

## Client Worksheet 6

### Doubt and Possibility

#### Imaginary Nature

You hopefully now agree with the fact that nothing about your obsession is supported by anything in the here and now. It originates entirely from you rather than the outside. It comes from the imagination. But what does this mean exactly? Are there any implications to this idea?

#### Possible Versus Probable

On the surface, the idea that there is no direct evidence for the obsession seems to make little difference. After all, people do become contaminated and ill even though there was nothing in reality to indicate that might happen. Likewise, people do forget to check whether the door is locked, and their homes are broken into, often completely unexpected and without warning. So it seems that the obsession might still be possible even if there is no justification in the here and now. But that is exactly the problem with OCD! It thrives on possibility and doubt! So before saying that the obsession might still be possible even if it comes from your imagination, let's have a closer look at that argument. Does something merely being possible really provide a justification for anything? Does it justify your checking, washing, worrying and everything else the OCD has put on your plate?

Keep in mind that we are not debating here whether your obsessional doubt is possible or not in the abstract. Most obsessions are indeed possible in a very abstract and generalized sense. So this is not what we are arguing here. What we are looking at right now is whether making the argument that something is possible in the here and now is justified by an abstract or remote possibility. Or is it impossible because it's irrelevant?

#### Example

Let's start with something that is really possible even if it's a small possibility. Let's say, for example, that I have an obsession about a meteor falling on my head. I constantly check the sky to ensure that nothing is falling down. The fact that there is really nothing in the here and now to support the idea that there is a meteor around doesn't convince me. I feel I have to worry about it without any sort of real justification. Here, you would probably agree that the mere possibility of a meteor landing on my head provides no real justification for me to start worrying about meteors falling down even though it might be possible.

## In Your Own Case

But how is this different from your own obsessions? You don't have any justification for your own obsession in the here and now either. The fact that your own obsession might be less of a rare occurrence than a meteor falling down makes no difference. Again, it's not about how possible something is on a chance-by-chance basis. Rather the problem is relying on possibility to begin with if there is nothing in the here and now to support the obsession.

## Selectivity of Doubt

And ironically, whether you know it or not, you already agree with the idea that there has to be evidence in the here and now to take a doubt seriously. In most aspects of your life, you never just rely on possibility. For example, do you worry about a car running you over after you checked the street before crossing? You don't, because you trust what your senses are telling you. You have this trust in your own senses or self in almost every other aspect of your life that has not been affected by the OCD. You don't confuse stories that import facts and possibilities from elsewhere as though they are happening now.

## Why Act Differently?

Yet, in the OCD situation you suddenly reason and act differently. There, you believe that only the possibility that the door might be unlocked is already enough to justify you checking it. The fact that you have seen it lock seems to make no difference. Or alternatively, you might worry about being contaminated without actually seeing anything on your hands. In other words, your reasoning is very selective when it comes to OCD. For whatever reason, you do not really trust yourself in these situations.

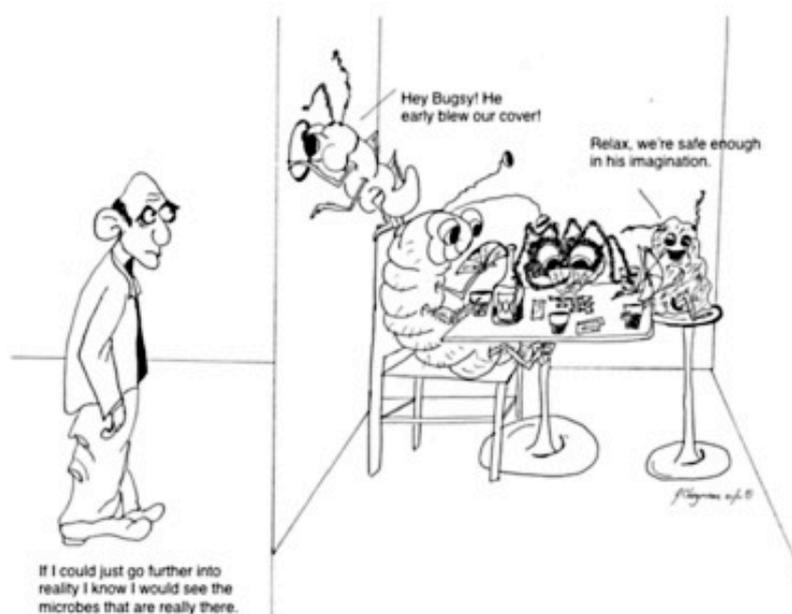
## Realizing Irrelevance

But none of this changes the fact that you can realize right now that your obsession is 100% irrelevant to the here and now. It is irrelevant since just because something is possible provides no justification for anything in the here and now. It is exactly the same as worrying that the ceiling might come crashing down. These things are possible, but you do not worry about them without direct evidence. It would only make sense to worry or doubt if you see sudden cracks in the wall, hear loud and strange noises above your head or something along those lines. There would be sense information in the here and now to justify the doubt; if there is sense information to support it, it would be a non-obsessional doubt.

## Applying the Principle

Do not get hung up on the fact that these examples may seem a little far-fetched. If you look at it carefully, you will see that the same principle applies to your own obsessions. You treat a mere possibility as if it is a realistic probability. You can come to this realization by applying this knowledge to your own OCD. And when you fully realize that this reasoning is incorrect you can indeed completely get rid of your OCD.

You only have to apply it.



**Cartoon 9.** Going beyond reality.