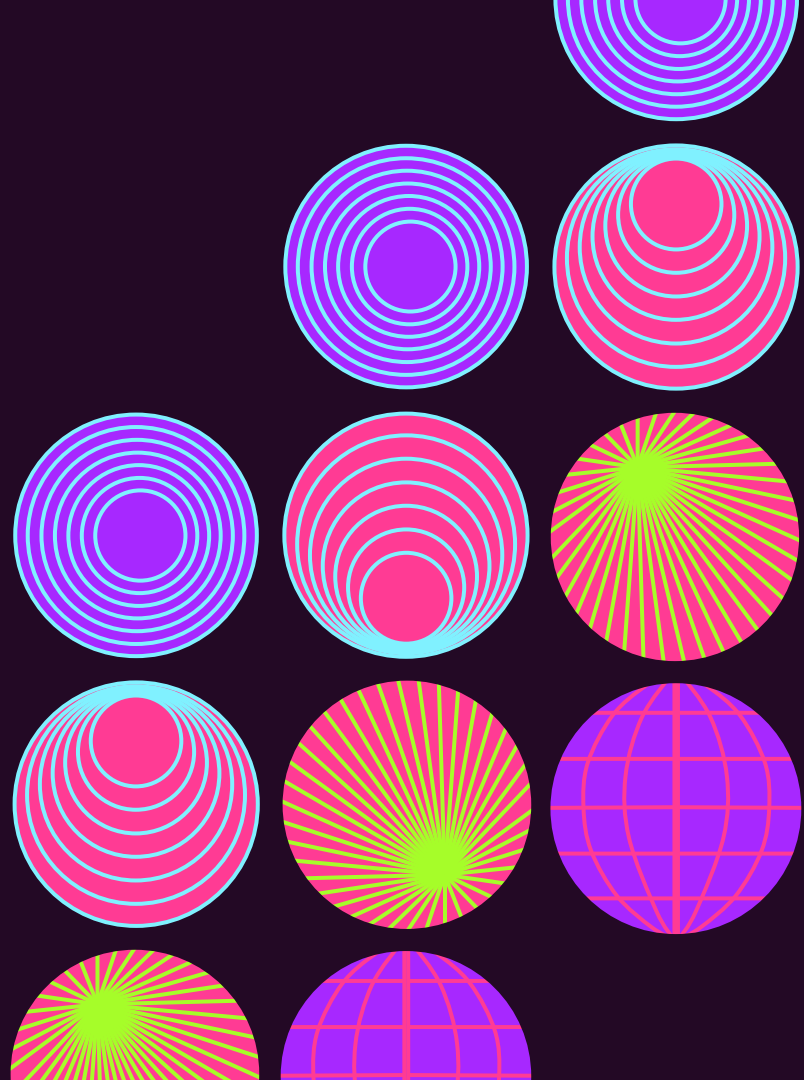


BUBBLE, BUBBLE, TOIL & TROUBLE

A round-trip tour into the
OCD bubble



Come with me, and you'll
be in a world of pure
imagination



“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 there 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.”



A “safety” reminder from OCD:

Please keep hands, legs, and reasoning processes within the bubble at all times.

This is a round-trip ticket. We will be returning by the bridge, but it may take several crossings before we make our full return. You know, just to be sure.

Thank you!

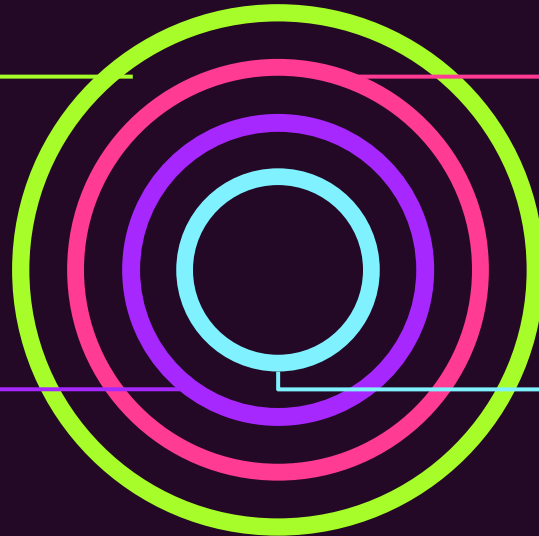
ANATOMY OF THE OCD BUBBLE

dissociation

Imaginal absorption is a dissociative state. High focus, low alert.

^ doubt

It increases doubt.



