

Client Worksheet 9

A Different Story

You saw earlier how the OCD convinces you to doubt by creating a story. The story is made up of a sequence of reasons or justifications on to why you should doubt. The strength of the argument lies largely in the fact that it is a story, not a sequence of events. The importance of viewing the argument as a story is that as a story it has considerable power because it does more than just state facts. It is dynamic, it moves us along from a starting point to an end point and it's like a journey where we pass all manner of images and events on the way.

The Candid Camera

Suppose I pick up a pen and try to convince you the pen is really a secret camera. I could just state this pen is a camera and discuss the make and type of camera. This statement on its own might not be too convincing. But suppose I relate a story about it being built in the same factory as James Bond's special car. How the developer won a prize for his work. It was tested in field trials in different situations. Finally it was patented and is now in general use as a spy pen.

Now all I have done here is to connect up a series of statements and observations in a sequence to make them more believable. One piece of the story 'piggybacks' onto the next piece and so on, until there is an accumulation of experiences supporting the idea. Also one begins to live in the story. The lived-in feeling comes from a number of devices. Firstly there is the dynamic aspect of 'moving along' in the story. Secondly there is the detail of the scenery as you go past it. The richer the scenery and the descriptive detail, the more it is lived in. also there is feeling of being immersed in the story and the detachment from everyday life, which allows the imagination free rein. You not only conjure up images and transitions as the story moves you along, but also build the scenes in your imagination and make the events seem even more vivid, personal and meaningful. So you become immersed or absorbed in the reality of your story. As you go off into the imagination, what at the outset might have appeared completely impossible now appears almost logical.

For example, let's take a ludicrous example, a flying pig with you between its trotters. It could never happen . . . but let's build up a story. . . .

The Flying Pig

Your friend is working for an experimental genetic laboratory where the scientists have been working some time on mating birds and mammals.

They've succeeded with rats and doves, and they are moving up the evolutionary scale. There have been several popular films exploring the idea of mutant humans. So when you arrive at the laboratory, you find they have mated an eagle with a pig. One of the testing criteria is assessing the load the mutant animal can take, and your friend asks if you would take turns as a volunteer to be transported by the flying pig over the local town.

I'm No Good at Stories

You may say, 'But I'm not too good at creating stories' or 'I have no imagination'. But as we have seen, you have built up and lived in an OCD story which was essentially imaginary. Now it's time to use that same imagination creatively to your advantage. In following the steps in the exercises, you will find the resources to build up the story and feel the effects of immersion in the story. This exercise will allow you to understand exactly how the OCD works its bad magic on you!