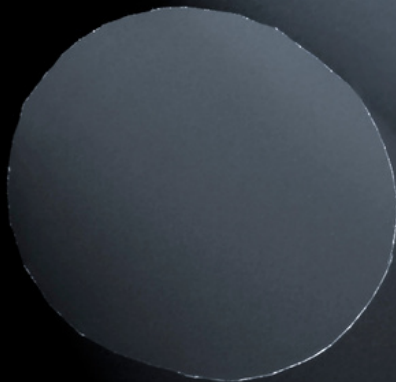




OCD Training School

De-mystifying Inferential Confusion



Adapted by Dr. Frederick Aardema, Bronwyn Shroyer, and Katie Marrotte from: O'Connor, K., & Aardema, F. (2012). Clinician's handbook for obsessive compulsive disorder: Inference-based therapy. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

What is Inferential Confusion?



What is Inferential Confusion?

(AKA Obsessional Reasoning)

Confusion between imagination and reality that comes about through faulty reasoning processes which are embedded in obsessional narratives - which then leads to an obsessional inference of doubt.



**Inferential Confusion is
a PROCESS.**

**Targeting this Obsessional
Reasoning PROCESS is the
mechanism of change in
Inference-based CBT for
OCD.**



In I-CBT - we are specifically targeting the formation of Obsessional Doubts.

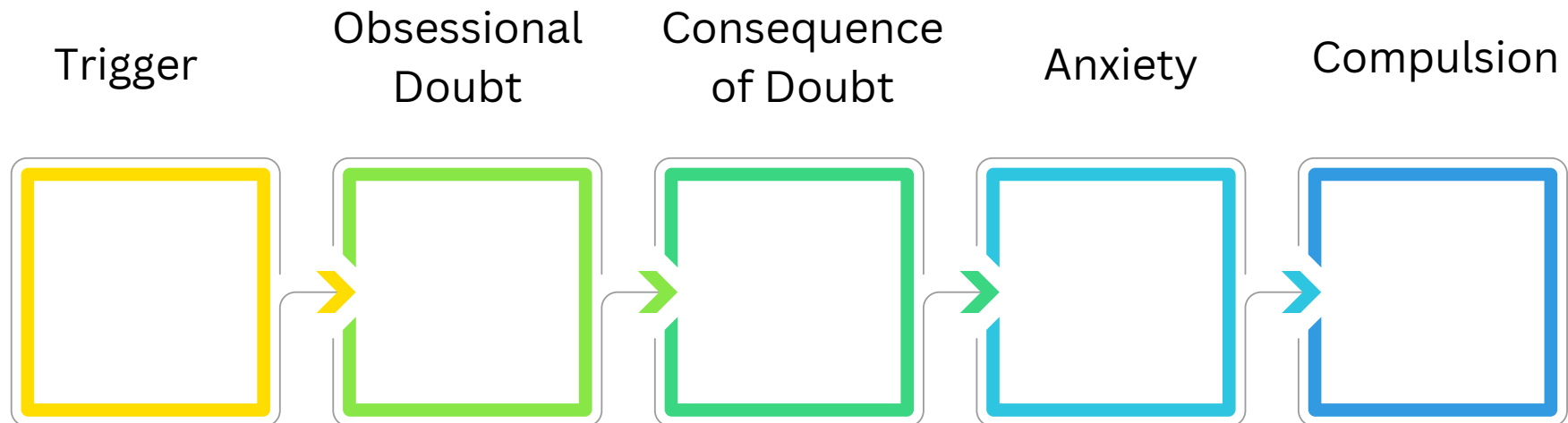


OCD follows a sequence. The target of I-CBT is the formation of the Obsessional Doubt in that sequence.

Obsessional Doubts are the "What If/Maybe" thoughts that indicate we are no longer trusting the certainty we could have in Reality. Instead, we are relying on an imagined possibility without direct evidence to support it. We are INFERRING a conclusion based on faulty reasoning.



The Obsessional Sequence



Let's take a closer look at the process that forms
Obsessional Doubts.

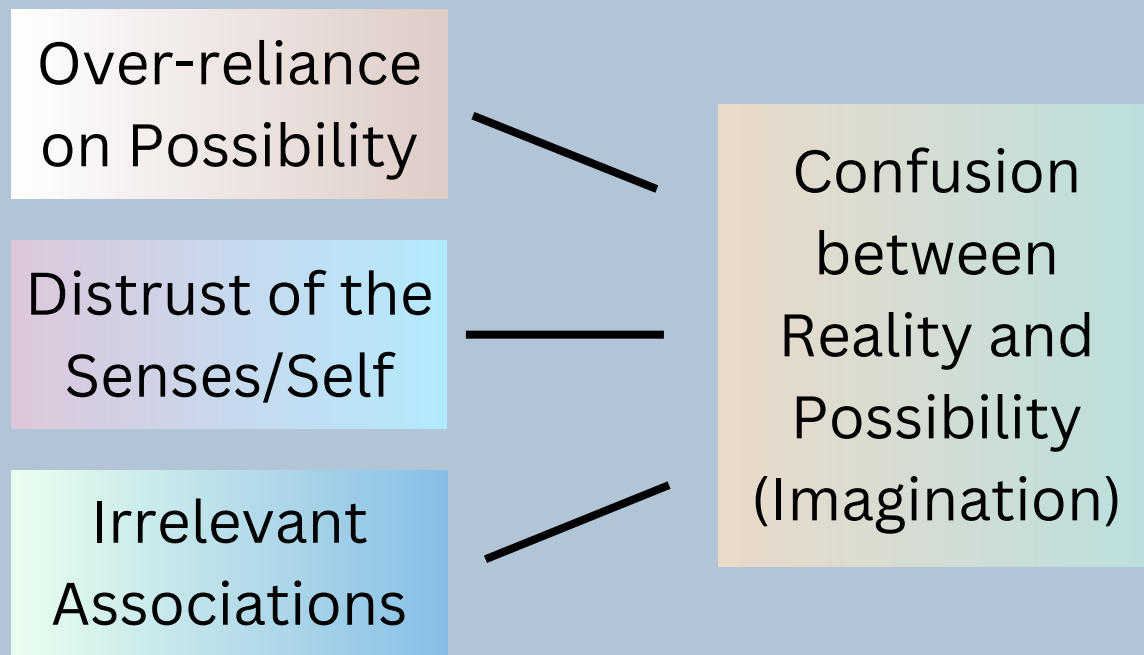
We will start with...



