

I'm not a Perfectionist!

I'm not a perfectionist. Seriously, honestly, no, I'm not. I wish I were! You need to be, for my job, for my house, for my voluntary service, in OA and elsewhere. Scientists, like me, need to be perfectionists, because wrong measurements or deductions are - well - wrong! Treasurers, like me, need to be perfectionists, because the books must balance. And DIY jobs in my house that aren't straight or don't fit get on my nerves.

Years ago, on a non-OA retreat, I was asked to write down my life's motto and reflect on how I might change it to bring it more into line with HP's will. What rolled off my pen was "*Let's get it over and done with!*". Many of my actions stem from this motto, including wolfing down food in a desperate urge to clear my plate; clearing my email inbox every evening before supper; weeding the whole vegetable patch in one go; and never paying for anything by installments.

"*Let's get it over and done with*" is really perfectionism in disguise; and from the existence of sayings like "*If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well*" and "*more haste, less speed*", it's a defect of character that isn't unique to me. It drives me to continue doggedly on a task when I'm failing and should really step back and take time to ask myself "*is there a better way of doing this?*" or even "*should I be wasting my time on this?*". If I know in my heart that I shouldn't be wasting time on a task, I sometimes become even more determined to "*get it over and done with*" (and even more slapdash).

What am I trying to make time for by getting a task finished quickly? Time to spend on "*better things*"? Huh! My life is so busy that there are always other tasks waiting to be "*got over and done with*".

Many essential tasks, including the Twelve Steps, can't be fitted into an "*over and done with*" model, so how do I deal with them? Avoid them, procrastinate, do a huge chunk of work on them and then neglect them for ages...? The original meditation rightly directed me to ponder how I could choose a better motto, but I think that summing up HP's will in a single motto isn't going to work. After all, "*Let's get it over and done with*" is a useful attitude to essential but nasty jobs, like cleaning up a mess on the floor, and for deadlines, such as a year-end financial report. HP's will, though, requires a more flexible approach. Yes, the books have to balance or the computer programme

has to run, but I won't find the mistakes if I'm hungry and tired, so I need to be good to myself and leave the search for the error until I've eaten abstinently and rested (and then the error will jump out at me). My memory is now so bad that those late-night emails go in one eye and out of the other, but I am learning to spot the vital ones; if they are too complex, I now add them to my list of things to do at the weekend, which really is handing-over to HP.

Finishing off a plateful of food when I've already had enough to eat is one task definitely not worth "getting over and done with", but how often have I wolfed down faster and faster so I can ignore my stomach's full-up point in order to complete the task of emptying the plate? Mentally marking out an overfull plate into the portion I can eat and the excess, can free me from the need to clear the whole lot. Instead of ploughing into "Let's get it over and done with", I can ask myself "What is best for me? What will happen if I don't do this now? or If I don't do it right?" Then it becomes clear that what I really need to do is HP's will.

Sheila (Reading Friday)