

Client Worksheet 2

The Logic Behind OCD

Last week's exercises were intended to help you understand the obsessional sequence. You should now be able to identify your own doubts that lie at the core of your OCD. Being able to recognize and identify your doubt is important, since it will be addressed in many ways throughout the course of your therapy.

Reasonable Doubt

It is also important to understand that doubt does not come out of the blue. You cannot have obsessions or doubts without reason. There is a certain kind of logic and reasoning behind obsessional doubts. For example, if you doubt or worry about the possibility that you might hurt someone, be contaminated, or make a mistake, then there is a reasoning process behind these ideas. At the very least, you consider the doubt to be possible for some reason or another- because if you really considered it to be impossible, then you would not have the doubt to begin with.

Reasoning categories

Below are some of the categories that are often part of the reasoning by which most people arrive at a particular doubt.

1. Abstract facts and ideas
2. General rules
3. Hearsay
4. Personal experiences
5. It's possible

For example, if you have the doubt that you might have accidentally run over a child after driving out of the driveway, *abstract facts* might say tell you accidents do occur, *rules* that you should be careful when driving, *hearsay* that you read recently about someone driving over a child and *personal experience* that you once hit the garbage bin when driving out, and after all it is always *possible* you might have a accidently hit a child even when not seeing that you did.

OCD Sounds Pretty Reasonable!

Another example would be the doubt that a person might have been contaminated with dangerous germs. The justification behind the doubt might take the following form:

1. Germs exist. (Abstract facts)
2. Surgeons are obliged to wash their hands too. (Rules)
3. I heard of someone getting ill after visiting a bathroom. (Hearsay)
4. I once got ill after eating unwashed salad in the Caribbean. (Experience)
5. There is always a chance of anybody contracting illness. (Possibility)

The point of all this is to show you that there is reasoning behind the doubt and that doubts can present themselves in as a 'reasonable' way. This is not to say that these doubts are 'correct'. There are a number of other crucial ingredients which render your obsessional doubts invalid for different reasons. In the course of the therapy, we hope to show you why they are always false. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. For now, it is important to understand and identify the justification behind your *own* obsessional doubt.

Client Exercise Sheet 2

The Logic Behind OCD

Finding Your Reason

In identifying some of the reasons behind your own obsessional doubt, keep in mind that there are *always* reasons behind a doubt. You may or may not be very familiar with those reasons. Some people with OCD for example, when asked why they believe what they do; come up with lots of reasons why the doubt might be true. Others will say that have no idea how their doubts come about and experience their doubts as extremely unlikely and even as nonsense. Yet, these two groups of people are not so different. Both groups feel that they must act upon their doubt, even though it might be experienced as unreasonable by one person and reasonable by the other. No matter if you believe your doubts are unreasonable and extremely unlikely, there are reasons why you doubt *your* particular doubt that *you* believe in. If you did not, you would not act on the doubt. There would be no obsession.

Be Reasonable

To find the reasons behind the doubt, you only need to ask yourself the question of why you think your doubt could be possible, even if only to the slightest extent. What are the reasons you think you *might* have left the door unopened? What do you do think that the papers *might* not have been placed correctly? Why do you think your hands *might* be contaminated? What is it that makes you think it is possible, even if the chances of it being true are only 0.0001%?

First, to identify the reasons behind your own doubts, write down below the two obsessional doubts that bother you the most.

1.

2.

Next, write down any justification you can think of in the corresponding category (abstract facts, hearsay, personal experience, etc.). Take your time with filling in the form, and try to write down the reasons as they occur to you while you are actually having your doubts. Let the OCD speak its mind. What does the OCD tell you?

A. Abstract facts

1.

2.

B. Rules

1.

2.

C. Hearsay (“I’ve heard of...”)

1.

2.

D. Personal experience

1.

2.

E. It’s possible

1.

2.

F. Other reasons

1.

2.

Example

Doubt: I could be contaminated by waves coming from mental objects.

1. Abstract facts could include ‘There have been reports of nuclear factories leaking radioactivity.’
2. Rules: People in contact with metals are obliged to wear gloves.
3. Hearsay: I’ve heard of people suffering from metal infections.
4. Personal experience: My hands smell and feel funny after I’ve touched a metal object.
5. It’s possible that metals give off contaminants that they haven’t discovered... like with Asbestos.
6. Other reasons: hot metal glows when it’s warm; heat rises and could give off toxins.

Now, put yourself in the mind of another person with OCD, and try to come up with reasons behind the following obsessional doubts:

1. I might go suddenly crazy and hit another person.
2. There might be broken glass in the meal I prepared for my children.

A. Abstract facts

1.

2.

B. Rules

1.

2.

C. Hearsay

1.

2.

D. Personal experience

1.

2.

E. It's Possible

1.

2.

F. Other reasons

1.

2.

Try to compare the reasons you have come up with those of your own doubts. Are they any different, and if so, how are they different? Write down below anything you have learned, wish to comment on, or that you have questions about.

Client Training Card 2

The Logic Behind OCD

Learning Points

- Obsessional doubts do not come out of the blue.
- There is 'logic' behind obsessional doubts.
- Doubts arrive due to prior reasoning.

Daily Exercise

At least four times a day, try to identify the doubt that motivated you to carry out a compulsion or made you feel anxious, and then rephrase the doubt in the form of statement of what *could be* or *might be*. Next, identify the reasoning you have applied to justify the doubt or statement. If you are not immediately aware of any thoughts before the doubt occurred, then ask yourself “why does the doubt seem real?” Or use the categories of abstract facts, hearsay, general rules, personal experience or mere possibility to help you identify the justification behind the doubt. Remember to slow down your thinking so you dwell on the validity of each component of your thought process and how one presumption leads to another.

Client Quiz 2

The Logic Behind OCD

1. Obsessional doubts are...
 - always correct.
 - preceded by reasoning.
 - sometimes realistic.
 - none of the above.

2. Obsessional doubts . . .
 - have justifications behind them.
 - come out of the blue.
 - ask normal questions.
 - all of the above.

3. The reasoning behind obsessional doubt...
 - is sometimes based on possibilities.
 - follows a logic.
 - makes the doubt seem likely.
 - all of the above.

4. The reasoning justifying the doubt may come from...
 - abstract facts.
 - general rules.
 - hearsay.
 - all of the above.

5. The difference between normal and obsessional reasoning is that...
 - obsessional reasoning is more logical.
 - normal reasoning is about the here and now.
 - normal reasoning concerns more dangerous topics.
 - none of the above.

6. Obsessional doubts are relevant because...
 - they are possible in the abstract.
 - they are based on valid reasoning.
 - they are telling me new facts.
 - none of the above.

Please check your answers by referring to the Quiz Answers Sheet.