Obsessional
Reasoning

Obsessional Reasoning:

"Reasoning characterized by an over-reliance on possibility, a distrust of the senses or self, and irrelevant associations that exemplify a confusion between reality and possibility in the here-and-now."



Let's further define the three main types of Obsessional Reasoning

1.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

2.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

3.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.

These types of Obsessional Reasoning all include a common factor:

1.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

2.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

3.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.

NO DIRECT EVIDENCE IN THE HERE-AND-NOW



Obsessional Reasoning

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.

NO DIRECT EVIDENCE IN THE HERE-AND-NOW

Confusion between Reality and Possibility (Imagination)

Let's look at examples of these three types of Obsessional Reasoning:

Maybe I will stab my dog.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



I could be an evil person
(possibility), therefore I might
stab my dog (more possibility).
(No attempts to use sense data)

Maybe I will stab my dog.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



I love my dog very much. I care for her with intention and lots of thought. Maybe I will stab her.

Maybe I will stab my dog.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



I read a story about someone stabbing their dog (arbitrary info).

Maybe I will stab my dog.
(No attempts to use sense data)

Maybe the door isn't locked.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



Maybe the door isn't locked
(possibility).

(No attempts to use sense data)



Maybe the door isn't locked.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



I felt the lock slide home. I heard it lock. I see it is locked.

Maybe the door isn't locked.

Maybe the door isn't locked.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



One time a few years ago, I didn't lock the door (arbitrary info). Maybe the door isn't locked now.

(No attempts to use sense data)

Maybe the faucet is contaminated.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



Other people could've used the faucet (possibility). Maybe it's contaminated (possibility).

(No attempts to use sense data)

Maybe the faucet is contaminated.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



No one in my home is sick. The faucet looks clean.

Maybe the faucet is contaminated.

Maybe the faucet is contaminated.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



Germs exist on all surfaces (arbitrary info). Maybe the faucet is contaminated.

(No attempts to use sense data)

Maybe I could kill my children.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



Perhaps I could suddenly go crazy and do this (possibility).
(No attempts to use sense/inner sense data -)

Maybe I could kill my children.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

Misapplying arbitrary information to a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.

I love my children and do not want to hurt them, but perhaps I could...

(Dismissal of inner senses)

Maybe I could kill my children.

Maybe I could kill my children.

Over-reliance on Possibility

Over-relying on possibilities without incorporating sense information when coming to conclusions about Reality.

Dismissal of Actual Evidence

Distrusting sense information that is present and turning to hypothetical conclusions about Reality.

Irrelevant Associations

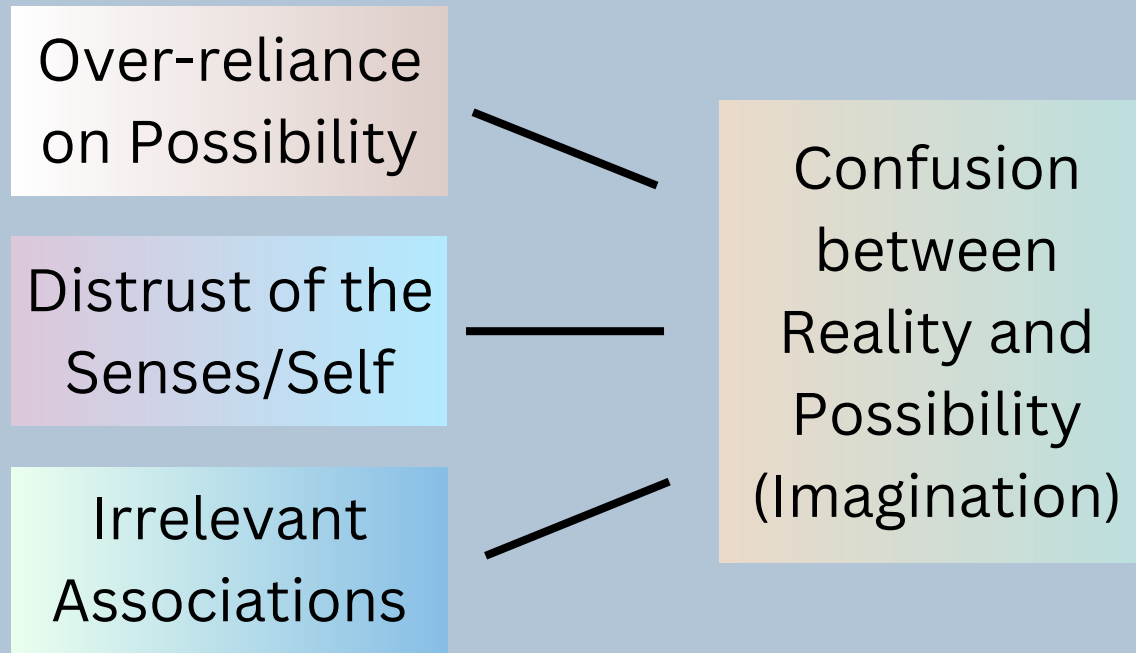
Misapplying arbitrary information (fact experieto a current situation without sense data to support that conclusion about Reality.



Other people have harmed their children (arbitrary info). I have gotten angry with them in the past (arbitrary info).

