

Client Worksheet 8

Reality Sensing

Imaginary Story

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

OCD Deconstructed

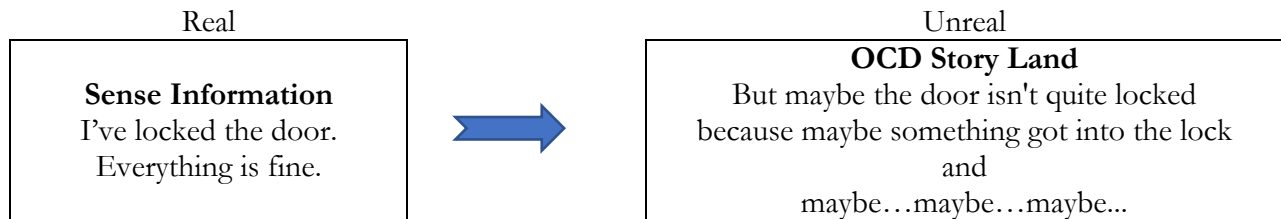
Now that sounds a bit brazen. After all, you might say, “OK, it may be imaginary and irrelevant, but even irrelevant imaginary ideas can come true, if not true by coincidence.” However, in the case of OCD, research shows that it is always false because of the way the OCD story is *constructed*. The doubting 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. Thus, it goes *against* reality from the “get-go” and is false.

Sensing the Certain

Think about yourself in the kitchen. Your senses have already told you that there is no fire. In fact, your senses have given you *certain* information as they always do on the current state of affairs. OCD then goes against this certainty by creating an imaginary story. Since the sensory information is real because it comes from your senses, OCD must always be unreal.

The Proof

Ask yourself, how often has your OCD doubt been correct? Have you ever found real proof that your doubt was a reasonable doubt?



The doubt jumps in so quickly you don't realize that you were certain before it arrived. That is why you have been working hard on learning how to identify the cross-over point that leads you from your senses into the world of your imagination. This combined with the knowledge that there already is certainty before the doubt arrived will give you a fighting chance to manage 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 whether the check 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 *felt* the door lock. You may even have tried to open it after locking it. This is exactly the sensory information you need to take into account. You should start as soon as you find yourself crossing over into the imagination because it clearly shows the obsessional doubt to be false and unreal.

Get Real

You may feel this situation does not apply to you. Perhaps it is because you feel there is not always sensory 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. It is also about *reality* directly from the outer and inner senses. For example, if you have the obsessional doubt that you might suddenly hurt someone, then you have to ask yourself what reality tells you this is true? When did you have the thought that you might hurt someone? Does it make any sense to have this thought when you are not angry at someone or nearby? In the case of obsessional doubt, your *actual* state of mind will always completely conflict with the doubt. So, it is not always just the physical senses that make the OCD wrong, it also 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 into the imagination, you will define reality by relying on information from the five senses. As you have learned so far, relying on the senses will leave no room whatsoever for obsessional doubt. When you check whether or not you left a door 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. It is the only reality that gives a resolution to your obsessional doubt. That means learning to trust your 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. OCD has told you for a long time to do more but, even then, it may still not be enough. 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 if you trust the senses. And, you will end up with an entirely different conclusion from that of the obsessional doubt. There will be no doubt, there will only be certainty. Realizing that there is certainty before the doubt is exactly what the exercises for the coming week are about.

Client Exercise 8

Reality Sensing

The exercise on this worksheet will help you practice everything you have learned to far. You will begin to use and trust your senses in obsessional situations. And if you trust your senses, you will have all the certainty that you need to dismiss the obsessional doubt. Do not worry that you have to be successful each time. The more you do the exercise, the more your confidence will go up, and the easier it will get over time. Again, the exercise here is the same as the one on your training card, just described in more detail. Try to do the exercise at least several times a day when an obsession occurs.

