

Client Exercise Sheet 6

OCD doubt is 100% irrelevant

Credibility

Sometimes people with OCD look at each other in disbelief when they hear about the other person's obsessions. They can't believe that anyone would doubt in these situations. Just think of an obsession you have read about before or during this treatment that made absolutely no sense to you. There are probably several you can think of which you do not find credible at all. Write down below a couple you can think of right now.

Obsessions which I find not credible:

1. _____

2. _____

As unlikely as these obsessions may seem, they are not really different from your own. They are in fact very similar, because ALL obsessions occur without direct evidence in the here and now. In other words, your own obsessions are as irrelevant to reality as the ones you have just written down.

Seeing your Own Obsession Differently

Being able to see how your own obsession is irrelevant to reality is important. Once you do, your doubt will lose a lot of its credibility, and you will feel far less need to act on it. You might even begin to look at your own obsessions with the same level of disbelief as you feel towards others' obsessions. But to be able to do so, you need to fully understand how the OCD is able to make something incredible seem credible by introducing a lot of possibilities that have no direct link to reality. It is those possibilities that make it seem like the OCD has something to do with reality in the here and now.

Exercise

The exercise for this week is to pick a situation that is very neutral to you. It should have no importance to you whatsoever, and be an area where you experience no problems whatsoever. You could even pick a situation related to the obsessions you wrote down earlier. Then, once you have picked the situation, we want you to make it obsessional. That is, you think of all the reasons why a particular situation might not be safe, and why a situation that would normally be neutral when you look at it in a non-obsessional way becomes a problem.

For example, if you were to make the neutral act of crossing the street entirely obsessional, it could look something like this:

“It is not safe to cross the street. I heard about an accident happen to someone who was always very careful. So accidents can happen just like that whether or not you pay attention. No one takes any notice of pedestrians anymore. So now when I cross the street, I do not look twice or three times to my left or right.

Instead, I stand there for half an hour looking to see if there are any cars coming. Even if I don't see any car, one could come out from a corner suddenly. Or it might be a silent car that I cannot hear, since there are even electrical cars now. So I often decide not to cross the street. It just doesn't feel safe even if I don't see any traffic.”

Now, write down below a different situation you picked that is ordinarily completely neutral to you:

Next, make this situation obsessional by introducing a lot of possibilities on why it could be dangerous or unsafe:

Creating OCD

As you can probably see, a situation that initially did not seem very believable became a lot more credible simply by introducing a lot of possibilities. Of course, it won't have such a big impact on you as your own OCD story. It was a neutral situation to you to begin with. But how would you go about disconfirming the story you just wrote down? Would you argue with the specifics of the possibilities you introduced? Or is there something else that makes the story irrelevant?

Write down below what is wrong with the story:

And how does this apply to your own OCD story?

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

On the basis of what you have now learned about OCD doubt and its role in obsessional sequences and behaviour:

Do you see how your OCD can be resolved?

- Yes No

How confident are you? (0–100%)

How do you think you can best resolve your OCD?

Client Training Card 6

OCD doubt is 100% irrelevant

Learning Points (Front)

- Obsessional doubt is completely irrelevant to reality.
- Just something being possible does not make it relevant.
- Normally when you reason, you never entertain possibilities that have no basis in reality in the here and now.

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 or possibility. Next, think of an example in your daily life where you would never consider a similar possibility because it is irrelevant to the here and now. Without debating with the OCD, try to see each time how this makes the obsessional doubt irrelevant.