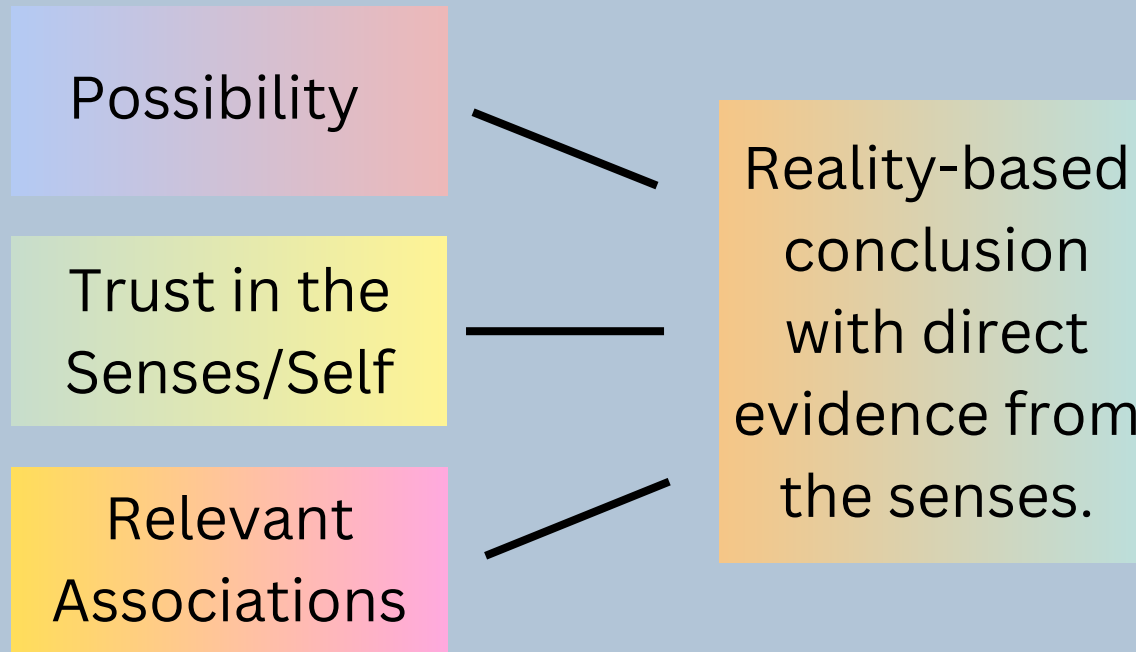
(No attempts to use sense/inner sense data)

This is what Obsessional Reasoning looks like:



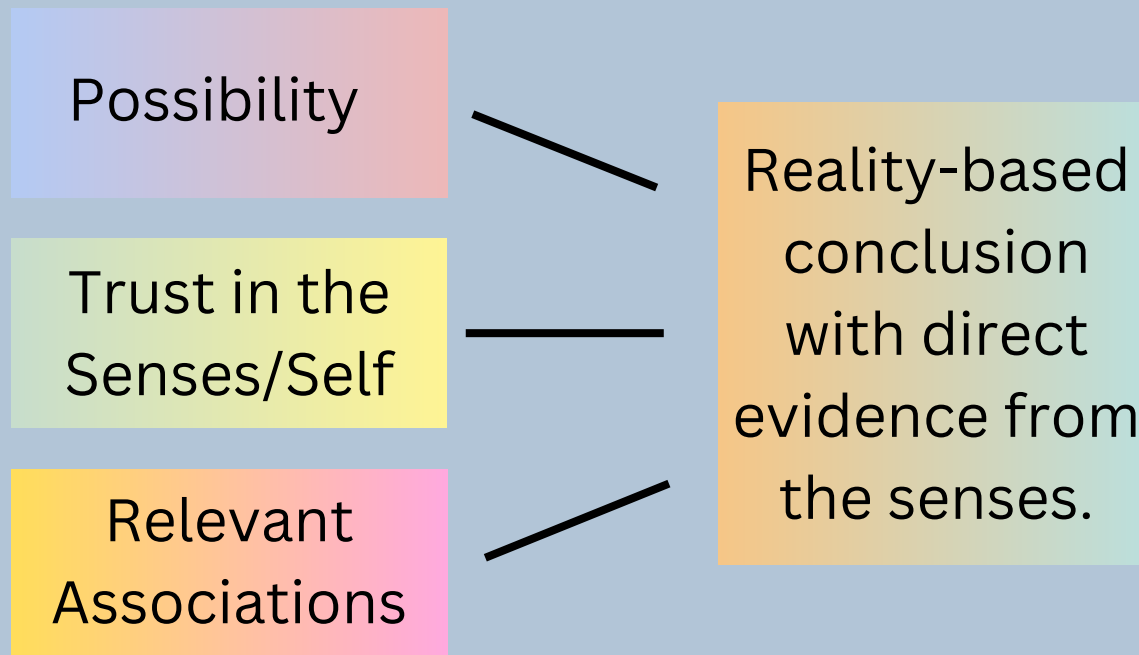
What does Normal Reasoning look like?

Normal Reasoning



**This occurs when we trust in our 5 senses,
common sense, and Real Self.**

Normal Reasoning



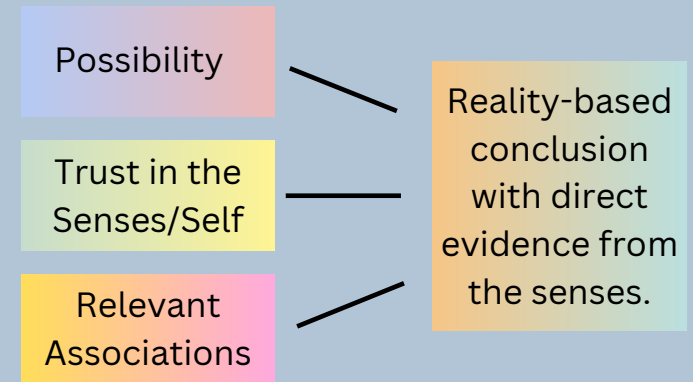
People without OCD use this type of reasoning.

**People WITH OCD use this type of reasoning when not in a
triggering OCD situation.**

Normal vs Obsessional Reasoning

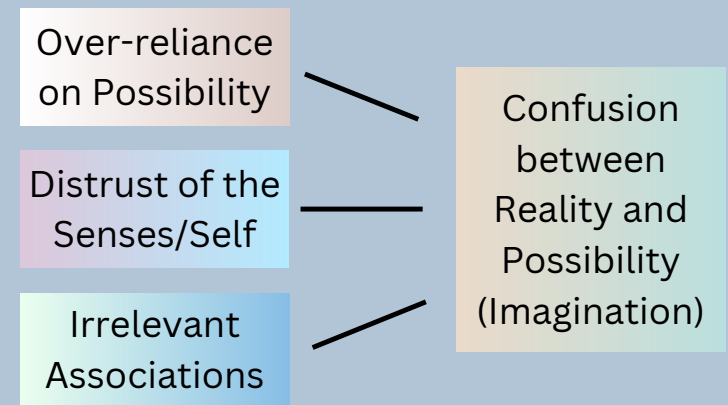
Trusting Sense Data
(Infer conclusion based on direct evidence)

Normal Reasoning



Not Trusting Sense Data
(No Direct Evidence -
inference based on
possibility)

Obsessional Reasoning



Where do we find this Obsessional Reasoning
when we are doing I-CBT?

