

Client Exercise Sheet 10

Tricks and Cheats of the OCD Con Artist

The goal of this week's exercise is to learn how to better identify and counter the tricks and cheats of the OCD. Remember, you never argue with the OCD. Rather than analyzing the relative merits of an OCD argument better to see how the argument is flawed right from the start. It is never about there being a small likelihood that the arguments for the doubt may be correct, but the particular way this doubt comes about. That is, the obsessional story takes you away from reality, which makes the OCD always irrelevant and false even if it is possible in a very abstract sense. If you still have problems with this idea, then you will need to address this issue with your therapist.

Now, take out your OCD story, and write down each sentence or partial sentence in your story. Each of those sentences contain a specific trick or cheat the OCD uses to convince you it is real. Next, using the accompanying worksheet, write down which of the tricks or cheats apply to each sentence in your story. First write down the trick or cheat that best applies. Often, other tricks and cheats will apply as well, which you can write down as second or third.

To make this a bit easier, first look at the following example given previously of someone who thinks her hands could be dirty and so she must wash her hands:

Example 1

So, I say to myself: Well, my kids were playing outside and like I know it's dirty outside. I've seen the dirt on pavements and I think they may have touched something dirty.

Selective out-of-context facts (over-reliance as possibility)

They picked up something from the street, dirty paper or dog shit, and then I say well if they're dirty then I'm going to be dirty.

Mismatching (category error)

And I'm going to make the house dirty, and I imagine the house dirty and me with my dirty hands, so I start to feel dirty.

Absorption in the imagination (living the fearful consequences)

So I go in and wash and I can't stop, you know, it's like a voice in my head, saying over and over again, you're dirty, even though you're washing and you see nothing you could still be dirty.

How quickly were you able to dismiss the different elements in this contamination story? Were you able to see how each of the tricks and cheats of the OCD applied here? If the story was different from your own, then you should have been fairly easily able to dismiss it as irrelevant and wrong.

And this is of course what you are also striving for with your own OCD story. So try to do the same thing and write down each of the tricks and cheats that apply to the separate elements in your own story.

In addition, the exercise on your training card focuses on real-life situations where you find yourself having a doubt. Each time an obsession or doubt occurs, you will be asked to (1) uncover the trick and cheat of the OCD underlying the doubt, (2) see how this trick makes the doubt irrelevant and wrong, (3) remember your alternative non-OCD story to replace the obsessional doubt, and (4) dismiss the doubt. The whole exercise should last no longer than 1–2 minutes each time. Don't forget, the OCD would want you to think it over, one more time, two more times . . . three . . . and it will never be enough. If you find yourself doing that, then the OCD has already lured you into OCD land with yet another trick. Eventually however, you will be able to see them all, at which point the OCD will give up all together.

Client Training Card 10

Tricks and Cheats of the OCD Con Artist

Learning Points (Front)

- OCD uses tricks and cheats to make it *appear* that your obsession has something to do with reality while it only takes you further away from reality.

The tricks and cheats of the OCD include *mismatching, living the fear, out of context facts, reverse reasoning, double jeopardy, testing it out, going deep and a distrust of the senses (or self)*.

Your non-obsessional story brings you closer to what is really there since it is in accord with reality.

Seeing through the tricks and cheats of the OCD con artist will make the OCD disappear.

Daily Exercise (Back)

- Each time an obsessional doubt occurs, identify the specific trick and cheat that gave rise to the doubt.
- Realize how this trick makes the doubt false and irrelevant.
- Imagine vividly how the situation would feel like if the non-OCD story applies.
- Let go of the obsessional doubt after you recounted the non-OCD story. It is the only thing that is real.



Cartoon 14. Seeing yourself in O'Seedy's mirror.