1. When an obsessions or thought occurs that takes you beyond the senses, hold still and imagine yourself between worlds – a bridge between reality and the imagination.
2. Focus your attention back to reality, and look at what is there. Only look once and take in the information of what your senses tell you. Don't put any effort into this.
3. Realize for a moment that this is all the information you need and that trying to obtain more information from elsewhere means you have already crossed into OCD land.
4. Look down from the bridge you see yourself standing on. Take note of any feeling that makes you feel you are not doing enough. It is the void that is left behind by not engaging in any rituals. It represents all the anxiety and discomfort you feel by not going into OCD land and only trusting your senses.
5. Take a moment to realize that this void is merely imaginary, and that there is certainty by remaining in the world of the senses. Try to feel that sense of certainty. It is common sense. There is absolutely no need to cross the bridge into OCD land.
6. Next, act upon the information from your senses by dismissing the obsession and not engaging in any compulsive behaviors.

There are a number of things you need to keep in mind while you are doing the exercise, which is to use the senses in a natural and effortless way. Trusting the senses means you use the senses normally, as you would do in any other situation where you have no obsessions. Anything else means you have already passed into OCD land. Of course, you can still get back, but try to avoid any of the following:

1. Staring: if you are staring, you are putting in too much effort to overcome your OCD. You are in your OCD Bubble the moment you stare.
2. Fast looking: creating ambiguity by quick looking will reinforce your imagination. Take a look as you would do... in any other situation where you have no obsessions.
3. Imposing your imagination on reality: if you can't see something clearly (for example: something in the distance that you may feel justifies the obsessional doubt), be aware that this is not 'real looking'.

Doing this exercise often will make it progressively easier to stay out of the OCD Bubble and not act on your obsessions. You will even find that your obsessions will begin to disappear, occurring far less often and becoming less intense. And the best part is that the imaginary void will slowly disappear, as it fills up with more normal reasoning and awareness which is real. So go out there and get to know your real self!

Basic Steps to Reality Sensing

1. You intend using your senses exactly as you do in everyday non-OCD situations.
2. You will tune into the world in a natural non-effortful mindful way; open to whatever happens.
3. If you are performing an act, you decide on what criteria you will observe with your senses to know the task is accomplished.
4. If an OCD doubt appears on the horizon and tries to muscle in on the action, you dismiss it and appeal to your senses to know what is actually there or is really happening.
5. You stop the task when your senses and common sense say what needs to be done and when all is done.

Example

You shower yourself... your senses say you are clean... You do not wait and reflect on whether maybe you are clean. You leave the shower.

You lock your front door. Your senses say it's locked. You go about your business and dismiss any subsequent doubt as irrelevant.

Client Training Card 8

Reality Sensing

Learning Points

- Obsessional doubts are wrong and false.
- Obsessional doubts conflict with reality.
- Reality sensing is staying with the information from the here and now.
- Trusting your senses will add to your confidence each and every time.

Daily Exercise

Follow this sequence:

Step 1: When a doubt or obsession occurs that takes you beyond the senses, hold still and imagine yourself between worlds – a bridge between reality and the imagination.

Step 2: Focus your attention back on reality, and look at what is there without effort.

Step 3: Look down the bridge between worlds and take note of any feeling that you might not be doing enough. It is the void left behind by not engaging in any rituals.

Step 4: Realize this void is imaginary, and that there is certainty in the world of the senses. Try to feel that ground under your feet. It is common sense.

Step 5: Act on the knowledge from your senses by dismissing the obsession and not engaging in any compulsive behaviors.

Client Quiz 8

Reality Sensing

1. Obsessional doubts are wrong and false because...

- they make you feel terrible.
- they are totally impossible.
- they go against reality.
- none of the above.

2. Reality sensing is about...

- trusting your senses without effort.
- something you already know how to do.
- keeping the OCD at bay.
- all of the above.

3. Overusing the senses occurs when you are...

- 'staring' instead of 'looking'.
- in the OCD Bubble rather than in reality.
- not really trusting your senses.
- all of the above.

4. If I feel I haven't done enough to see . . .

- this means I'm incompetent.
- I will endanger myself.
- it is OCD making me doubt.
- my seeing is deficient.

5. Reality sensing includes trusting...

- my five senses and my common sense.
- questioning what I really feel.
- seeking reassurance.
- keeping a written note of all I see.

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