

Supporting Your Gymnast

Understanding Perfectionism & Building Healthy Confidence

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What Is Perfectionism?

- Healthy striving can build resilience
- Unhealthy perfectionism creates fear, anxiety, and self-doubt
- Early awareness protects long-term well-being



“Rather than focusing on the obstacle in your path, focus on the bridge over the obstacle.”
- Mary Lou Retton

Why This Matters

- Gymnastics is demanding ... physically and emotionally
- Many gymnastics athletes tie performance to self-worth
- Parents play a powerful role in shaping mindset



Perfectionism

Adaptive

- Healthy striving
- Realistic goals
- Resilient mindset

➔ **Optimistic**



Maladaptive

- Anxiety and depression
- Fear of failure
- Negative self-talk

➔ **Pessimistic**

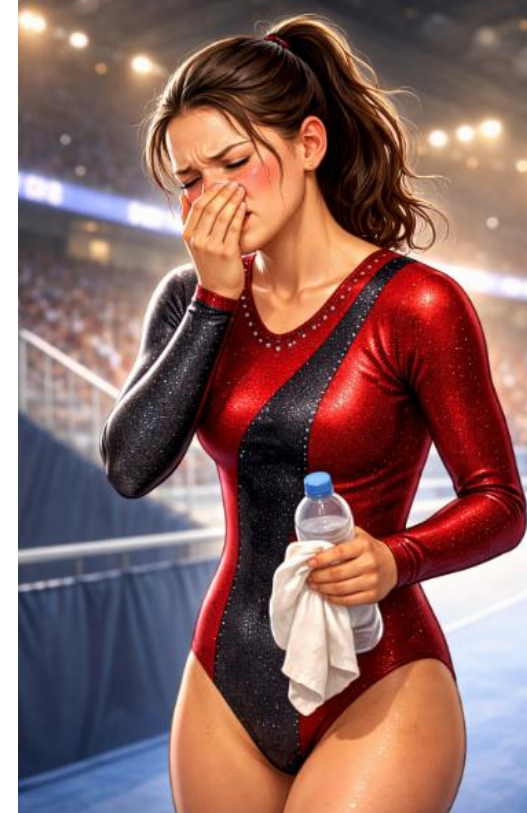
Perfectionism: Friend or Foe

- Optimistic: Growth Mindset
 - Can drive excellence
- Pessimistic: Fixed Mindset
 - Can become emotionally harmful
- Self-talk shapes performance
 - Must be guided carefully



Signs to Watch For

- All-or-nothing thinking
- Fear of mistakes
- Harsh self-criticism
- Avoidance or procrastination



How Parents Can Help

- Praise effort, not outcomes



- Normalize mistakes as learning
- Model calm responses to setbacks

ACT-Based Support at Home

- Help your child notice thoughts without judgment
- Remind them thoughts are not facts
- Ask values-based questions:
 - 'What kind of person do you want to be today?'



[Acceptance and Commitment Therapy \(ACT\)-based support](#) is an action-oriented, mindfulness-based psychological intervention that helps individuals accept difficult thoughts and feelings rather than fighting them.

What to Say (and What to Avoid)

- Instead of: 'You should have won'
 - Try: 'I loved watching how hard you worked'
- Instead of: 'Don't be nervous'
 - Try: 'It's okay to feel nervous and still compete'



Consistency Between Home & Gym

- Athletes thrive when messages are consistent:

- Effort matters more than scores
- Mistakes are part of learning
- Feelings are allowed
- Actions still matter



- When parents and coaches use the same language, confidence and trust grow

The Goal



- Confident athletes
- Healthy self-worth
- Resilience beyond the sport

Final Thoughts

- Your belief in your child matters more than any score
- Support the person first—the athlete follows



To Learn more ...

Drop me a line - send email to marywright@gymnasticsuniversity.com or visit

www.gymnasticsuniversity.com

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