

# Client Worksheet 6

## Doubt and Possibility

### Imaginary Nature

You hopefully now agree with the fact that nothing about your obsession is supported by anything in the here and now. It originates entirely from you rather than the outside. It comes from the imagination. But what does this mean exactly? Are there any implications to this idea?

### Possible Versus Probable

On the surface, the idea that there is no direct evidence for the obsession seems to make little difference. After all, people do become contaminated and ill even though there was nothing in reality to indicate that might happen. Likewise, people do forget to check whether the door is locked and their homes are broken into, often completely unexpected and without warning. So it seems that the obsession might still be possible even if there is no justification in the here and now. But that is exactly the problem with OCD! It thrives on possibility and doubt! So before saying that the obsession might still be possible even if it comes from your imagination, let's have a closer look at that argument. Does something merely being possible *really* provide a justification for anything? Does it justify your checking, washing, worrying and everything else the OCD has put on your plate?

Keep in mind that we are not debating here whether your obsessional doubt is possible or not, in the abstract. Most obsessions are indeed possible in a very abstract and generalized sense. So this is not what we are arguing here. What we are looking at right now is whether making the argument that something is possible in the here and now, is justified by an abstract or remote possibility. Or, is it impossible because it's irrelevant?

### Example

Let's start with something that is really possible even if it's a small possibility. Let's say, for example, that I have an obsession about a meteor falling on my head. I constantly check the sky to ensure that nothing is falling down. The fact that there is really nothing in the here and now to support the idea that there is a meteor around doesn't convince me. I feel I have to worry about it without any sort of real justification. Here, you would probably agree that the mere possibility of a meteor landing on my head provides no real justification for me to start worrying about meteors falling down even, though it might be possible.

### In Your Own Case

But how is this different from your own obsessions? You don't have any justification for your own obsession in the here and now either. The fact that your own obsession might be less of a rare occurrence than a meteor falling down makes no difference. Again, it's not about how possible something is on a chance-by-chance basis. Rather the problem is relying on possibility to begin with if there is nothing in the here and now to support the obsession.

## Selectivity of Doubt

And ironically, whether you know it or not, you already agree with the idea that there has to be evidence in the here and now to take a doubt seriously. In most aspects of your life, you never just rely on possibility. For example, do you worry about a car running you over after you checked the street before crossing? You don't, because you trust what your senses are telling you. You have this trust in your own senses or self in almost every other aspect of your life that has not been affected by the OCD. You don't confuse stories that import facts and possibilities from elsewhere as though they are happening now.

## Why Act Differently?

Yet, in the OCD situation, you suddenly reason and act differently. There, you believe that only the possibility that the door might be unlocked is already enough to justify you checking it. The fact that you have seen it lock seems to make no difference. Or alternatively, you might worry about being contaminated without actually seeing anything on your hands. In other words, your reasoning is very selective when it comes to OCD. For whatever reason, you do not really trust yourself in these situations.

## Realizing Irrelevance

But none of this changes the fact that you can realize right now that your obsession is 100% irrelevant to the here and now. It is irrelevant since just because something *is* possible provides no justification for anything in the here and now. It is exactly the same as worrying that the ceiling might come crashing down. These things are possible, but you do not worry about them without direct evidence. It would only make sense to worry or doubt if you see sudden cracks in the wall, hear loud and strange noises above your head or something along those lines. There would be sense information in the here and now to justify the doubt; if there is sense information to support it, it would be a non-obsessional doubt.

## Applying the Principle

Do not get hung up on the fact that these examples may seem a little far-fetched. If you look at it carefully, you will see that the same principle applies to your own obsessions. You treat a mere possibility as if it is a realistic probability. You can come to this realization by applying this knowledge to your own OCD. And when you fully realize that this reasoning is incorrect you can indeed completely get rid of your OCD.

You only have to apply it.

## Client Exercise Sheet 6

### OCD doubt is 100% irrelevant

#### Credibility

Sometimes people with OCD look at each other in disbelief when they hear about another person's obsessions. They can't believe that anyone would have doubts in these particular situations. Just think of an obsession you have read about before or during this treatment that made absolutely no sense to you. There are probably several you can think of which you do not find credible at all. Write down below a couple you can think of right now.

Obsessions which I do not find credible:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

As unlikely as these obsessions may seem, they are not really different from your own. They are in fact very similar, because ALL obsessions occur without direct evidence in the here and now. In other words, your own obsessions are as irrelevant to reality as the ones you have just written down.