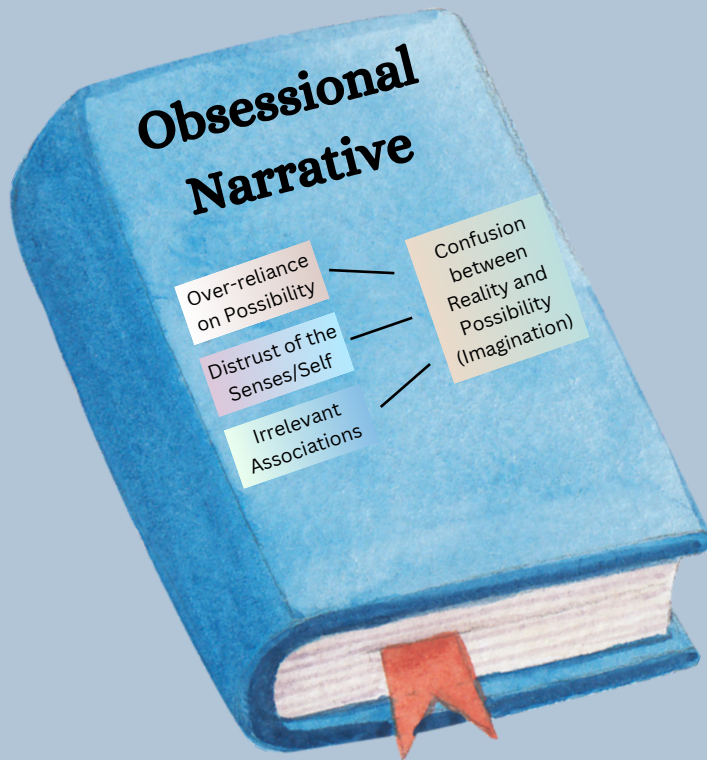
We will find it in...



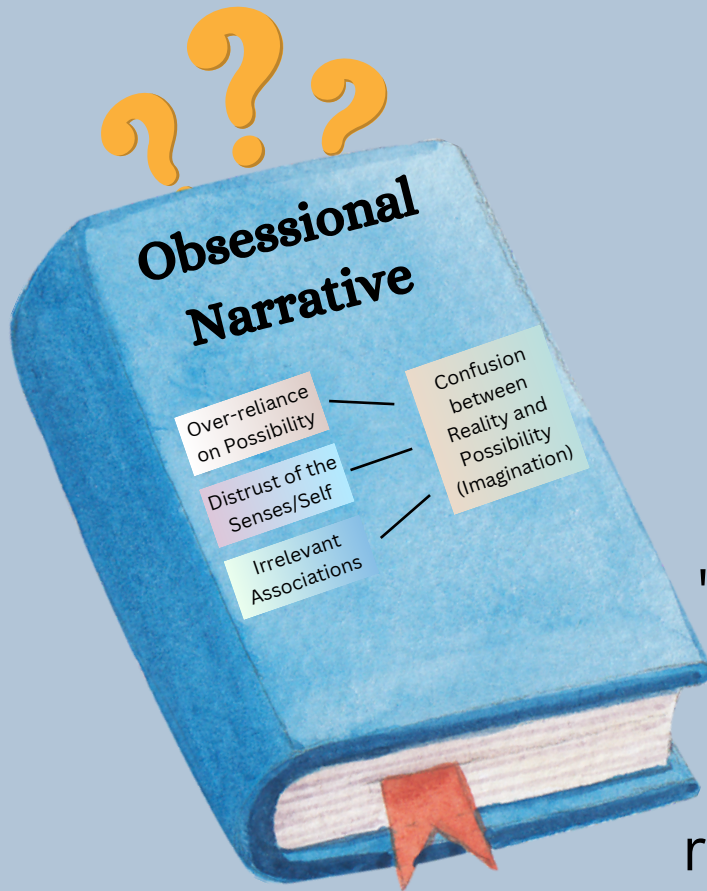
Obsessional
Narratives

The Obsessional Narrative

Part of why Obsessional Reasoning is so effective is because it is embedded in a narrative, which makes Obsessional Doubts very convincing. The Obsessional Narrative causes the OCD sufferer to feel they are going deeper into reality, but they are not. To identify the Obsessional Narrative is to identify the Reasoning Processes that give Obsessional Doubts their credibility.



Obsessional Doubt



The Obsessional Narrative(s) gives rise to Obsessional Doubts. This reasoning story consists of all the combined REASONS behind the obsessions on WHY the Obsessional Doubt might be true. .

WHY MIGHT I?....

"... have left the door unlocked."

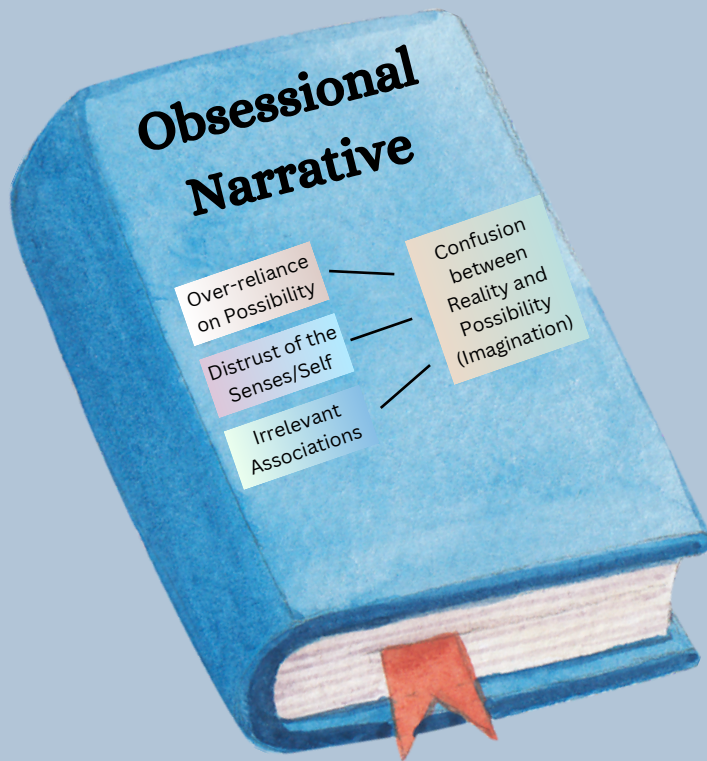
"..be a serial killer?"

