Perfectionism and depression: vulnerabilities nurses need to understand

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Abstract

Striving for excellence is an admirable goal. Adaptive or healthy perfectionism can drive ambition and lead to extraordinary accomplishments. High-achieving people often show signs of perfectionism. However, maladaptive, unhealthy, or neurotic perfectionism, where anything less than perfect is unacceptable, can leave individuals vulnerable to depression. In both personal and professional relationships, nurses need to understand how accepting only perfection in self and others is likely to lead to emotional distress. This paper reviews perfectionism as a personality style, comments on perfectionism and high achievement, discusses vulnerabilities to depression, identifies how to recognize perfectionists, and presents balancing strategies perfectionists can implement to lessen their vulnerability to depression.
In both personal and professional relationships, nurses need to understand how accepting only perfection in self and others is likely to lead to emotional distress. This paper reviews perfectionism as a personality style, comments on perfectionism and high achievement, discusses vulnerabilities to depression, identifies how to recognize perfectionists, and presents balancing strategies perfectionists can implement to lessen their vulnerability to depression.

1. Introduction

Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing. Maladaptive perfectionism was associated with making controllable, subtractive, and less specific counterfactuals. High personal standards perfectionism moderated the effects of maladaptive perfectionism on counterfactual controllability. Generating counterfactuals increased motivation for personal standards perfectionists relative to a noncounterfactual control group but had no effect on motivation for maladaptive perfectionists. The findings suggest a continuum of counterfactual functionality for perfectionists and highlight the importance of considering counterfactual specificity and struct...