



Hooray! We made it through the first month of 2021! Hope your house is somewhat back in the swing of things AND I hope that you've been making it outside once in a while (even though it's been SO cold out – UGH). At least there's been a bunch of snow! WOOT! WOOT! This month, our topic is about Perfection and Imperfection. What do these words mean to you? Do you ever think certain things in your life have to be perfect? Or that **you** have to be perfect? What happens when you can't do something the way you want or the way someone else thinks you should? Do you get frustrated and upset or do you turn it into a challenge?

To let you in on a little secret that you might already be aware of – NO ONE is perfect. Instead, you should start to think of yourself as an **im-perfectionist**. This is a great way to change the way you see yourself – especially when you feel like you aren't good enough or aren't doing something the "right" way. I really wish someone had taught me this when I was younger. I spent so much time feeling frustrated because I couldn't do things the way I thought they should be done. I had a problem of setting really big goals for myself. For instance, I had this crazy idea that I shouldn't ever miss any notes when I played my French horn or that I had to have a perfect recital in order for others to consider me a good musician. Because of these beliefs, I had a tendency to give up when things got tough. Instead of appreciating all the progress I was making, all I could think about was how I couldn't play this or that or do whatever XYZ was. I let myself believe that everyone else was naturally better than I was. However, they were most likely working a whole lot harder than me (and weren't letting their brain get in the way). I made lots of excuses to make myself feel better, but these same excuses kept me from getting where I wanted to go. And worst of all is that I cared too much about what people thought.

Luckily at some point, I started to develop a **growth mindset**. This is the belief that talent, skills, and intelligence can be developed through hard work, persistence and effort. When you have a growth mindset, the process becomes so much more than the results. It's no longer about a certain goal you're trying to achieve. It's still ok to want to get that A, but it isn't ALL that matters. Now you can focus on how much you are learning. This is what makes you who you are and is what will matter in the long run. It also doesn't hurt to have confidence in yourself (plus some compassion). Just think about your favorite artist, musician, inventor or writer. What do you think would have happened if they had thought they weren't good enough or stopped trying because they failed over and over again?

I encourage you to have a growth mindset. If you struggle with this, don't worry, you are not alone and there are ways to get better at this! Page three has a few ideas to get you started. There's also a list of resources on the UU website if you want to dive deeper. Our Zoom get-together will be Sunday, February 28 at 2 pm and we'll be making glass bead sun catchers. I'll be providing materials so if you let me know what colors you prefer, I can try to make your kit with those. You can always make this project on your own, but I do hope you'll be able to join us.

And remember, it's **PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION.**

Until next time -



Kintsugi Wellness

Kintsugi is the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold — built on the idea that in embracing flaws and imperfections, you can create an even stronger, more beautiful piece of art. Every break is unique and instead of repairing an item like new, the 400-year-old technique actually highlights the "scars" as a part of the design. Sometimes in the process of repairing things that have broken, we actually create something more unique, beautiful and resilient.

Wabi sabi is about celebrating imperfections and living simply. In Japanese, wabi means alone and sabi is the passage of time. Together, they teach us how to embrace the good and bad parts of ourselves that we should celebrate our challenges and how they help us to grow.

Gaman is the ability to endure, be patient and remain calm. Everyone can practice gaman in everyday life with meditation or by focusing our attention on breathing while giving our minds a break. It also helps with every day stresses so instead of focusing on negative circumstances, you can use challenges as an opportunity to learn.

Yuimaru is valuing togetherness. Yuimaru helps you heal through friends and family. When you have a good support system, you are better able to be kind to yourself.

Eiyoshoku is keeping a strong and healthy body. When you keep your body healthy, your mind will benefit the same way.

And most importantly, **Kansha** is the act of expressing gratitude for the good and the bad. Practice gratitude by living in the present and realize when you are wishing for things you don't have or need. Try to see the positive because everything happens for a reason. There is no difficult situation that comes your way without a purpose. That purpose is becoming better, resilient and more grateful individuals.



How to Become an Im-perfectionist!

- Become familiar with unhealthy (fixed-mindset) versus healthy (growth-mindset) talk, and challenge fixed-mindset talk when you hear it.

A **fixed-mindset** voice might say things like: "I'm no good at this"; "This would have been easier if you really had talent"; "Other people don't have to work hard to understand this. If I'm working hard, I must not be smart enough"; "You've made a mistake in front of everyone – now they all know that you aren't talented"; and "What if I fail?"

A **growth mindset** voice sounds like: "You made a mistake, which isn't always fun, but it taught you a lot!"; "I don't know how to do this...yet"; "This was my first try – I'll get there eventually with practice"; and "I can always get better."

- Encourage yourself to think about setbacks, criticism, and failure differently. Instead of thinking of mistakes and failures as signs that you are lacking, choose to interpret them signs that you are learning and as indicators that you may need to change your strategy or increase your effort.
- Reframe your goals: Make progress, not perfection.
- Recognize and challenge impossibly high standards and realize when you are overestimating the cost of mistakes/failure. What is the worst that could happen? Usually it's not that bad.
- Be a role model and challenge yourself to make mistakes! Face difficult activities/material, experience setbacks, learn from failures, and try, try again.
- Have extra self-compassion. Be kind to yourself. Think about how you would treat a friend who was struggling and be sure to treat yourself that way, too.
- Take time for mindfulness every day. Take a break from the stress of your everyday and be sure to think about how no one is perfect. Just breathe and be in the moment.

- Start slowly by developing **Mini Habits** (Mini Habits: Smaller Habits, Bigger Results by Stephen Guise). A mini habit is a very small positive behavior that you force yourself to do everyday. When it's "too small to fail" then it can be a great way to build new habits. You will have no choice but to believe in yourself when you're always moving forward. By setting that first step low, discouraged or stuck people can find success right away. Having trouble finding time to work out? Start with one push-up a day. When you aim for the moon, you won't shoot because it's too far away. Instead, aim for the step right in front of you. You might just keep going and eventually reach the moon!



Happy New Year! I hope you had a very happy holiday and a chance to do something extra fun with your family! I also hope you are staying warm – it's cold out there! Did you get a chance to play in the snow? I did! We got so much over Christmas we even got the chance to make a snowperson! I hope that even though it's cold outside, you get bundled up and go outside for a little bit. It's always nice to get outside, don't you think? What do you think of the cold? How does it make your nose and hands feel? My nose and feet always get really cold, so I don't stay outside for too long. My favorite thing to do is to watch the birds if they're around. We also like to listen to the birds talk to each other. Sometimes, if we're really quiet, we can hear one bird chirp and then another will chirp back from far away! I always wonder what they are talking about. Do you ever watch or listen to the birds while you are outside? Maybe next time you are outside playing, you could listen really hard and maybe you'll hear the birds talking to each other, too! I sent a little bird seed in your packet so that you can spread it out on the ground to give our little birdie friends an extra treat this winter. Just shake it out on the ground – maybe a sidewalk or a back porch – so they can see it from above. They might just visit your house and then you'll be able to watch them eat it while you look through your window! I also included a list of some other fun things to do while you're outside this winter. Hopefully you'll get to try a few! In addition, there's a balloon in your packet that your mommy or daddy can help you fill up with water and a little food coloring. Once you put some water in it, take it outside and let it sit overnight (it will need to be a night that gets REALLY cold). Can you guess what will happen to the water? Last of all, I put a little craft in your packet. It's an animal that really likes the cold – what do you think it could be?? I hope you enjoy these little activities and be on the lookout in February for some more!

Have a great January and stay warm -