"...have touched something that is contaminated."

"...have ran over someone with my car?"

All of this comes about through the Inferential Confusion Process: an over-reliance on the imagination and a distrust of the senses which causes the person to infer a conclusion based on the imagined possibilities instead of reality.

Let's look at some examples of Obsessional Narratives and identify the three types of Obsessional Reasoning within them.



Note that the Obsessional Doubts at the top of each story are the outcome of the obsessional narrative and the obsessional reasoning process contained in it.

Obsessional doubts are ARRIVED-AT through reasoning

Obsessional Narrative #1

Perhaps the hot plates on my stove are still turned on (Obsessional Doubt) because...

I heard on the television that an apartment block caught fire, and I guessed it was because the occupants had forgotten to shut off the cooker (Irrelevant Association). Also I was a witness once to a stove catching fire when my mother-in-law was cooking a meal. So if the cooker caught fire, I'm saying to myself that you can't leave a stove unwatched or it will catch fire (Over-reliance on Possibility). This is another proof that you need to be hypervigilant about turning off the stove after using it. Also, when I shut off the stove, I have trouble being sure since the light indicating it is off is really tiny. (Dismissal of Actual Evidence)

Obsessional Narrative #2

Perhaps my hands aren't clean (Obsessional Doubt),
because...

First, we know that microbes exist and can be found on the hands, (Irrelevant Association). For example, if I touch money regularly, I know the money is dirty because it's never washed and everybody touches it without washing their hands (Over-reliance on Possibility). So if I touch money, my hands will be dirty. (Irrelevant Association) In any case, everything I touch is likely to have been touched by another person who is likely to be careless washing their hands and whose dirt will stay on their hands (Overreliance on Possibility). So I do well to wash my hands. I heard on the television that studies have concluded that we should wash our hands for at least 20-30 seconds to make sure they are clean. (Irrelevant Association) .Even then, I can never be sure whether or not I wash my hands, since germs cannot be seen (Dismissal of evidence)

Obsessional Narrative #3

I might stab someone (Obsessional Doubt) because...

I dreamt of stabbing someone and enjoying it, which means I have the hidden desire to actually stab someone. (Irrelevant Association)) The dream felt so real that I might be able to do this in real life also. (Irrelevant Association). What if there is something bad inside of me that I am not aware of? (Over-reliance on Possibility) I know I never really hurt anyone in real life since these obsessions have started, but there always might be the possibility that I could. (Dismissal of Evidence/Over-reliance on Possibility) Even though I read about similar obsessions of other people, and I know that people with OCD are not dangerous, their obsessions were never totally the same, which means I still might be dangerous. (Dismissal of Actual Evidence)

Obsessional Narratives often have a more general self-theme that runs through them - linking them all together.

This self-theme is the ...

