

Inference Based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Treatment Materials

Worksheet 1

Obsessive And Normal Doubt

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) always starts with doubt. You doubt when you are not sure about something or feel that "things are not right". Without the presence of an initial doubt, you would not feel the need to do your compulsions (checking, replacing, etc...). For example, the person who repeatedly checks his or her appearance in the mirror does so because he or she doubts that it is correct. The person who constantly fixes his or her hair does so because he or she doubts that his or her hair is properly styled/placed. Without doubt, there is no compulsion. Also, if you don't doubt, you won't worry about possible consequences such as being laughed at or judged negatively. In other words, not only is doubt the cause of compulsions, it is also responsible for the discomfort and anxiety you feel, that would not exist without doubt.

In everyday life, you sometimes have doubts that don't turn into obsessions. Why do you have these doubts? What is the difference between obsessive and normal doubts? Here are some points that differentiate them:

- √Normal doubt is triggered by direct evidence or information that comes from your senses.
- √Normal doubt quickly disappears following the information, the answer.
- √Obsessive doubt occurs even when your common sense tells you that everything is correct.
- √Obsessive doubt ignores evidence as it attempts to go beyond the senses.
- √Obsessive doubt increases the more you think about it.

Doubts usually take the form of "I feel like" or "It seems like". Some examples are: "I feel like my hair is asymmetrical"; "I feel like my skin is blemished"; "I feel like my nose is crooked"; "I feel like my eyes are squinty" etc.

Examples of normal doubt:

1) Maybe it will rain this afternoon?

You may have planned a picnic and clouds are obscuring the sky, which triggers your doubt about the weather.

2) Maybe I'll be late?

Realizing that you left home later than expected is another example of a concrete fact that can trigger the normal doubt of being late.

These normal doubts are triggered by information from your senses and are therefore appropriate in the context in which they arise. These doubts can be quickly dispelled (by checking the weather forecast or doing a simple calculation of the travel time) and your common sense assures you that everything has been done to satisfactorily address your doubts.

Examples of obsessive doubt:

1. I feel like my hands are deformed, weird.
2. It seems to me that my ears are not at the same level.

These doubts, if they are obsessive, are not triggered by specific information. An obsessive doubt leads you to check despite the absence of direct information preceding the doubt. On the other hand, even if your common sense tells you that you have checked enough, your need to check is still there. Finally, the more you think about it and the more you check, the more you doubt.

Exercise 1

Obsessive And Normal Doubt

The purpose of this exercise is to help you better distinguish between obsessive and normal doubts. Remember, obsessive doubts are expressed as "I feel like" or "it seems like".

Try to identify situations where you experience obsessive doubts and write them down in the spaces below.

Obsessive doubts

1. It seems to me that _____

2. It seems to me that _____

3. It seems to me that _____

4. It seems to me that _____

Remember that the above doubts are the cause of your BDD symptoms. Try to imagine what would happen if you did not have these doubts. How many BDD symptoms would you have if you did not have these doubts?

Now write down examples of normal doubts that occur in your everyday life that do not lead to compulsions.

Normal doubts

1. **Maybe** _____
2. **Maybe** _____
3. **Maybe** _____
4. **Maybe** _____

Using what you learned in Worksheet 1, ask yourself the following questions for each of the concerns you identified:

- √Is there any information from direct evidence to support my doubt?
- √Would doubt disappear with information?
- √Is the doubt based on common sense?
- √Does doubt go beyond the senses?
- √Does the doubt increase when I think about it?

This exercise should help you distinguish between obsessive and normal doubt.

Keep the training card with you and regularly use it, to try to consolidate what you have learned.

Training Card 1

Normal and Obsessional Doubt

Major Learning Points

- a) Normal doubt or questioning occurs with *direct* evidence or information from your senses and in an appropriate context.
- b) Normal doubt is resolved quickly once the proper information or evidence is obtained.
- c) Obsessional doubt occurs when you are already certain from a common-sense point of view that all has been done
- d) Obsessional doubt excludes evidence since it is trying to go beyond the senses.
- e) Obsessional doubt increases the more you think about it.
- f) In obsessional doubt you never know exactly what you are looking for.

