

Nobody's Perfect

Juvenile Fiction/
Perfectionism
Ages 8-12/Grades 3-6

**A Story for Children
About Perfectionism**

Sally Sanders is a perfectionist—if can't she be the best, she feels like a failure. Sally procrastinates, shies away from new things, and constantly compares herself to others, convinced she's not good enough.

With the help of her teachers and mother, Sally learns how to relax and try new things without worrying so much about being the best. She can just be herself, and that is all she needs.

Nobody's Perfect illustrates how extreme perfectionism can get in the way of enjoying life. I recommend this book highly for any child who struggles with the need to always be perfect.

— MARTIN M. ANTONY, Ph.D.
Author, *When Perfect Isn't Good Enough:
Strategies for Coping with Perfectionism*
Professor of Psychology, Ryerson University, Toronto

Ellen Flanagan Burns is giving all children who suffer from the pain of perfectionism a wonderful gift by helping them understand mistakes are a normal part of life and everything they do doesn't have to be absolutely perfect!

— ROSEMARY CALLARD-SZULGIT, Ed.D.
Author of *Perfectionism and Gifted Children*



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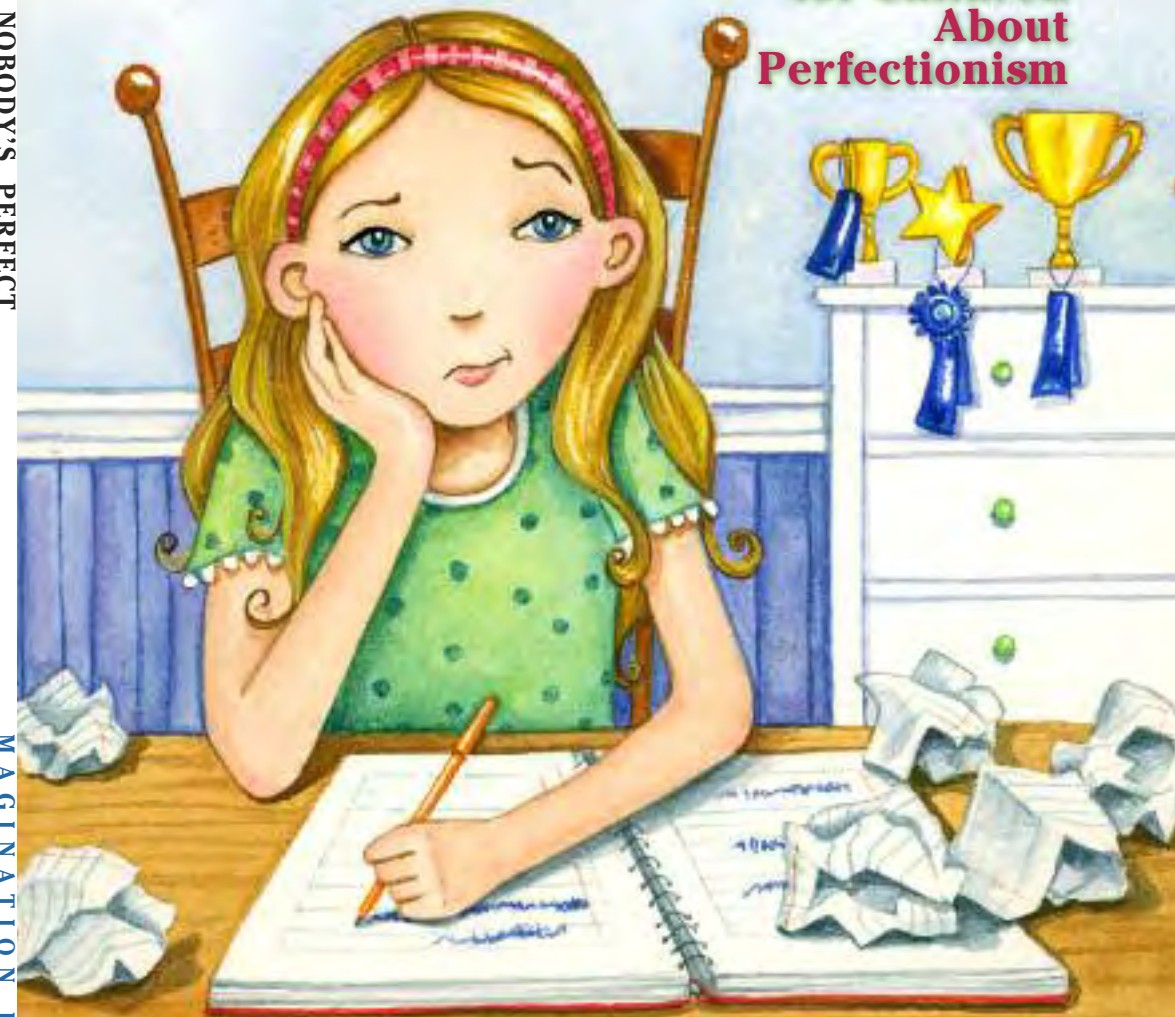
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NOBODY'S PERFECT

