



### Understanding the “Never Good Enough” Feeling

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Many people live with a persistent, gnawing sense of inadequacy—the belief that no matter what they do, they won’t measure up. This feeling often arises from a combination of societal pressures, family expectations, and an internal critic that never seems satisfied.

Below is a practical psychological framework for understanding these feelings and beginning the shift toward a more grounded, intentional, and authentic life.

#### Existential Foundations:

##### Three Ways of Being

Existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre proposed that human beings operate through three fundamental modes of existence:

##### 1. Being-for-others (self-conscious existence)

This mode emerges when we become acutely aware of how others see us. Their perceived judgments shape our behaviour, emotions, and self-worth. We begin altering ourselves to meet real or imagined expectations.

##### 2. Being-in-itself (non-conscious existence)

This is the mode of objects—things that simply are. They have no awareness, no freedom, and no capacity for change.

##### 3. Being-for-itself (conscious, choosing being)

This is the human capacity for reflection, awareness, and choice. We continually shape who we are by the decisions we make moment to moment.

Understanding these modes helps us see how easily we drift away from who we want to be and toward who we think we “should” be.

#### Being-for-Others: Conditions of Worth and Alienation

When we mould ourselves to align with others’ expectations, we fall into what Carl Rogers described as conditions of worth—the belief that we must perform, achieve, or please others in order to be valued or accepted.

Internalising these conditions often creates:

- Chronic self-criticism
- Perfectionism
- People-pleasing
- Emotional exhaustion
- Alienation from our own needs and values

Seeking approval is a cycle with no finish line. The more we rely on external validation, the further we drift from authenticity.

#### Being: Reclaiming Presence and Grounding

Before we can live intentionally, we need to reconnect with the ability simply to *be*—to return to the present moment with awareness and acceptance.

Gestalt therapy emphasises “the here and now” as the foundation of meaningful change. When we ruminate on the past or

catastrophise about the future, we leave ourselves behind and become entangled in old conditions of worth.

Reclaiming presence includes:

- Mindfulness practices
- Grounding and sensory-awareness techniques
- Conscious breathing
- Noticing when the mind drifts and gently returning to the present moment

Over time, these practices reduce anxiety, strengthen emotional regulation, and support intentional—not automatic—responses.

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## Becoming: Moving Toward an Intentional Life

To break the grip of the “never good enough” narrative, we must reclaim our being-for-itself—our capacity to choose, direct, and shape who we are becoming.

This involves several key steps:

### 1. Identifying Your Values

Ask yourself what truly matters—not to others, but to you.

### 2. Challenging Conditions of Worth

Reflect on the expectations you feel pressured to meet:

- *Who placed these expectations on me?*
- *Are they fair or meaningful?*
- *Do they align with my values?*

### 3. Accepting Imperfection

Perfection does not exist. Growth—not flawlessness—is the goal.

### 4. Making Intentional Choices

Choose actions that align with your values, even when they feel uncomfortable.

## 5. Practising Self-Compassion

Treat yourself with the same kindness and understanding you would offer to someone you care about. Mistakes are part of being human, not evidence of inadequacy.

When we shift from external validation to internal alignment, we begin to live with greater clarity, purpose, and self-acceptance.

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## Next Steps: Reflection and Support

Consider journaling on these questions:

- *What expectations do I feel pressured to meet?*
- *Whose voice do those expectations belong to?*
- *What do I genuinely value in myself and my life?*
- *How can I begin making small, intentional choices this week?*

These reflections can be deepened by exploring them with a trusted friend, family member, or psychologist. Self-discovery is not a race—it is an unfolding process.

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## If You Would Like Support

Working with a psychologist can help you:

- Understand the origins of self-criticism
- Strengthen your sense of personal agency
- Clarify your values
- Develop mindfulness and emotional regulation skills
- Build a more compassionate, balanced internal dialogue

You are not alone in this experience. With the right support, it is possible to cultivate a more grounded, confident, and authentic sense of self.