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

similarly, default thoughts and beliefs return even when we've worked to manage them. The key thing to remember here is that we don't have to be surprised or beat ourselves up when these thoughts that we thought we'd addressed, when they come back. This is just how our brains work. It is what it is.

### Lie #3

OK. So, now let's get into the two lies of perfectionism for this episode. Lie number three is that there's a right way to do things. I want to clarify that I'm not talking about moral right and wrong here--I'm using the term "right" to mean "correct" or "proper" or even "best." This is probably the most prevalent of the lies of perfectionism in our society. Even people who aren't perfectionists believe this lie. You hear people say this about all kinds of things -- that there's a right way to spend money, a right way to treat other people, a right way to lose weight, a right way to attract customers, a right way to raise children, a right way to multiply fractions, or to pray, or to vote, or to load the dishwasher, fold towels, replace the toilet paper roll, and on and on, right?

The lie here is two-fold: first these "right way" statements are presented as facts when they're actually just someone's opinions or ideas; and second, the statements imply that there's only ONE right way to do whatever.

Now, I do want to note here that when our brains or someone else tells us there's a right way to do something, it's usually well-intentioned. For example, I happen to believe there's a right way to fold bath towels. My brain is very sure about that. I think the towels should be folded in half lengthwise first and then widthwise, because when you fold them this way, you don't

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

have to refold them to hang them over a towel bar. My husband usually folds the towels widthwise first and then lengthwise, and then when it's time to hang them up, we have to completely unfold and refold them lengthwise to hang them over a towel bar. It adds an extra step and it takes longer. When I explain to my husband and children that lengthwise first is the *right* way, it's out of a desire to help them be more efficient, because I love to be efficient. Well intentioned or not, though, it's not a fact that my way is THE right way. I know that's just my opinion. I only think that's the right way because of my desire to make our household run as efficiently as possible. But even that implies that being efficient is the "right" way.

Well intentioned or not, those "right way to do things" statements can be problematic. When we think there's only ONE right way to do things, it creates stress or worry in one of two ways. When we think there's a right way but we're not sure what that is, we worry about not knowing. And we obsess over finding the right way. When we think there's a right way and we *do* know what that is, we worry when we or someone else isn't doing it. We obsess over getting ourselves or others to do it right. The flip side and another drawback is that we worry so much about doing things *wrong* that we sometimes don't do anything.

This is the lie that I said in the intro I'd been unconsciously believing. I realized I'd been thinking there was a right way to respond to all of these challenges my family's been facing. I didn't know what that right way was, so I was worrying A LOT about not knowing. I was obsessing about finding THE right way, and I was very worried about doing things wrong. I was so worried about doing something wrong that I wasn't doing anything about a couple of the issues. It's just so fascinating how our brains do this!

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

I want to share one more story of this lie playing out in my life. When I was growing up, my mom was a stay-at-home mom. She ended up getting a job when my youngest sister was in school, but I was pretty much grown and out of the house at that point, so I really only knew her as a stay-at-home mom. I remember her talking about how much she liked being a stay-at-home mom and how it was important for her and my dad that we live on less so that she could be home with me and my sisters. So, from her example and from some other things I was taught through church, I learned that being at home with kids was the “right” way to be a mom, and I fully planned to do that when I had my own children.

But that didn't quite happen. When I married my husband and became an instant mom to three bonus children, I was working full-time as an administrator in a school district, and we needed my salary to make ends meet. So I kept working. But all the time in the background my brain was telling me, “This isn't the right way to be a mom. You're doing this wrong.”

On top of that, I enjoyed and got a lot of benefits from working. I loved what I was doing, I was intellectually stimulated by my job, and interacting with other adults helped keep me sane. But in the background my brain was telling me, “You shouldn't *want* to work outside of the home. You should only want to be a stay-at-home mom. You're doing this wrong.”

Fast forward a few years to when my husband and I added three more children to the family, and my brain's low level chiding had turned to constant yelling and bullying. I had so much guilt and shame at that point, and I was so fully invested in believing I wasn't doing the mom thing “right,” that I couldn't see it any other way. That is a big part of what this lie does--it shuts down your brain's ability to perceive other options.

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

On top of that, my brain had concocted all kinds of horror story scenarios about how my children were going to turn out because I wasn't a stay-at-home mom. I just knew that they were going to get into all kinds of trouble, turn to drugs or alcohol or sex, or they were going to be kidnapped or something horrifyingly awful was going to happen, and it was all going to be my fault because I wasn't doing the mom thing "right."

If you can relate to this story and my fragile mental and emotional state, I desperately want to throw you a lifeline. I want to offer some relief and hope. I can look back on that time now and remember all the pain and suffering I was experiencing. I remember how oppressive and tight and heavy and dark the shame, anxiety, and sadness felt. And I can see now that I was causing all of that just by believing the lie that I wasn't doing the mother thing "right." That I was doing it all "wrong." And because I believed that so strongly, my brain couldn't see or even consider that something else might be true. I couldn't envision any futures for my children other than the horror story scenarios.