^ stress

It increases stress and anxiety.

v security

It makes you feel less secure.



LIVED-IN EXPERIENCE



Lived-in

Accompanied by vividly imagined images and bodily sensations (ie “feeling contaminated”)



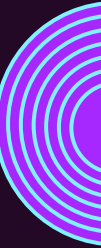
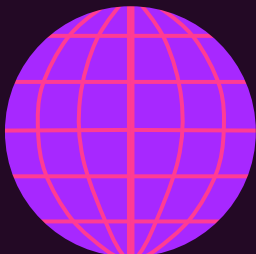
Goes beyond the senses

Though this state can produce *sensations*, there is no *sense evidence* that this is happening in the here and now




Distrust

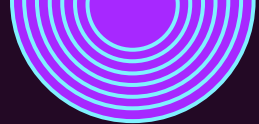
The OCD bubble is sustained by distrust in the sensory experience, and self





Decrease security, increase stress

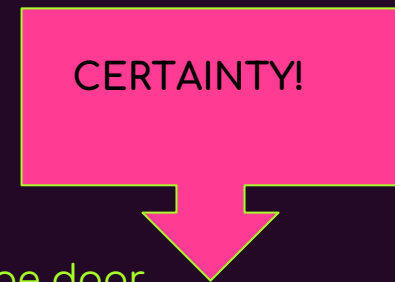
- The strategies used to keep us safe make us less safe
 - going into the bubble narrows our focus, making us less aware of actual risk
 - excessive hand washing destroys skin
 - checking with partner regarding status of relationship pushes partner away
 - locking and re-locking wears on the lock
 - attempting to solve imaginal problem to resolve anxiety, increases anxiety
 - provides an “illusion of a solution”
 - takes unnecessary effort to anticipate, prepare, neutralize, etc.
 - no wonder you’re always tired!
- 



Doubt begets doubt

Reality based doubt -> use of sense information -> solution

Did I close the garage door? -> garage door is open -> close garage door



Obsessional doubt -> distrust of sense information -> more doubt

What if it's not closed all the way? -> eyes say it is, but I don't trust that -> must not be closed




PRE the doubt! Obsessional doubt is a bully that trumps





CROSSING THE BRIDGE

- identify the thought that took you beyond your senses.
 - hold off on compulsions for at least one minute.
 - Restore agency by choosing what to do. Come back to reality, or go into the bubble.
 - Re-focus attention on the here and now, where you can make a values-based decision.
 - Residual anxiety, feelings of being incomplete, or any other dysregulation will resolve, though it may take some time. This is NOT an invitation to re-engage!
- 



TROUBLESHOOTING

-“it feels real”

-“feeling real” is not evidence something is wrong, it is evidence that your imagination got hijacked. The anxiety is a BYPRODUCT of the bubble, not invitation to go back.

-“it feels irresponsible/risky/reckless to leave the bubble”

- still stuck in the story

-“what if I leave the bubble and something bad happens?”

-look for secondary and tertiary obsessive doubts

-look for other justifications and facts taken out of context

-re-align the client with their values - how is staying in the bubble affecting other things in your life?

-where are values being hijacked and used as justifications? (ex: value of ‘safety’)

-remind them that sensory data is all that is needed to make a decision, and going beyond the senses is going BACK into the bubble






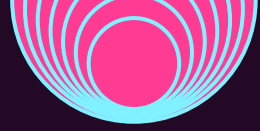
I HAD A TERRIBLE FEBRUARY...

I am, on an average day, subclinical. On a great day, I'm even grateful to have the experience of having OCD, and all of the privileges that recovery has given me - like a career that I love, and helping you fine folks understand what this is like.

But, OCD hates anything new (even good things!) and anything that can be perceived as even mildly threatening.

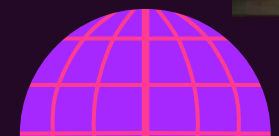






NETFLIX

First time?



LET'S MAKE EVERYTHING ABOUT ME

Russia invades Ukraine

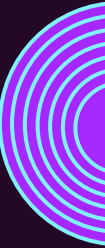
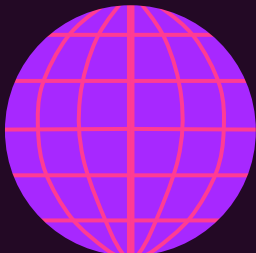
Trigger

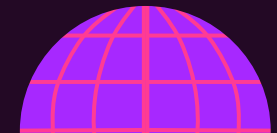
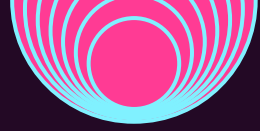
Russia is a nuclear super-power

Facts out of context

What if Russia drops a nuke?

