

Client Worksheet 8

Reality Sensing

Imaginary Story

So far, you have learned that OCD is an imaginary story. You also know that the OCD is not really relevant to reality because there is no sense information in the here and now to support your doubts. Now we add Now you will move to understand that the OCD doubt is *always* false because it goes against your senses.

OCD Deconstructed

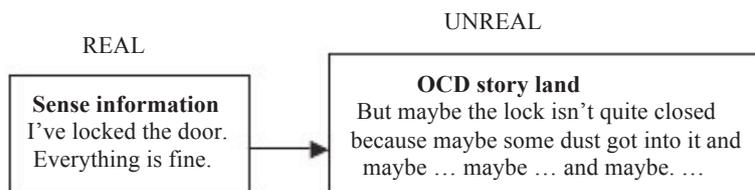
Now that sounds a brazen claim; after all, you might say, OK it may be imaginary, OK it may be irrelevant, but even irrelevant imaginary ideas can come true, or just be true by coincidence. However, in the case of OCD, research shows that it is always false because of the way the OCD story is *constructed*. The doubting takes you away from the here and now by making you believe a story that has nothing to do with the current context. It tells you to ignore your senses. So it is *against* reality from the word 'go', that's why it's false.

Sensing the Certain

Think of yourself in your kitchen. Your senses have already told you that all is correct, that there is no dust. In fact, your senses have given you *certain* information as they always do on the current state of affairs. The OCD then goes against this certainty by creating an imaginary story. But since the original sense information was correct, it came from your senses and is real, then the OCD must always be unreal.

The Proof

The proof that the OCD doubt and story is false is that never once, in our research experience, has an OCD 'maybe' turned out true. Ask yourself, how often has your OCD doubt been correct? Did you ever find any real proof that your doubt was correct?



The doubt of course jumps in so quickly you don't realize that you were certain before it arrived. This is why you have been working hard in the previous week on learning how to identify the cross-over point that leads you into the imagination. This combined with the knowledge that there already is certainty before the doubt will give you a fighting chance to recover from OCD.

Feeling Certain Today?

Finding certainty is not a difficult thing to do. For example, if you have frequent obsessions about maybe having forgotten to lock the door, or 'perhaps' the cheque you put in the envelope was not signed, do you actually take into account what your senses have told you just a moment before? After all, you have *felt* the door lock. You may even have tried to open it after locking it. This is exactly the sense information you have to start taking into account. And you should start taking it into account as soon as you find yourself crossing over into the imagination, because it clearly shows up the obsessional doubt false and unreal.

Get Real

You may feel this situation does not apply to you. Perhaps because you feel there is not always sense information around to tell you whether all is OK. It is true that the here and now it is not always about physical sense information alone. But it is about *reality* devined directly from outer and inner sense information.

For example, if you have the obsessional doubt that you might suddenly hurt someone, then you have to ask yourself what reality tells you about this idea. When do you have this idea that you might hurt someone? Does it make any sense to have this idea when you are not angry at anyone? Does it make sense when such a thought occurs when you are standing somewhere minding your own business? In the case of obsessional, your *actual* state of mind will always completely conflict with the doubt. So it's not always just the physical senses that make the OCD wrong. It includes your inner reality as well – your 'inner senses'.

Reality Sensing

Reality sensing is about staying with information from the here and now. This means, that you will actually take notice of what is there instead of making assumptions of what is there solely on the basis of an imaginary OCD story. Instead of avoiding a situation or adding doubt to it by going off in the imagination, you will define reality by relying on information from the five senses. And as you have learned in the therapy so far, relying on the senses will leave no room whatsoever for obsessional doubt.

For example, do you look at your hands after you feel an urge to wash? Do your senses play any role at all right now? When you check whether you left something unlocked, does it matter whether you heard and felt it lock?

Often, for people with OCD, this type of sense information is not given any attention, since the OCD story has found a way around it. But, it is the only reality that gives a resolution to your obsessional doubt, and that means learning to trust the senses again – and knowing that this is enough.

Easy Does It

Can it be so easy that all it takes is to trust the senses? Yes and no. It's easy, because if you really trust your senses and common sense, then there will be no obsessional doubt. It's not so easy, because trusting the senses will give you the feeling you are not doing enough. The OCD has told you for a long time to do more and more, and even then it may still not be enough. So doing less will leave a void and a feeling that you are not doing enough. That may produce anxiety, discomfort, or fear. Yet, you *are* doing enough, and in fact all that you can do, if you trust the senses. In short, it is time to trust the senses once again. And if you do so, you will end up at an entirely different conclusion from that of the obsessional doubt. There would be no doubt. There would only be certainty.

Realizing that there is certainty before the doubt is exactly what the exercises for the coming week are about.



Cartoon 11. Safety first.