

Client Worksheet 2

The Logic Behind OCD

The exercises of last week were intended to help you understand the obsessional sequence. You should now be able to identify your own doubts that lie at the core of your OCD. Being able to recognize and identify your doubt is important, since we will address in many ways in the course of your therapy.

Reasonable Doubt

It is also important to understand that doubt does not come out of the blue. You can not have obsessions or doubts without reason. There is a certain kind of logic and reasoning behind obsessional doubts. For example, if you doubt or worry about the possibility that you might hurt someone, be contaminated or make a mistake, then there is a reasoning process behind these ideas. At the very least, you consider the doubt to be possibly true for some reason or another, since if you really considered it to be impossible then you would not have the doubt

Reasoning categories

Below you see some of the categories that are often part of the reasoning by which most people arrive a doubt.

1. Abstract facts and ideas
2. General rules
3. Hearsay
4. Personal experiences
5. It's possible

For example, if you have the doubt that you might have accidentally run over a child after driving out of the driveway, *abstract facts* might say tell you accidents do occur, *rules* that you should be careful when driving, *hearsay* that you read recently about someone driving over a child and *personal experience* that you once hit the garbage bin when driving out, and after all it is always *possible* you might have a accidentally hit a child even when not seeing that you did.

OCD Sounds Pretty Reasonable!

Another example would be the doubt that a person might have been contaminated with dangerous germs. The justification behind the doubt might take the following form:

1. Germs exist. (Abstract facts)
2. Surgeons are obliged to wash their hands too. (Rules)
3. I heard of someone getting ill after visiting a bathroom. (Hearsay)
4. I once got ill after eating unwashed salad in the Caribbean. (Experience)
5. There is always a chance of anybody contracting illness. (Possibility)

The point of all this is to show you that there is reasoning behind the doubt, and that doubts can present themselves in as a 'reasonable' way. This is not to say that these doubts are 'correct'. There are a number of other crucial ingredients which render your obsessional doubts invalid for different reasons. In the course of the therapy we hope to show you why they are always false. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. For now, it is important to understand and identify the justification behind your *own* obsessional doubt.