And then, and then, and then....





VULNERABLE SELF-THEME

CONTAM

We could get sick

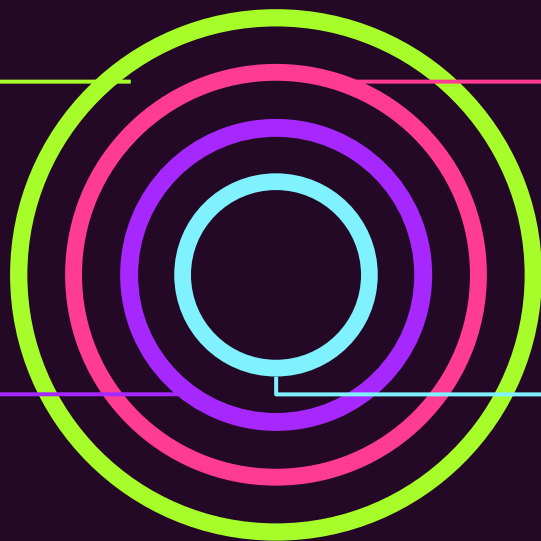
HARM

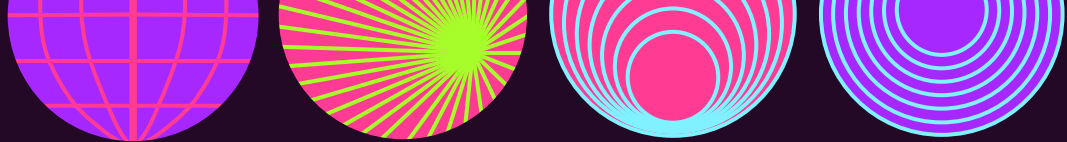
People I love
could be hurt

RESPONSIBILITY

It could be my
fault

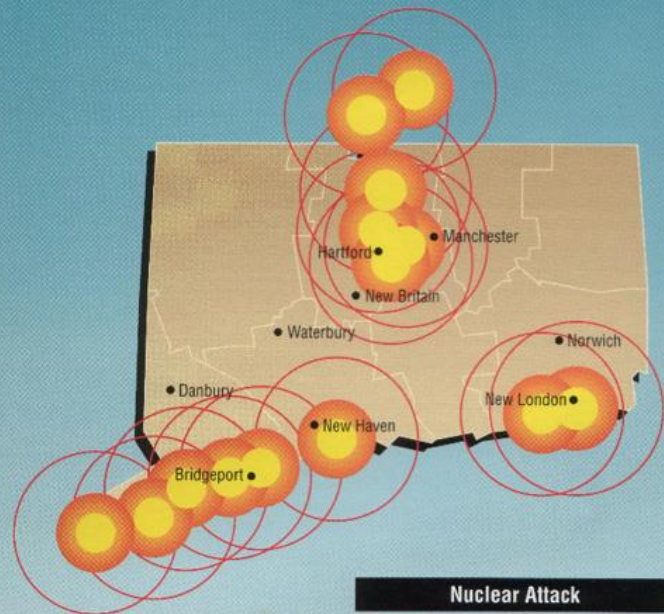
**I COULD FAIL TO
PROTECT
PEOPLE I LOVE**





I have a problem...

Not only do I have lived experience...I also love movies, tv, books, podcasts, video games, and weird history.



Nuclear Attack



Red Ring (0.5 to 2 psi): Up to 25 percent casualties. Light damage to commercial-type buildings, severe damage to small residences.

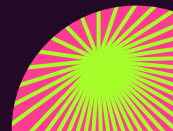
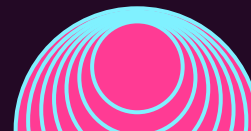
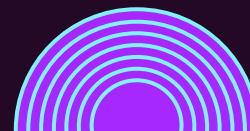
Orange Area (2 to 5 psi): 50 percent casualties. Moderate damage to commercial-type buildings, severe damage to small residences.

Yellow Area (5 psi or more): Few survivors. Severe damage to total destruction of buildings.

Fallout

Fallout radiation is a potential hazard for all localities. See page 122 for more information.

AAAAAGGGHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



COMPULSIONS



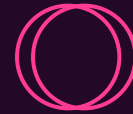
Research

Nukemap, CDC, fallout shelters, prepping websites



Ruminating

HOW AM I GOING TO GET TO GRANDMA!?



Planning

Food, water, shelter, pets, livestock



Checking

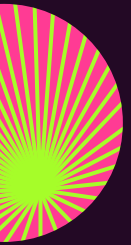
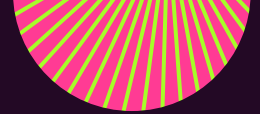
News, social media, Reddit live feeds, talking to friends

COMPULSIONS

Every solution attempted while in the bubble is compulsive.

My brain will not give me the “stop” signal when I am ruminating, because there is no applying a practical solution to an imaginary problem. There is no resolution.

You cannot argue with a conspiracy theorist. The only winning move is not to play.





CROSSING THE BRIDGE

Or: How I Learned
to Stop Worrying and
Love the Bomb



Here and Now

Russia has invaded Ukraine, unprovoked. Russia has nuclear weapons, which are highly dangerous.

The Bubble

What if Russia drops a nuke on the U.S., and then we have a nuclear winter? Which would mean, we could all die from fallout. I had better get prepared.



CROSSING THE BRIDGE

Why was it so difficult to get back, even though I know all of this?

Hit on multiple themes, multiple storylines

Out of context facts

Getting hooked by “reality” (it’s possible!)

Free access to 24/7 news

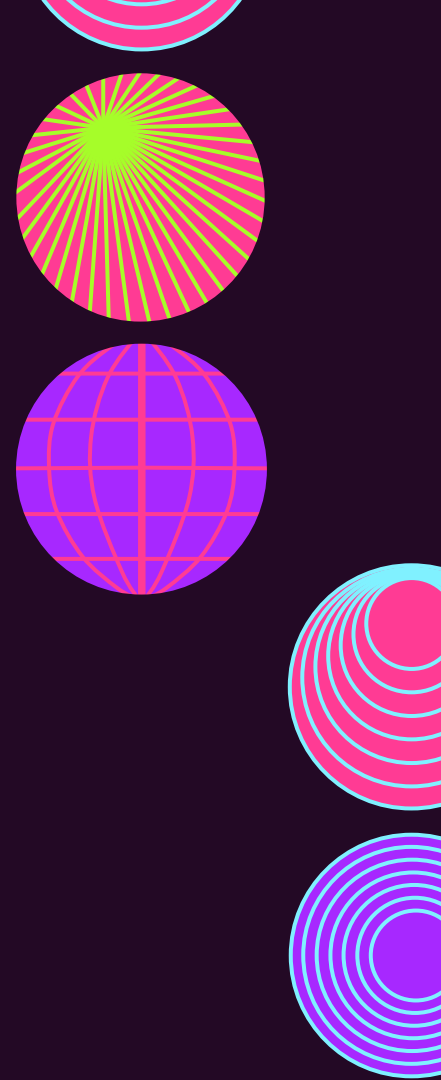
Friends who are preppers reinforcing my fears

(oh no, people who don’t have OCD are also worried!)

Lifestyle affecting cognitive ability to resist going into the bubble

Hormones, med change, poor appetite, lack of sleep, lack of exercise, isolation due to Omicron

SHAME - leading to more isolation, and depression



How did I get back?

Identifying the crossover point

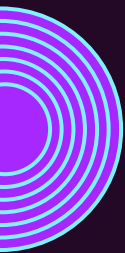
Understanding the 'logic' and 'reasoning' behind OCD

Identifying the out of context facts

"How would I be feeling and acting if I had absolutely no access to this new information? The only thing that has changed for me is this new information, which set off a cascade of stories. I have to stop telling the story."

-Unknown unknowns become known unknowns

Adjusting focus to the here and now, where none of the nightmare stories are happening (to ME)

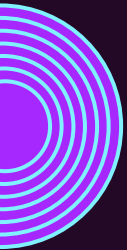


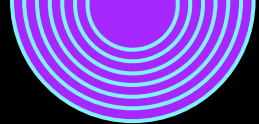
Get out and stay out!

Identifying and meeting needs - sleep, socialization, food, calling psychiatrist, exercise

Committing to response prevention (reducing news consumption, setting boundaries with friends)

Acting on values-based decisions instead of story-based decisions (getting saturated in LIFE instead of STORIES!)





I have decided to stop caring



Is that why you were shopping for a \$3,000 CBRN suit



Yes but that was a different me. I was in the bubble



Questions?

