

THE MIGRAINE RELIEF SERIES · ANGER, GRIEF & LETTING GO
Book 51 of 58

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Perfectionism and the Illusion of Control

*Questioning the quiet belief that doing everything
right keeps pain and uncertainty away*

ROD GABRIEL ZR

Author of Living with Visual Aura Migraine



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Perfectionism and the Illusion of Control

*Questioning the quiet belief that doing everything
right keeps pain and uncertainty away*

Designed with spacious type, warm colors, and generous white space for visual comfort — especially for readers navigating aura, light sensitivity, or neurological strain.

A note on care. This mini-book shares one person's lived experience and general wellness practices. It is not medical advice, and it is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a qualified healthcare professional. Migraine has many forms and causes. Always consult your doctor about your symptoms, your triggers, and any medication or treatment decisions.

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BEFORE WE BEGIN

A letter to you

How much of our suffering comes from the event itself, and how much comes from our fight against the fact that it doesn't match what we expected?

Here's another honest answer: sometimes our suffering comes from a quiet bargain we never actually agreed to out loud — if I do everything correctly, I can avoid the error, the pain, the uncertainty. Perfectionism promises safety. It rarely delivers anything but exhaustion and a longer list of rules to follow.

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The experience: the rule that was never enough

I built rules for years — sleep exactly this many hours, eat exactly on schedule, avoid exactly these triggers — each one a small bargain struck with an unpredictable condition. And still, some mornings, none of it mattered. The rule had been followed perfectly. The migraine came anyway.

The automatic thought: 'if I do this exactly right'

The sentence underneath perfectionism is seductive precisely because it sounds like competence: *if I do this exactly right, I can avoid the bad outcome*. It's rarely tested consciously. It's simply assumed, and every failure to control the uncontrollable gets quietly filed as a personal failing instead of what it usually is: proof the bargain was never real to begin with.

Perfectionism is control's favorite disguise. It rarely delivers the safety it promises. It reliably delivers a longer list of rules.

The emotion and the reaction

When the rule fails anyway, the feeling underneath is rarely simple disappointment. It's closer to a quiet self-blame: *I must have done something wrong*. The reaction is usually more rules, tighter ones, an even more demanding bargain struck with a body that was never actually negotiating in the first place.

The chain of perfectionism

□ The perfectionism chain

Experience: something goes wrong despite doing everything 'right.'

↓ Automatic thought: *'I must have made a mistake somewhere.'*

↓ Emotion: quiet shame, tightening into more rules.

↓ Reaction: tighter control, less room for uncertainty of any kind.

↓ Observation: *'the rules were never actually a contract with my body. They were a story I told myself about control.'*

↓ Possibility: some things were never within the rules' reach to begin with, and that was never a personal failure.

PAUSE & REFLECT

Your own bargain

A rule I've built for myself that quietly promises more control than it can actually deliver...

What would it feel like to follow that rule because it helps, not because it guarantees an outcome?

The observation: control that was never actually there

Some rules genuinely help — steady sleep, steady meals, steady hydration all reduce the overall load on a migraine-prone body. What perfectionism adds on top isn't the rule itself. It's the unspoken guarantee that following it perfectly buys certainty. That guarantee was never true, and it was never yours to promise yourself in the first place.

The possibility of letting go

Letting go here doesn't mean abandoning the habits that genuinely help. It means releasing the quiet belief that doing everything right entitles you to an outcome the body was never obligated to deliver.

*Keep the habit. Release the guarantee.
They were never the same thing, even
though perfectionism worked hard to
convince you otherwise.*

YOUR SPACE

My notes

[illegible]



CLOSING

Keep going, gently

Doing things well is wisdom. Believing it guarantees an outcome is a bargain your body never actually signed. Releasing that bargain doesn't mean releasing the habits — only the illusion riding on top of them.

How much of our suffering comes from the event itself, and how much comes from our fight against the fact that it doesn't match what we expected?

*Next in the series: **The Body That Interrupts Your Plans** — on the frustration of accepting limits you didn't choose.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROD GABRIEL ZR

This closing collection returns once more to the voice at the heart of *Living with Visual Aura Migraine* — not to explain another symptom, but to sit with the feelings that so often ride alongside one: anger that things aren't as they should be, and grief for the versions of days, people, and himself that pain quietly rewrote.

One question runs underneath every book here: how much of our suffering comes from the event itself, and how much comes from our fight against the fact that the event doesn't match what we expected? He doesn't have a tidy answer. He has ten honest attempts at sitting with the question anyway.

Want the whole journey?

This guide is adapted from the complete book, *Living with Visual Aura Migraine: Finding Relief Through the Rough Times* — the full story, with every practice, every episode, and every lesson in one place.

The Migraine Relief Series

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