

## Client Exercise Sheet 5

### OCD Is 100% 'Imaginary'

Perhaps you already intellectually accept the idea that your obsessional doubts originate 100% from the imagination. And with imagination we mean that there is *never* any direct evidence for the obsessional doubt in the here and now. It is what makes your doubt obsessional as opposed to it being a normal doubt.

1. Will it rain tomorrow?
2. How long will the journey take?

Such normal questioning occur with specific evidence or information for the doubt. They occur in an appropriate *context*. For example, you may have plans to spend the next day outside, or you noticed you were running late for an appointment. Also, these doubts are quickly resolved (check the weather report, or do a simple calculation on how much longer the journey will take), and from a commonsense point of view you would be convinced all had been done.

Now, take the following obsessional doubts:

1. Did I shut the stove?
2. Did I read that word correctly?

If these doubts are obsessional, they will occur without specific evidence or information. You would check without having direct evidence or information that the stove was still on or that you didn't read the word correctly. The doubt would arise in a situation without having any real indication that the stove is left on. Such doubts are not so easily resolved if you do not realize there is no real evidence in the here and now for the doubts. Even if from a commonsense point of view you would know you have checked enough, the compulsive urge to check would continue.

Being able to determine whether something is a normal or obsessional doubt can make a real difference, especially with respect to your own OCD doubts. First, however, we'll put the idea into practice with some OCD stories other than your own. To do so, try to determine whether the stories written down lead into an obsessional or normal doubt. Remember, if there is no direct link to reality in the here and now, the ensuing doubt is nearly always obsessional.

## Creative Exercises

### Story 1

A woman checks the front door five times on leaving to go to work and looks back several times to see if her cat has escaped. She also looks and fixates on the door when in her car for a few minutes. The cat has escaped once before in the summer when she was gardening and left the back door open. However, it has never escaped at the moment she leaves for work.

What is the doubt in the story?

---

---

Is this doubt obsessional?       Yes       No

If yes, what makes it obsessional (or non-obsessional)? Please be specific in your answer.

---

---

### Story 2

A pharmacist recounts the number of pills when she gets distracted during her count. She believes the recounting is justified because it's important to be careful when it comes to people's health. Yet, she never has made any mistake with counting pills. However, she did once make a mistake in labelling the bottles.

What is the doubt in the story?

---

---

Is this doubt obsessional?       Yes       No

If yes, what makes it obsessional (or non-obsessional)? Please be specific in your answer.

---

### Story 3

A girl is preoccupied that she might unwittingly hit a passerby in the street as she walks along. This has never happened, but she often feels very angry at people. She once knocked someone down in a supermarket when someone was getting in her way all the time. It really feels to her that she could do it with even less provocation the next time.

What is the doubt in the story?

---

---

Is this doubt obsessional?  Yes  No

If yes, what makes it obsessional (or non-obsessional)? Please be specific in your answer.

---

---

### Story 4

A man checks the clothes in his wardrobe for ants, believing ants will lay eggs and eat and destroy them like moths do. His clothes have already been eaten once by moths. He once saw an ant on the towel in the bathroom and another climbing up onto the plant. They are small and could get in and ruin anything like moths.

What is the doubt in the story?

---

---

Is this doubt obsessional?  Yes  No

If yes, what makes it obsessional (or non-obsessional)? Please be specific in your answer.

---

---

Now, let's turn to your own OCD story. You already have it written out from a previous exercise. Try to determine whether there is anything in your OCD story that has any direct link in reality. Keep in mind that even though some ideas and facts are often *about* reality, this does not mean they have a *direct* link to reality in the here and now.

Did you find any direct justification for your own doubts in the here and now?

Yes       No

If yes, write down below if you found anything in your own story directly relating to reality in the here and now:

---

---

Is there anything currently not part of your OCD story that makes you feel your doubt directly relates to the here and now?

---

---

Write down below anything you have learned from this exercise or wish to comment on, or that you have questions about.

---

---



**Cartoon 8.** The crossing.

## Client Training Card 5

### OCD Is 100% Imaginary

#### Learning Points (Front)

- Obsessional doubt comes from within you. It has nothing to do with reality.
- Obsessional doubt occurs without direct evidence in the here and now.
- The reasoning behind obsessional doubt is 100% based in the imagination.

#### Daily Exercise (Back)

Each time you have an obsessional doubt, ask yourself whether there is or was any direct evidence or information that justifies the doubt. If you think there might be, write it down to bring with you to the next session. Try to compare what the doubt says 'could be' with information coming from your senses, perception and common sense.