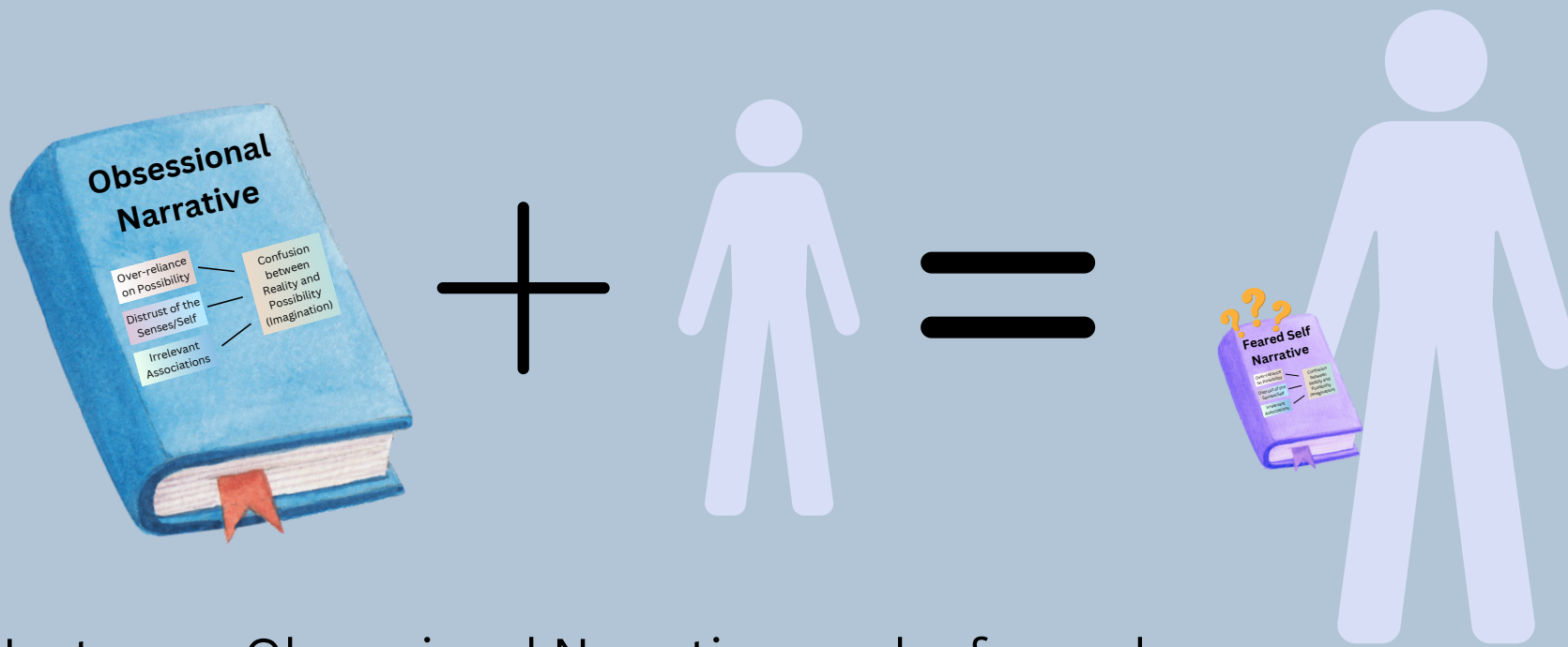


The Feared
Possible
Self



The Feared Possible Self

The Feared Possible Self
is who the person with OCD
fears being
or
fears they may become.



Just as an Obsessional Narrative can be formed based on an over-reliance on the imagination and distrust of the senses (Inferential Confusion), a narrative can also form about the SELF. This Inferential Confusion of the Self results in a feared possible self that has no actual basis in reality. It is a FALSE self.

The Feared Possible Self's Role

The outcome of the this self-narrative is unnecessary self-doubt

In turn, the self doubt can form the basis for different obsessional narratives and obsessional doubts to form .

You always have to start with identifying and working with the different obsessional narratives and doubts until the more general feared possible self reveals itself.



The Feared Self is the fruitful ground that Obsessional Reasoning can use to create Obsessional Narratives and thus Obsessional Doubts.

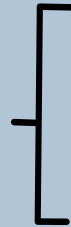
The types of Obsessional Doubts that a person constructs will have a common link - that link is the Feared Possible Self. It is a general vulnerability theme that will run through all Obsessional Narratives.

Examples of Feared Possible Selves

Obsessional Doubts



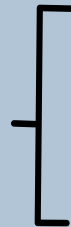
**Maybe I am a
Negligent Person**



Maybe I will leave the burner on.
Maybe I will pray wrong.
Maybe I will accidentally hurt my child.



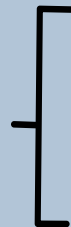
**Maybe I am an
Immoral Person**



Maybe I am racist.
Maybe I will commit blasphemy.
Maybe I will think about sex
with a relative.



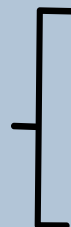
**Maybe I am a
Dangerous Person**



Maybe I am a serial killer.
Maybe I will punch people.
Maybe I could burn a house.

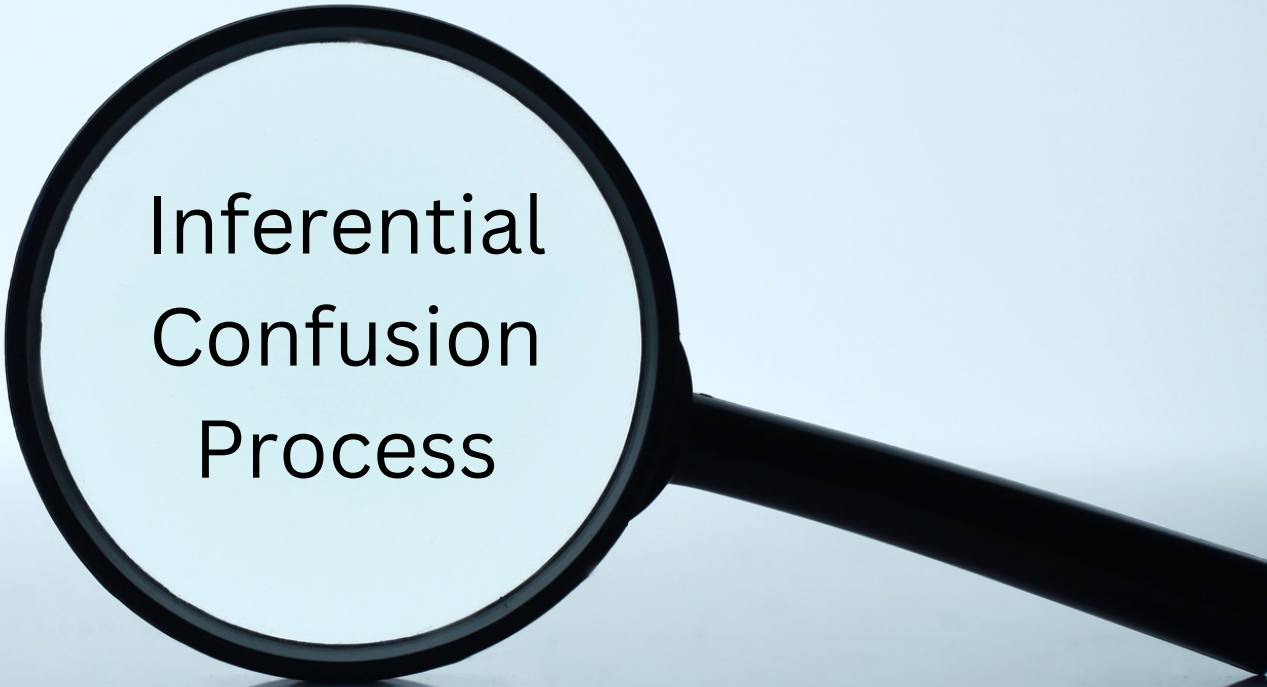


**Maybe I am an
Inconsiderate Person**



Maybe I will embarrass someone.
Maybe I will say the wrong thing.
Maybe I will talk too much.

Let's put it all together!