Normal and Obsessional Doubt

Exercise

Step 1

Ask yourself at least four times a day whenever you are anxious or upset about something, or engaged in some kind of compulsion like checking, washing or ordering, what the specific doubt was that preceded these symptoms.

Step 2

After you have identified the doubt, ask yourself the following questions to determine whether it is a normal or obsessional doubt:

- 1) Is there any direct evidence or information that justifies the doubt?**
- 2) Would the doubt disappear with more information?**
- 3) Is the doubt based on common sense?**
- 4) Does the doubt increase the more you think about it?**
- 5) Does the doubt go beyond the senses?**

Worksheet 2

The Logic of the BDD

The purpose of last week's exercises was to help you distinguish between normal and obsessive doubts. Now you should be able to identify the initial doubt behind your worries and actions. At this point in the therapy, it is normal that simply distinguishing between the two types of doubts does not make your obsessive doubts any less credible to you. Today, we are going to look at the reasons why you value your obsessive doubts. In other words, we'll look at the reasoning behind the doubt that gives it credibility.

Obsessive doubts are statements about things that "could happen". They therefore seem probable to you. These doubts do not appear by magic. Even though your doubts may seem unreasonable at times, they are based on conclusions you draw from some reasoning. So BDD is not just a feeling. This is good news, because if obsessive doubts came out of nowhere, there would be nothing we could do about them. So, let's take a look at where your doubts come from? The following categories will help you identify the reasoning behind your doubts:

- 1) **Common sense**
- 2) **The authority**
- 3) **Hearsay**
- 4) **Previous experience**
- 5) **Logical calculation**

Let's take an example to illustrate how a person can come to doubt that the skin on his face is dull and full of imperfections and, as a result, cleans his face excessively and repeatedly. What kind of reasoning could justify such a doubt?

- 1) Appearance is important in our society. (*Common sense*)
- 2) Cover Girl touts natural beauty: "Just you, just beautiful, Cover Girl". (*Authority*)
- 3) I've heard that Brad Pitt once lost movie roles because he had acne scars (*hearsay*).
- 4) As a teenager, I was laughed at because of my appearance. (*Previous experience*)
- 5) A person who neglects the health of his or her skin means that he or she has a careless and negligent nature. (*Logic calculation*)

As you can see, the elements in the above reasoning seem to make sense. At first glance, your doubt seems reasonable because it is based on reasoning. Your doubts seem credible because they are based on elements (past experiences, authority, etc.) that we all use in our reasoning processes. However, there are some particularities in the reasoning process that leads to obsessive doubt. We will come back to this in future meetings. For now, try to think of your doubts as statements about what "could happen" based on some reasoning.

Exercise 2

The Logic of the BDD

In summary, obsessive doubt is a statement that you consider to be a valid possibility and is based on a particular reasoning process. It is possible that over time you have learned to act automatically and have forgotten the reasoning that accompanied the doubt in the first place. From now on, it is important to be aware of how you justify your doubts.

Here are some examples of obsessive doubts that can help you identify your own doubts:

- 1) It seems to me that the fingers of my left hand are longer than those of my right hand.
- 2) I feel like I always have an "inappropriate" look.
- 3) It seems to me that I constantly give off an unpleasant smell.
- 4) I feel like I have huge dark circles around my eyes.
- 5) It seems to me that my skin is full of imperfections.
- 6) I feel like my teeth are abnormally long.

Using Exercise 1, choose the obsessive doubt(s) that worries you the most and write it down in the spaces below:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

Now, using the five categories listed above, try to determine what justifies your doubt. There could be several arguments for one category and no argument for one or more of the categories.

A) Common sense

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

B) Authority

1) _____

2) _____

C) Hearsay

1) _____

2) _____

D) Previous experience

1) _____

2) _____

E) Logical calculation

1) _____

2) _____

Now you should begin to understand why your obsessive doubts can feel so real to you and are sometimes so hard to shake off.