#### Seeing your Own Obsession Differently

Being able to see how your own obsession is irrelevant to reality is important. Once you do, your doubt will lose a lot of its credibility and you will feel far less need to act on it. You might even begin to look at your own obsessions with the same level of disbelief as you feel towards others' obsessions. But to be able to do so, you will need to fully understand how the OCD is able to make something incredible *seem* credible by introducing a lot of possibilities that have no direct link to reality. It is those possibilities that make it seem like the OCD has something to do with reality in the here and now.

#### Exercise

The exercise for this week is to pick a situation that is very neutral to you. It should have no importance to you whatsoever, and be an area in which you experience no problems. You could even pick a situation related to the obsessions you wrote down earlier. Then, once you have picked the situation, we want you to make it obsessional. That is, think of all the reasons why a particular situation might not be safe, and why a situation (that would normally be neutral when you look at it in a non-obsessional) way becomes a problem.

For example, if you were to make the neutral act of crossing the street entirely obsessional, it could look something like this:

“It is not safe to cross the street. I heard about an accident happen to someone who was always very careful. So accidents can happen just like that whether or not you pay attention. No one takes any notice of pedestrians anymore. So now when I cross the street, I do not look twice or three times to my left or right.

Instead, I stand there for half an hour looking to see if there are any cars coming. Even if I don’t see any car, one could come out from a corner suddenly. Or it might be a silent car that I cannot hear, since there are even electrical cars now. So I often decide not to cross the street. It just doesn’t feel safe, even if I don’t see any traffic.”

Now, below- write down a different situation you picked that is ordinarily completely neutral to you:

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Next, make this situation obsessional by introducing a lot of possibilities on why it could be dangerous or unsafe:

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### **Creating OCD**

As you can probably see, a situation that initially did not seem very believable became a lot more credible simply by introducing a lot of possibilities. Of course, it won’t have such a big impact on you as your own OCD story. It was a neutral situation to you to begin with. But how would you go about disconfirming the story you just wrote down? Would you argue with the specifics of the possibilities you introduced? Or is there something else that makes the story irrelevant?

Write down below what is wrong with the story:

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And how does this apply to your own OCD story?

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Below, write down anything you have learned from this exercise or wish to comment on, or that you have questions about.

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On the basis of what you have now learned about OCD doubt and its role in obsessional sequences and behavior:

Do you see how your OCD can be resolved?       Yes       No

How confident are you? (0–100%)

How do you think you can best resolve your OCD?

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## **Client Training Card 6**

### **OCD doubt is 100% irrelevant**

#### **Learning Points**

- Obsessional doubt is completely irrelevant to reality.
- Just something being possible does not make it relevant.
- Normally when you reason, you never entertain possibilities that have no basis in reality in the here and now.

#### **Daily Exercise**

Each time you have an obsessional doubt, ask yourself whether there is or was any direct evidence or information that justifies the doubt or possibility. Next, think of an example in your daily life where you would never consider a similar possibility because it is irrelevant to the here and now. Without debating with the OCD, try to see each time how this makes the obsessional doubt irrelevant.

## Client Quiz 6

### OCD doubts are 100% irrelevant

1. Possibilities that justify a particular obsessional doubt are ...
  - impossible.
  - not relevant.
  - relevant when they are facts.
  - none of the above.
  
2. Obsessional doubt is completely irrelevant ...
  - because there is 0% justification in the here and now for the doubt.
  - because the doubt originates 100% from the imagination.
  - because the doubt comes entirely from you rather than reality.
  - all of the above.
  
3. When reasoning about a practical state of affairs in reality, possibilities should be considered only when ...
  - you want to understand ultimate reality.
  - there is at least some basis in the here and now to justify the possibility.
  - you feel creative.
  - none of the above.
  
4. Your reasoning about situations unrelated to the OCD ...
  - shows that you reason differently from the OCD situation.
  - involves possibilities as well.
  - includes possibilities that have some justification in the here and now.
  - all of the above.
  
5. Which of the following is true?
  - All is possible, so I should consider all possibilities.
  - Inventing possibilities keeps me safe.
  - The possible and the real are all the same.
  - None of the above.
  
6. Obsessional behavior can be completely resolved if:
  - I challenge the rationality of my obsession.
  - I resist ritualization.
  - I distract myself.
  - I realize that the doubt is irrelevant and dismiss it.

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