It took a while to unwind that lie from my life -- it definitely wasn't a quick fix -- but it all started by being open to the idea that something else *might* be true, by asking and re-asking and pondering and sitting with questions like:

- What if there is no one right way to do this?
- What if something else is true?
- What if the opposite is true?
- What might be some other options?
- How might someone else handle this?
- What might be possible?

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

So if you're noticing this lie in your life and you'd like to break free or start to loosen its grip at least, I'd suggest you start with some of those questions.

### Lie #4

OK. The next lie, lie number four, is perhaps the sneakiest of the bunch. Lie number four is that perfectionism helps you improve and grow. Doesn't that sound lovely and helpful and nice? I think it's precisely because it sounds so helpful that this lie is one of the easiest to believe. It makes sense, right? If you're trying to be perfect or do things perfectly, that's going to help you improve, right? And the flip side our brains also go to is that if you're *not* striving for perfection, you'll just let yourself slide and you won't grow at all.

So let's pick this apart just a bit. I think striving to be better and do better is normal and useful. As humans we're designed to grow and evolve. It's part of our purpose on earth. But perfectionism takes that desire to evolve and grow to an unhealthy extreme. It adds weighty and sometimes harmful expectations onto the desire for growth -- expectations like growth needs to happen faster; and we shouldn't make mistakes along the way or we should make fewer or less serious mistakes along the way; and it should be a steady, linear trajectory upward; and it's a problem if our growth doesn't happen like that. The heart of all of that is that there's a "right" way to progress (notice lie number three sneaking back in here) AND it's a problem if growth doesn't happen like that. And usually when we believe that, we're not compassionate towards ourselves for our mistakes. We're not forgiving of ourselves for our humanness. Instead we berate and bully and beat ourselves up about our mistakes and humanness, all the while thinking that will motivate us to get back and stay on track.



## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

But I'd like you to consider a couple of things here. First, what if there is no "right" way to evolve and grow? What if instead we're each supposed to have our own unique pace and path of growth? What if everyone's pace and path of growth is supposed to be messy and a little chaotic at times? Second, has using the triple-B method of berate, bully, and blame ever worked for you long term? Have you been able to make real and lasting growth doing that? I am willing to bet the answer is "no." And I'm willing to bet that because I've heard from my clients, so many others, and my own experience that triple-B might get you "back on track" temporarily, but it's too heavy and painful to sustain long-term.

Think about that in your own life. Think of a time you were trying to accomplish or overcome something and you used the triple-B method to motivate you. How did that turn out? How did you feel going through that? How motivated did you feel to keep going?

I read a quote from [Dr. Will Cole](#) today that I just love and I think relates to this beautifully. He said, "Sometimes wellness looks like realizing that 37 trillion cells are intently listening to how you speak to them. Speak kindly." Yes! We need to speak kindly to and about ourselves. That is so much more effective than bullying, berating, and blaming!

If you'd like to break free of believing perfectionism helps you improve and grow, let me suggest a couple of things to do. First, pay attention to how you treat and talk to yourself when you're trying to accomplish or overcome something and notice the result that creates. Is it helping or hindering you? And second, if you notice you're taking the triple-B approach and berating, bullying, and blaming yourself, ask yourself a few questions. What if it's not necessary or helpful for me to berate, bully, or blame myself? If a friend were

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

going through this same thing, how would I talk to her? If setbacks and mistakes are all part of the plan, how do I want to proceed?

### RECAP

All right. Those are the two lies I have for you in this episode. Let's do a quick recap of what we covered today.

- Lie number three is that there's a "right" way to do things. The truth is there are many good, effective ways to do things, and fixating on finding THE right one only shuts down creativity and limits perspective.
- Lie number four is that perfectionism helps you improve and grow. The truth is that striving for perfection can help you grow, but perfectionism, with its layered expectations about the pace and path of growth, only stops or delays progress.

Stay tuned for the next episode where I will be sharing two more of the lies of perfectionism. Remember, if you want to see the complete list of lies, including a bonus lie I won't be covering on the podcast, head over to the show notes to grab it. I think you're going to love it.

---

Thank you for listening today! I'm truly honored and thrilled that you took the time to do so. If you'd like to see show notes and a transcript for this episode, go to [kerimartinez.com/3](http://kerimartinez.com/3). That's k-e-r-i-m-a-r-t-i-n-e-z dot com forward slash the number three. You don't even need to put www at the beginning. While you're there, grab the complete list of all 7 Lies of Perfectionism, and then tag

## Episode 3 - The Lies of Perfectionism, Part 2

me on Instagram or Facebook @kerimartinezcoaching to let me know if you'd add any to the list.

Lastly, if you enjoyed this episode, be sure to subscribe or follow the podcast, and please share it with anyone you think would benefit from it. Take a screenshot and post it on social media, and be sure to tag me @kerimartinezcoaching so I can give you a shout-out and a huge thank you!

Have a beautiful week and stay well, my friends! Ciao for now!