



# Effects of Perfectionism on Korean American Mental Health

Soni Kim, Psy.D, Director

Crossroads Institute for Psychotherapy and Assessment

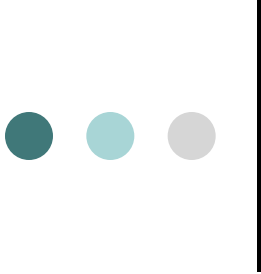


# Perfectionism Defined

Refusal to accept any standard short of perfection (Google Dictionary)

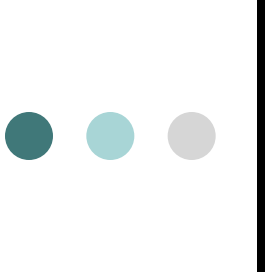
Belief that it is possible to avoid making mistakes through hard work and vigilance

Fear of making mistakes and expected negative judgment



“Asian Americans have more concerns about making mistakes, parental expectations, parental criticisms, and doubts about their actions than Caucasian Americans. This study also found higher levels of pessimism and hopelessness for Asian Americans than Caucasian Americans.” – correlational, not causal, findings.

(Chang, E. C., Cognitive Therapy and Research, Vol 22:3, pp 237-254, 1998)



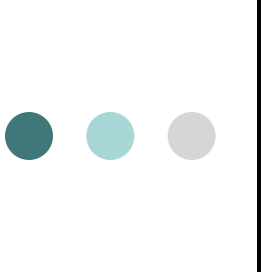
According to the Korea Herald, South Korea has had the highest level of suicide rate among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s 34 countries since 2003. According to 2014 data by Statistics Korea, suicide was the No. 1 cause of death among people aged 10 to 39.

(Published 8/30/15)



# Case Presentation: K

32 year old Korean American male, presenting with severe anxiety and agitation, bouts of uncontrollable crying, insomnia (sleeping less than 4 hours per night over the previous month), and hopelessness. First time seeking therapy. Reported that his anxiety and depression were due to his belief that he is a complete failure because he had not yet succeed in making “a six-figure income” and having an impressive job title that his family could be proud of. He was a graduate of a prestigious university and just started in an MBA program at another prestigious university, after working for several years.



How can perfectionism and resulting belief that one can never be good enough affect mental health and subjective well being?

How might this interact with the predisposition toward various mental health conditions to result in negative outcomes for some?

How can health care providers help to effect a cultural change?