TRAINING CARD 2

The `Logic` of OCD

Major Learning Points

- 1) A doubt is a statement about what *could* be or *might* be
- 2) Obsessional doubts do not come out of the blue
- 3) There is a reasoning process behind obsessional doubts
- 4) OCD is not the result of not being `logical` enough

The `Logic` of OCD

Exercise

Step 1

At least four times a day times day, try to identify the doubt that motivated you to carry out compulsions or made you feel anxious, and rephrase the doubt in the form of statement of what could be or might be.

Step 2

Next, identify the reasoning you have applied to justify the doubt or statement. Be specific since the reasoning behind the doubt may be different for each situation. If you are not immediately aware of any thoughts that preceded the doubt, then ask yourself, why does the doubt seem real? Or use the categories of common sense, hearsay, authority, previous experience, or logical calculation, to help you identify the justification behind the doubt.

Worksheet 3

The BDD Doubt Is 100% Imaginary

In the previous step, you learned that your obsessive doubts come from reasoning based on information that may be true in some contexts and seem logical. Despite this, we can say that your obsessive doubts are still false. Why is that? Because it is not the **content of the** information that is wrong, but rather the **timing** of your use of that information. This is the main difference between a normal doubt and an obsessive doubt.

Imagine the doubts that follow: "My breath seems bad" or "I feel like I have a pimple on my face". Is there sensory information **here** and **now** to explain your doubt? Is there information from your senses to support your doubt in **this** situation? In the case of an obsession, the answer is always no.

Obsessive doubt always comes from within yourself and never from the outside. To determine if your doubts are self-induced or external, ask yourself the following questions:

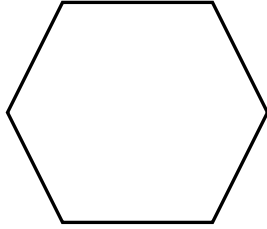
- 1) Is there any information in the **here** and **now** to justify my doubt?
- 2) Does the doubt go beyond what I can perceive?

You may agree that doubt is not based on the reality that surrounds you in the present moment and yet you wonder why this is so important. This is a fundamental point because in the absence of information in the **here** and **now** your obsessive doubts are as irrelevant as wondering if the ceiling is going to fall on your head right now.

Besides, as you do with your obsessive doubts, it would be easy to use all sorts of arguments to justify the possibility of the ceiling collapsing. So why aren't you worried about it? You might answer that it's unlikely. So are your obsessive doubts, yet you take them seriously. The reason you don't worry about the ceiling collapsing on you is that you have no information in **the here** and **now** that leads you to think that. It would be different if you suddenly heard a huge noise coming from the ceiling, accompanied by large cracks. In this context, your doubt would be relevant.

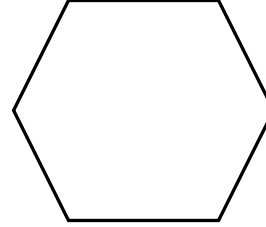
When you are in the BDD, you doubt in the absence of information. Reasoning that is not based on reality is 100% imaginary and therefore unlikely.

Figure 1. Normal Doubt



Reality

Figure 2. Obsessional Doubt



Imagination

The difference between obsessive and normal doubt is that normal doubt is ***always based*** on something in reality, while obsessive doubt seems to come from nowhere. In other words, obsessive doubt always comes from within yourself and never from outside.

Exercise 3

The BDD Doubt Is 100% Imaginary

As a result of the information you received in your therapy session, you may be able to accept, at least from an intellectual standpoint, that your obsessive doubts are 100% your own. However, understanding something is not enough when you want to change things. You must therefore apply your new knowledge to your obsessive doubts. How do you do this? By asking yourself if the elements of your reasoning that make your doubt seem real apply **here** and **now**.

Here are some examples of thoughts that are part of the BDD reasoning process that can persuade you that your doubt is justified: "Sometimes I am inattentive; therefore, I have to make sure that my appearance is correct very often"; "My best friend just got dumped by his girlfriend for a boy who is better looking than him" ; My best friend just got dumped by his girlfriend for a better looking guy"; "My mother always told me that it is crucial to take care of your appearance because you never get a second chance to make a good first impression"; "Since I have oily skin, I absolutely have to take care of it because if I don't, I'll be covered in pimples"; "People judge or laugh at people who are not physically attractive". At first glance, it may not be obvious that these notions have nothing to do with reality, since they speak of real things. However, if this information does not relate to the **here** and **now**, it is not at all relevant to your situation.