Inferential
Confusion
Process

Inferential Confusion (Obsessional Reasoning) runs through the development of:



The Feared Self Narrative



The Obsessional Narrative



The Obsessional Doubt



Inferential Confusion (Obsessional Reasoning) runs through the development of:



The Feared Self Narrative



The Obsessional Narrative

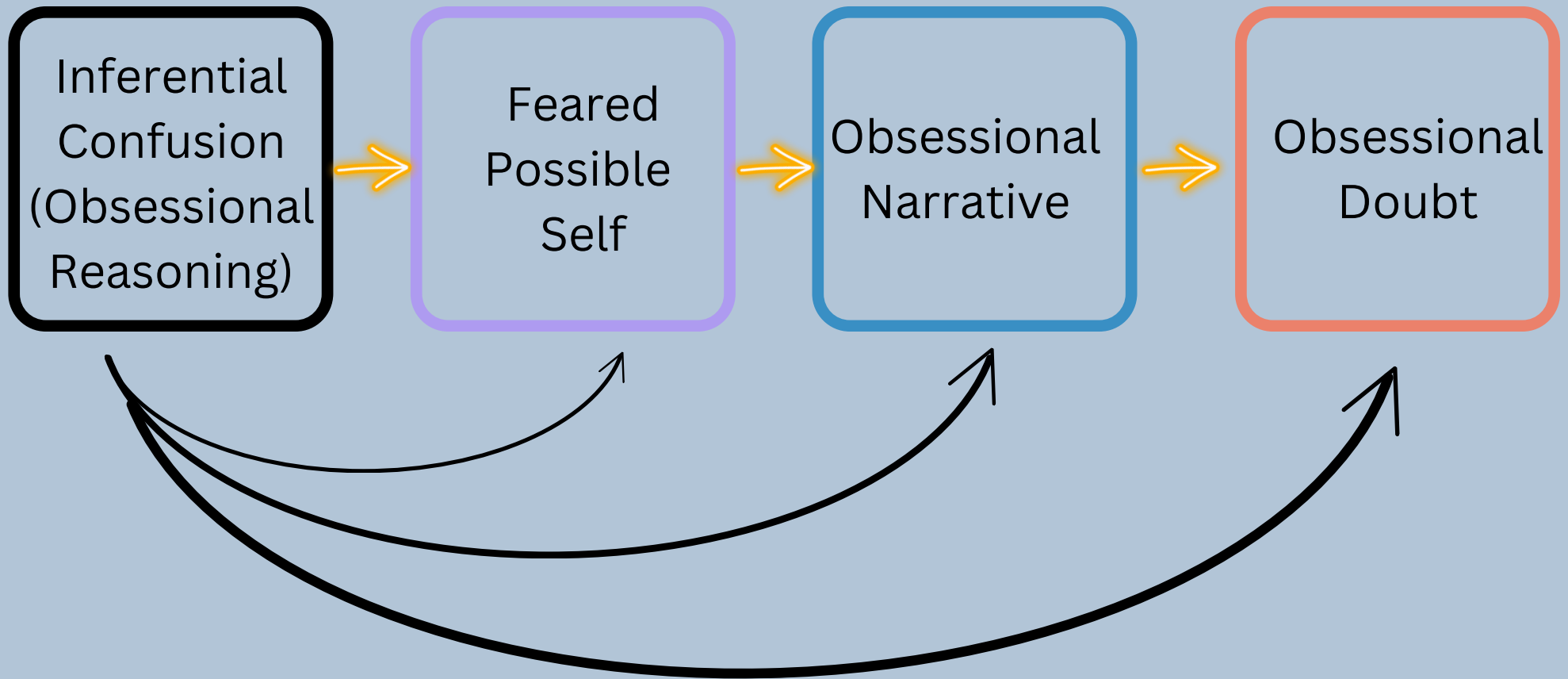


The Obsessional Doubt

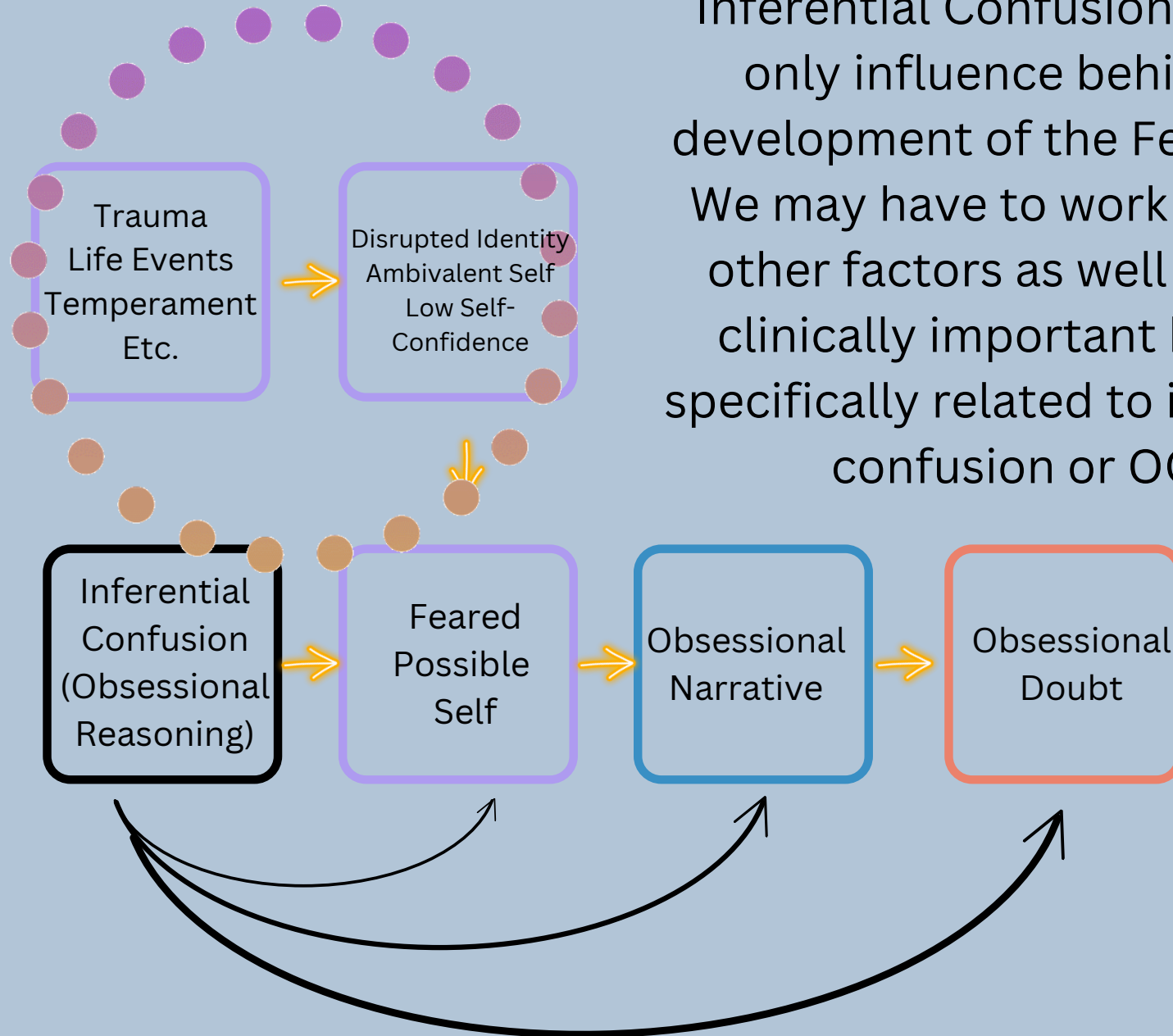
In the formation of obsessional narratives/doubts, there is a reliance on the imagination over the senses which results in the person with OCD acting on the imagined possibility instead of using the direct evidence in front of them to stay in Reality and act accordingly (Inferential Confusion).