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Nobody's Perfect

**A Story
for Children
About
Perfectionism**



by Ellen Flanagan Burns • illustrated by Erica Pelton Villnave



The Recital

“Sally Sanders is next,” announced Mrs. Pratt. Sally walked to the front of the living room and sat at the piano. She glanced around and saw her mom, dad and little brother, Billy, and the parents of Mrs. Pratt’s other students, all sitting in mismatched chairs gathered from around her teacher’s house. It was Sally’s turn to play at the recital, her turn to shine bright like a star, and she looked forward to it.

She began her first piece, “Ocean Waves,” playing softly at first, then much harder, just like real waves that slowly build then forcefully crash onto a sandy beach.

Sally memorized the piece even though Mrs. Pratt said she could use her book because she didn’t want to take the easy way out. Besides, she wanted to play like the older students and they usually memorized their pieces. Next she performed “Clowns at the Circus” lightly and quickly, the way silly clowns juggle for a crowd. As she neared the end of the piece, her finger slipped onto a wrong key and the sounds clashed. To Sally, it felt like the whole piece was ruined, like her whole performance was a flop. She was embarrassed and mad, all at the same time, which is an

awful mix. Probably as awful as an onion and garlic milkshake tastes, if you can imagine. Sally wanted to shrink down to the size of a worm and hide under the pedals of the piano.

She sat by her family when she was done, feeling relieved to hear Mrs. Pratt announcing the next student.

"Very good!" Mr. Sanders whispered. Her mom agreed.

Sally didn't. "I ruined everything," was all she could think. She looked around the room at the other students and felt like she didn't belong there — she spoiled the group. She decided she would have to practice even more every day just to be as good as everyone else. "After all, accomplished players didn't make mistakes," she thought.

Afterwards, Mrs. Pratt invited everyone to the kitchen for refreshments. In the middle of the kitchen table, surrounded by plates of chocolate chip cookies and crackers, was a big bowl of peach punch. Floating in the punch were scoops of vanilla ice cream and ice cubes in the shape of a quarter note.

Sally didn't feel like talking to anyone. And she was pretty sure there wasn't anyone who wanted to talk to her either. "Nobody wants to hang around with a loser," she told herself. She took a sip of punch and stood by herself.

Jill walked over and stood next to Sally. She played right before Sally in the recital. "I liked your pieces," Jill said.

Sally said, "But I messed up on the second one. It sounded really bad."

"Oh, I didn't notice," Jill said. She shrugged, "I made a couple of mistakes too. It's no big deal."

Sally thought Jill was just trying to be nice. She couldn't remember Jill ever making a mistake when she played. In



fact, she made it look so easy all the time.

After another sip of punch and a chocolate chip cookie, Sally was ready to leave.

She wasn't in a very good mood and most of all she didn't want to face Mrs. Pratt. Sally felt like she had let her down.