As you go through the exercises you will use to help you cope with BDD, you'll realize that BDD is a very creative disorder that easily finds plenty of information to fuel your doubts. The good news is that BDD is always wrong! None of the doubts of the many BDD sufferers we have known have ever been proven correct. However, the BDD says, "But maybe this time it could happen. But since the obsessive doubt does not come from reality, it is always wrong.

To see the inconsistency of BDD, let's apply your BDD reasoning to situations without BDD. Suppose you want to cross the street. You look left and then right and if you don't see a car, then you cross. If you applied BDD logic, you would be suspicious of your senses, telling yourself things like "if the car I see in the distance approaches faster than it looks, I might get hit" and you would never cross!

To put this concept into practice, choose one of your doubts and try to remember the last time it really worried you. Ask yourself if, in that situation, the doubt was based on

something real. Don't try to convince yourself of anything as this is not the purpose of the exercise. When you are wondering about doubt, write down all the thoughts that come to mind. Then look at each thought separately and ask yourself if it is based on anything that is related to what is **here** and **now**. Reject, as you go, each of the thoughts you identified earlier that are not based on the **here** and **now**. Write down any thoughts that you are unable to reject and discuss them with your therapist.

TRAINING CARD 3

Obsessional Doubts are 100% Imaginary

Major Learning Points

- 1) It is not a matter of *what* justifies the obsessional doubt, but *how* and *when*.
- 2) Obsessional doubts always come from you and never from the outside.
- 3) Obsessional doubts are 100% irrelevant to the here and now

Obsessional Doubts are 100% Imaginary

Exercise

Step 1

At least 3 times a day, question an obsessional doubt as it occurs. Try to identify the thoughts that come up, which make the doubt seem like a valid concern.

Step 2

Next, determine whether the thoughts that seem to support the doubt goes beyond what you can see or sense.

Step 3

Lastly, establish what remains of the obsessional doubt leaving out any information that that is not relevant to the here and now.

Worksheet 4

How The BDD Becomes a Lived Experience

Why do obsessive doubts feel so real? In order to answer this question, we need to understand why something feels real.

Let's take the activity you are involved in now: reading this page. Why does this activity feel real to you? It is not only because of the information coming from your senses (you see the words on this page) but more importantly because there is a story attached to it that draws on the past, present and future. Ask yourself, why did you decide to read this page? Almost immediately a whole story unfolds, a story that can be read like a novel. You see yourself in the past struggling with BDD, looking for resources to help you, visiting the therapist, talking, and asking questions, and doing exercises at home in the hope of overcoming BDD. Imagine for a moment that you are reading this page but that you were never involved in the experiences described above; that they never happened. How real would the content of this page seem to you?

In some ways, listening to your own thoughts is like reading a novel. This is not just a coincidence, but rather part of the way we organize opinions and feelings about ourselves and the world around us. Thus, a story unfolds and we add elements that make the world around us more real and convincing. So here we are on our way to the grocery store or to work, talking with friends or family or even having obsessions. So, in a way, we spend our lives telling stories. These stories influence our experiences, our beliefs and also how real those beliefs seem to us. Similarly, obsessive notions and their credibility are based on the stories we tell ourselves. This gives them a certain probability of realism. One of the problems with BDD is that you may be aware that it is ridiculous and not very believable, but when you are in a BDD situation, you feel compelled to act on the doubt. As already argued, this follows from the fact that the BDD story gives doubt a certain reality, regardless of whether you believe it or not when you are outside the BDD situation.

Of course, you already know the story behind your BDD. After all, during the previous sessions, you have already identified many thoughts that seem to justify the obsessive doubt. However, all of these bits and pieces that you have previously identified must now be ordered to form a story. It is this story that makes the doubt seem so real. The BDD story can include all sorts of things, such as facts or calculations that seem to speak to reality but are never based on sensory information about the reality around you.