They are INFERRING that the imagined possibility is true without direct evidence to support that conclusion.

Inferential Confusion Process

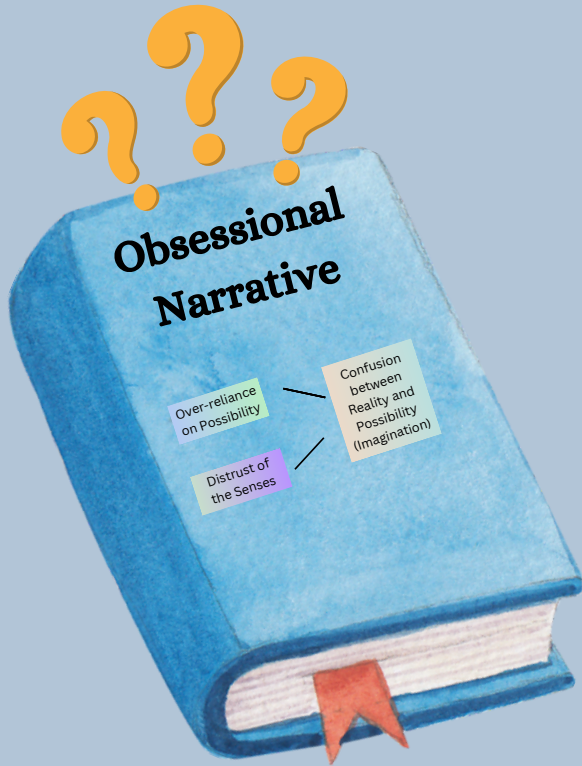


To Keep in Mind



Inferential Confusion isn't the only influence behind the development of the Feared self. We may have to work on many other factors as well that are clinically important but not specifically related to inferential confusion or OCD

How do we unwind Inferential Confusion?



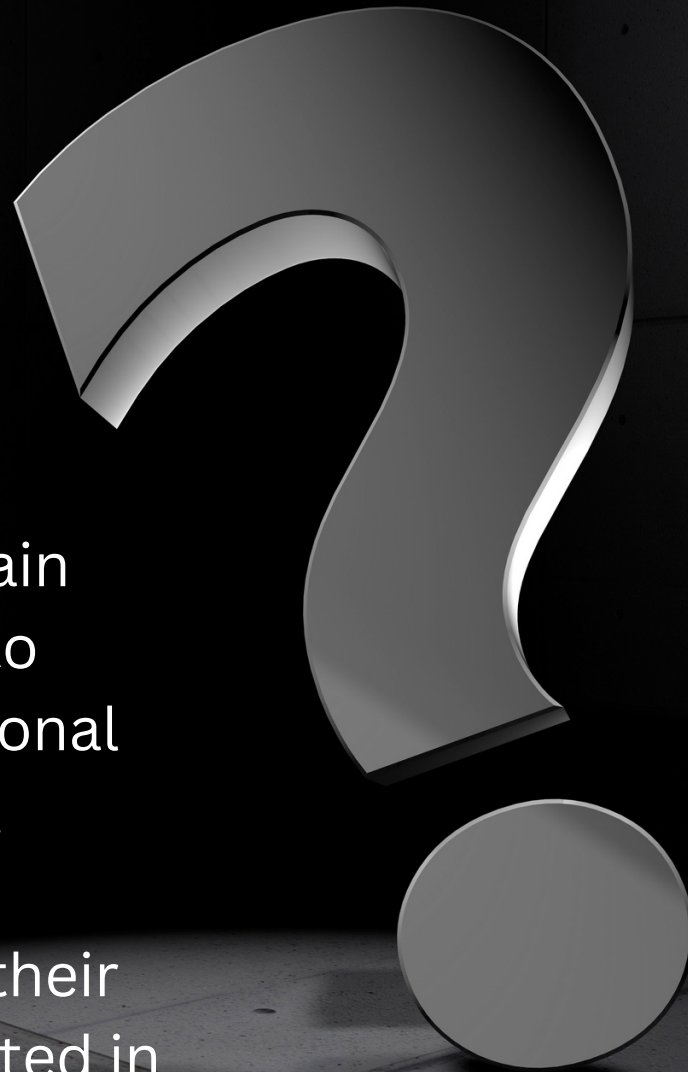
We help clients learn to trust their 5 senses, common sense, inner sense data, and Real Selves over their Imaginations and also help them to correct their Obsessional Reasoning.


We do this through layers of learning - which include understanding how OCD gets constructed.

By clients knowing HOW they reasoned their way into Obsessional Doubts, they can then DO something about them.

Through I-CBT, clients gain agency regarding how to deconstruct their Obsessional Reasoning (Inferential Confusion).

This helps return trust to their senses so they can stay rooted in Reality - thus resolving Obsessional Doubts.





**For more information about
I-CBT and Dr. Frederick Aardema
please visit:**

<https://icbt.online/>

For more information about
OCDTraining School
please visit:

<https://ocdtrainingschool.com/>