

Client Worksheet 7

The OCD Bubble

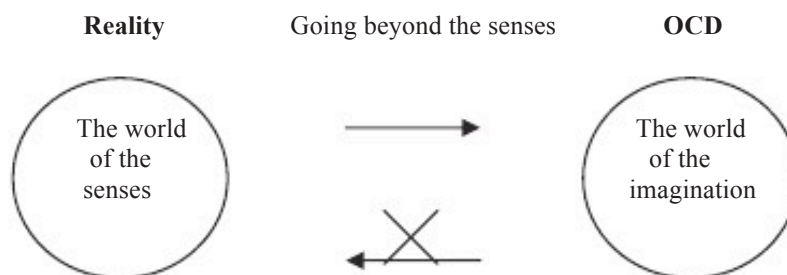
It may not seem obvious at first, but you would be surprised how much your OCD is about going beyond the senses. In fact, the *only way* for the OCD to make a convincing case is to come up with possibilities that make it seem *as if* the doubt has something to do with reality around you. More importantly, these possibilities make it seem as if reality does not really matter.

Let's say that you worry about certain dangerous germs on a particular object. Yet, there is no evidence in reality that these germs are present. It looks clean. There is no smell. The object has been used before without incident. On the basis of what reality and your senses tell you, there is nothing to worry about. Yet somehow, the OCD is able to make an obsessional doubt relevant by going *beyond* the senses:

For example:

1. Germs are too small to be seen. . . so there might still be germs on it.
2. Who knows who else has touched it. . . so there might still be germs on it.
3. People never clean enough. . . so there might still be germs on it.

All these possibilities may not necessarily be impossible, yet they do not originate from sense and common reality around you. In other words, obsessional doubt is *never* kept alive by reality, but *only* by what your imagination can come up with. And because OCD is such an *all-or-nothing* process that originates 100% from the imagination, there is an exact point in time where you enter the world of the imagination. It occurs with the first thought that you have that takes you beyond the senses. Like this:



When it comes to OCD, reality and the imagination are really two separate worlds. And you are entering the imagination with that first thought that gets you beyond the senses. The worst part, however, is that as soon as you cross over into the imagination, it is very difficult to get back to the world of the senses, or reality. This is often described by people with OCD as being in a bubble, or a circle. There is this sense that you are sucked into something from where is no escape no matter how hard you try. And you are indeed sucked into something.

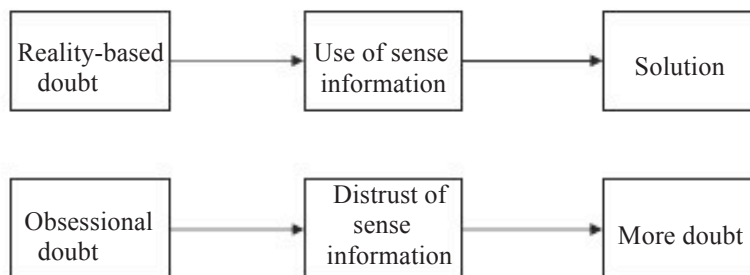
You are sucked inside the world of the imagination – welcome to *the OCD Bubble*.

The following sections cover what the OCD Bubble is really about.

The OCD Leads You Beyond Reality into More Doubt

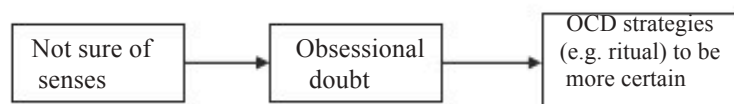
Obsessional doubts never have any direct link to reality, which means they always come from your imagination. The story leads you to believe that maybe there is something wrong in reality and that therefore you should act in reality to overcome it. But the doubt is only a story. So when you give in to the story, you are only encouraging more doubt. Which is why the more you perform the ritual, the deeper you go into OCD, the less you are in touch with reality and so the more you doubt. Ironically, in going into OCD land, you sometimes feel you are getting deeper into reality, but it's exactly the opposite: the more you go into OCD, the further away you go from reality.