From an intellectual standpoint, you may agree with the above reasoning, but how do you go about changing the obsessive doubt? As argued, obsessive doubt seems real because

it is based on a compelling story. So, it is clear that the story needs to be changed. In order to do this, over the next few weeks you will be looking at the obsessive story and the elements that make the doubt seem real. You will also work on developing an alternative story. By formulating an alternative story, you will automatically diminish the effect of the obsessive story. This will not happen overnight and takes a lot of practice. However, if you persevere and have the proper techniques you will be able to break free from the BDD and eventually *experience* a different story.

Exercise 4

How The BDD Becomes a Lived Experience

With the help of your therapist, first choose one obsessive doubt, the one that bothers you the most or the one you have dwelt on the most during previous meetings. Then, write down all the justifications that you have gradually identified behind this doubt. Organize and complete this information so that it looks like a story with a plot, like a novel. You now have your obsessive story about why this doubt seems so real. This story can be added to as the days go by with other elements.

The next step is essential because it will allow you to put the BDD story into perspective. To do this, you will begin to develop a non-obsessional story. This story must concern the BDD situation in which the chosen doubt manifests itself. It should be very descriptive, that is, it should contain as much sensory information as possible that is usually found in the BDD situation. Like some novels, you will focus on describing a scene with you as the main character. Colors, smells, sounds, in short, everything you could perceive in this BDD situation should be used. Your work related to the non-obsessional story is a creative process. Imagine that your mind is a canvas on which you paint many versions of reality. The painter does not constantly ask himself at every step of the process whether the picture he paints is better than the last. So, you don't have to wonder if the obsessional story is better than the non-obsessional story. The painter would want the painting to be simply as "real" and as "alive" as possible.

Furthermore, it is a mistake to view the development of the non-obsessional story as merely an intellectual exercise to help you somehow "solve" your BDD problem. It is not about finding arguments that contradict the rationale of the BDD. Such an attitude will help the BDD get rid of whatever alternative you may bring. Exploring the alternative, non-obsessional story is only the willingness to imagine and engage in a different story where the description of the reality of the moment predominates.

Both stories are likely to change over time and are a work in progress. The non-obsessional story will change over the course of therapy as you try to add new elements to it as often as possible to make it more real to you. These elements may include all kinds of information. However, unlike the obsessional story, you will be able to add elements that are based on reality or your senses since this kind of information is never part of the obsessional story.

Do not be discouraged if, at first, the obsessional story and its elements seem much more compelling than the non-obsessional story. This is quite normal. The conviction level of the non-obsessional story may be very low at first since, in fact, that is why you are suffering from BDD. Completing the non-obsessional story and reading or thinking about it often is intended to make the story and its elements more real to you. Thus, gradually, the

obsessive story will give way to this alternative story based solely on reality.

Remember that your therapist will not try to convince you by constantly bringing in new evidence to make you "see the light. He or she can help you find new material if you happen to be struggling and help you fix the story so that it makes more sense to you, but he or she cannot do the work for you. The only "magic" solution to overcoming BDD is the magic we perform every day through the stories we tell ourselves and the way those stories turn into lived experience. So, unless you want someone else to live in your place, it's up to you to make the non-obsessional story real and relevant.

TRAINING CARD 4

How OCD becomes a `lived-in` experience

Major Learning Points

- 1) Things become real to us by the stories we tell ourselves about them.
- 2) Behind the obsessional doubt there is a convincing story that makes the doubt feel very real.
- 3) To change the doubt, you change the story
- 4) Changing the story is not an intellectual process but a creative one.

How OCD becomes a `lived-in` experience

Exercise

Make yourself very familiar with the non-obsessional story until you know it by heart. Then, at least three times a day, imagine and rehearse the non-obsessional story as vividly as you can. Immerse yourself in it with as much detail as possible. You can do this verbally or use imagery, or both, depending on your preference. Only do this in moments where you are calm, and outside of OCD-type of situations. While you imagine it, act as if the non-OCD story is completely true – like no other possibilities exist. Imagine each of the elements and make them as real as possible to yourself by going in as much detail as possible. Creatively add new elements to your story. Make it as real and intense as possible!

