Client Worksheet 4
The Vulnerable Self-Theme

The worksheet in this section covers:

- How to discover your vulnerable OCD self through decentring your everyday doubts around you.
- Understanding how the self-theme may dictate the type of everyday obsessions you experience.
- Understanding how the OCD is not a real self but an illusory self arrived at on the basis of inferential confusion.
- In other words, it is a possible self you are convinced you could become and who you do not wish to become, but are convinced you could become on the basis of an absorbing story.
- Your real self is exactly the opposite of the OCD feared self you fear could become.

Looking at the doubts listed on the clinical scale, perhaps we see:

- Doubt that I checked the stove.
- Doubt that I wrote the correct number.
- Doubt that I said the right word.
- Doubt that the car door is locked properly.
- First question to ask: ‘What do the doubts share in common here?’

Answer: The first obvious point in common amongst the doubts is checking to see if everything was fine.

- The second question: ‘What does this checking action tell us about your’s self-construct?’

Answer: The client fears that she or he may have made an error, mistake or gaffe.

- The third question: ‘What sort of person would do this?’ introduces the self-theme.

Answer: A person who is clumsy, prone to gaffes, inadequate or careless.

- The self-theme is idiosyncratic and can be quite complex. It is important to cover all the options of self-themes with the client and include all components.

- Your doubts reveal your OCD self, since you only doubt obsessionally in areas where your self-theme says you would be most likely to doubt. For example, a person who is constantly checking to see if the lights in the house are off clearly considers he is a person likely to leave the lights on.
At the same time he does not constantly check whether the car is parked correctly when the client goes out to a car park, clearly does not consider it any more likely than anyone else to find the parked incorrectly.

- The OCD self-theme plays an important part in determining the type of OCD you experience. Hence it is important to know it. In other words, the self is not a real self that you can identify with real positive attributes. It is rather a non-existent self which you are afraid you will become. Or, more precisely, you think maybe you could become. Rather, it’s another obsessional doubt and follows all the reasoning errors that make your obsessional doubt believable. Good news: you will readily identify all the imaginary and illusory tricks by which the OCD convinces you that you could become a self you fear, and don’t want to be.

- Bad news: the OCD has done a really good job of convincing you that this illusory self is a real possibility.

- The OCD self is actually the complete opposite of who you really are, and in a later chapter we will cover how to replace the OCD feared self with the authentic self you really are.

- Obviously, knowing and changing this theme comprise a giant step in helping you overcome your OCD. Why? Well, because if this theme makes you vulnerable to doubt in the way you do, then repositioning you towards a more solid self will make you far less vulnerable. You will begin to base your self-evaluation on who you really are and what you are really likely to do, not on a self that OCD says you might possibly, one day, become.