The sequences are as follows:

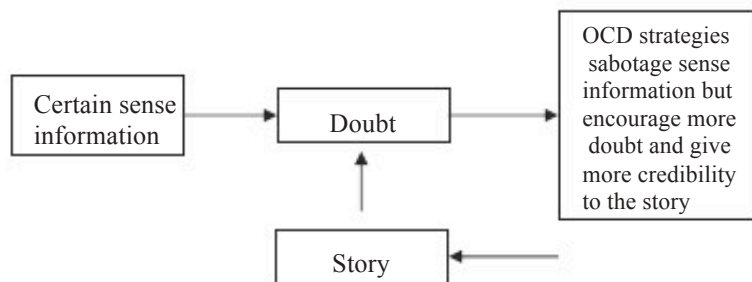


You might argue that it is exactly because you are unsure of your senses that you doubt. But our research shows it is exactly the opposite. It is only when you are certain according to your senses that the obsessional doubt then takes over and tells you *not* to be sure of your sense information. It trumps the senses and creates doubt on the basis of a good story, not on the basis of sense information.

How it seems:



How it is:



Giving in to the OCD Makes You Less Secure

OCD sabotages the very action it is supposed to make secure. First of all, people with OCD are often so caught up in the OCD Bubble that they are not aware of what is going on around them. They may not hear their baby cry. They may not notice a car looming up. They may not realize they are being pickpocketed. But OCD actions can also directly sabotage the aim of being secure. For example, testing a door several times per day will make it loose. Asking people if you said the right thing because you are afraid to upset them will eventually make them upset. Staring at a locker to make sure it is closed properly so you won't be robbed will draw the attention of thieves. Scrubbing hands to remove invisible infections will eventually destroy protective skin.

Remember that you go into the OCD spiral on the basis of a subjective doubt which is generated by a story. The more you go into OCD, the more you generate doubt, since this is the only outcome. OCD reinforces doubt so it cannot give you anything else. You think you will find a solution in continuing the questioning, but mostly you just doubt more. Sometimes a rule will let you out of the spiral. Example: 'I've done this five times' or 'I've put a lot of effort so it must be done'. But you are *never* more certain of real information than when you started the doubt; you are always *less* certain. The reason is because you were certain before the OCD doubt came along, but the OCD made you doubt your sense of certainty with its story. So now you are not focused on reality at all but on a story. So actually OCD is exposing you to more potential danger whilst you are absorbed in its story. We have met people who have ignored real dangers and been hurt because they were too absorbed in their OCD spiral.

Entering the OCD Bubble Makes You More Stressed Out

Going into the OCD Bubble is often difficult to resist for people with OCD. This is because the OCD tempts you the illusion of with providing a solution to the obsessional doubt. Everything would be so much better if only you could do the ritual and solve the problem. But that feeling is going to be very short-lived. You will get in fact the opposite of what the OCD is promising, because giving in to the OCD is like giving in to someone shouting orders at you.

Initially you feel less stressed. But one thing should be clear: doing the action does not make you less stressed, *it makes you more stressed out.*

OCD makes you more stressed because you are constantly putting in more effort than necessary and doing irrelevant actions to make yourself feel secure. But effectively, you are working overtime for nothing, and worse, all your effort is sabotaging your security. At the end of all this, you are more anxious than when you started. That's why people often end up avoiding OCD situations. It all seems so stressful. Anticipating, preparing, all that extra attention, muscle tension: you're worn out, and yet you think OCD makes you less stressed? OCD is some conman!

You only feel better because you have given in to a screaming bully, and if you do as the bully says he or she stops screaming for a short while, but of course in the long run you reinforce the bully. It is for this reason that staying out of the OCD Bubble will go a long way towards your recovery from OCD.