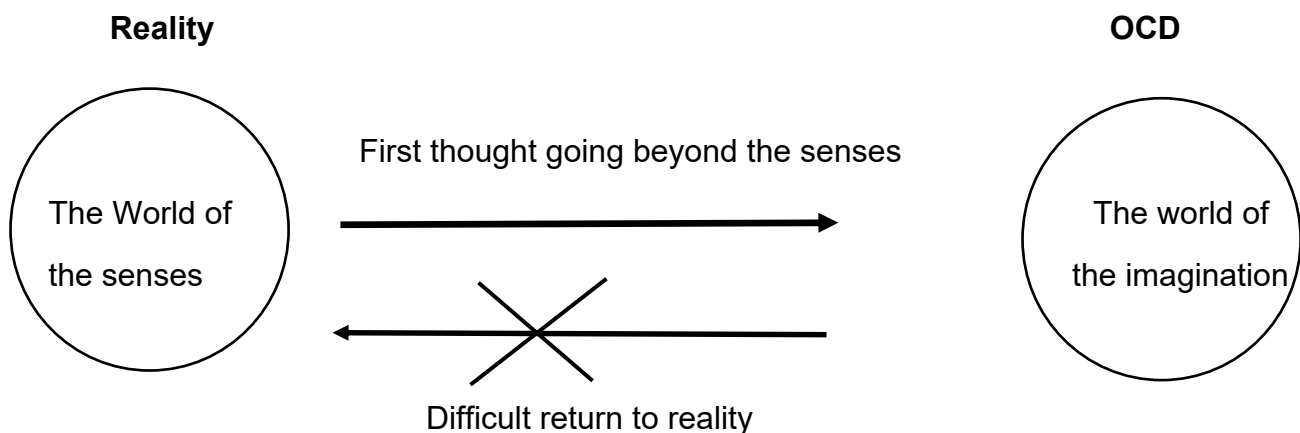
Worksheet 5

Crossing The Border of Reality

The goal of BDD is to make you doubt as much as possible. This is no small feat since there is nothing in the reality around you that supports doubt. BDD can only be convincing if it appeals to information beyond the senses and tries to make you believe that everything from your senses is of little importance. Soon, these elements become part of the obsessive story and make your doubt seem more real.

For example, let's say you're concerned that your eyes are squinty. However, there is no evidence that your eyes are squinty. The people you talk to don't seem bothered by your eyes, your optometrist never mentioned anything about it. The only way to give reality to the doubt is to appeal to information beyond the senses: "I had an eye injury when I was a child and it must have left a mark"; "My relatives don't say anything to avoid hurting me", etc. All this argumentation may not necessarily be wrong, but if it does not have its origin in the immediate reality around you, the obsessive doubt is 100% imaginary and irrelevant.

Since, when you are in the BDD you are no longer in reality, there is a specific moment when you fall into the imaginary "world" of the BDD. This moment can be identified. It happens with the first thought that takes you beyond the sensory information. This can be represented by the following figure:



When you enter the world of BDD, everything you can perceive in the reality around you no longer seems to matter. You are caught up in a spiral of imaginary and dramatic consequences that make you very anxious. You have broken all ties with the reassuring perception of reality.

Moreover, once you have crossed the border between reality and fantasy, it is very difficult to retrace your steps. This is because you have abandoned all criteria based on reality, the only ones able to resolve doubt permanently. Of course, in the world of BDD you can resort to compulsions, but how can you really know if you have checked or repositioned enough? Rituals are only a temporary solution to the problem since knowing when to stop the rituals depends solely on the whims of the BDD.

Exercise 5

Crossing The Border of Reality

The following exercise is a detailed description of the exercise that you will find on the weekly training card. Use this sheet to become familiar with the exercise so that you don't need to use it again except as a reminder. Rest assured, the purpose of this exercise is not to stop you from doing anything! So this exercise is not a scary experience. Rather, it is about gaining a new awareness.

Step 1

When an obsessive doubt arises in your mind, stop, do nothing! Imagine yourself standing in front of a bridge separating reality, the world you are still in, from the imaginary world of the BDD. Something seems to be pushing you forward and drawing you across the bridge. This is the first thought that goes beyond the sensory information. Ask yourself the following questions:

- 1) What is the first thought that comes to mind that pushes me beyond the sensory information?
- 2) How does this thought make me see the senses as having very little relevance?

Step 2

Once you have identified the exact thought that is causing you to cross the boundary between the real and imaginary worlds, don't react immediately with compulsions or avoidance. Do nothing for at least a minute and reflect.

Standing in front of that bridge, you feel the need to respond to the doubt. It seems to you that the doubt will be resolved only if you cross the bridge and enter the world of the BDD. However, turn around and look at the world of the senses and direct information from which you came for a moment. There, doubt had little relevance because there was nothing to support it.

Step 3

Now choose what you are going to do. You can move forward into the world of BDD, fret

more about the doubt, try to resolve it in some way, and in all likelihood, worry even more. Or you can go back to the world of senses and direct information where the doubt was 100% arbitrary and had little relevance.

If you are moving forward in the BDD, ask yourself, "Have I successfully resolved the doubt permanently?", "Will I find that in similar situations the doubt will return?"

If you have decided to return to the world of the senses and direct information, ask yourself about the reasons that convinced you that the doubt was imaginary and not something that needed your attention. Did you use your senses and direct information to decide that the doubt was imaginary? How permanent was the resolution of the doubt?

Step 4

Write down the most important thoughts that took you beyond the senses. Discuss them with your therapist in the next session and add this information to your obsessional story.

Remember to continue to reread and elaborate your non-BDD story when you are not in a BDD situation. This is an exercise that you should continue throughout therapy.

TRAINING CARD 5

Crossing Over

Major Learning Points

- 1) Obsessional doubt can ONLY be maintained by going beyond the senses and NEVER by reality around you
- 2) There is a cross-over point where you move from reality into the imagination.
- 3) Crossing over occurs as soon as you go beyond the senses and feel your senses are not really relevant.
- 4) Only the senses can provide a permanent resolution to your obsessional doubt and rituals.

Crossing Over

Exercise

Step 1

Identify the thoughts that you have during the day that take you beyond the senses, and make it seem as if your senses do not really matter.

Step 2

Next, hold off every ritual and feeling associated with this thought. You are now at the cross over point in between the world of the senses and the imagination. Imagine yourself standing on a bridge in between worlds. Look in both directions and realize there is a choice there.

Step 3

Make your choice and reflect afterwards on the choice you made.

Worksheet 6

The BDD's Reasoning Stratagems - Part 1

As demonstrated earlier, in order to make obsessive doubt seem real, the most important trick of the BDD is to appeal to information beyond the senses and direct information. However, like any seller of useless goods, the BDD has many tricks up its sleeve. In one way or another, these tricks all relate to appealing to information beyond the senses and direct information.

Gaining a detailed understanding of each of these ploys and knowing exactly what is going on can help you move away from doubt by making it seem less real. These schemes are part of the BDD story and this week's exercises will focus on learning how to identify them.

Below are six ploys used by the BDD.

Category Errors

Confusing two categories of information or two categories of objects in such a way that one appears to be related to the other but in fact is not. If a is true, then b is also true.

Example: "My sister had a nose job and received a lot of compliments afterwards, so this procedure would also be justified in my case.

Seemingly comparable events

Confusing two different events that are separated in time or place.

Example: "Teenagers with acne are laughed at, so I may be laughed at if I have imperfect skin.

Selective use of out-of-context facts

Abstract and general facts are inappropriately applied to your personal situation.

Example: "Actors who have physical defects have more difficulty in getting contracts.

Totally imaginary sequences

Make up compelling stories from scratch and start living them.

Example: *"When I am in a social situation and people look at me, I feel my nose getting bigger and more repulsive."*

Inverse inference

Inferences about reality precede, rather than follow from observation of reality

Example: *"Some people in the room laughed, that proves that they saw and judged my flaw."*

Distrust of normal perception

Disregarding the senses, even rejecting sensory information.

Example: *"I need to analyze my defect to make sure it doesn't appear too bad".*

Exercise 6

The BDD's Reasoning Stratagems - Part 1

The purpose of this week's exercise is to learn to better identify the ploys used by the BDD to convince you that your obsessive doubt is real.

Identifying BDD schemes is not easy. When you are in the midst of an emotional roller coaster ride, they can seem very real. For example, you are listening to the news and hear about someone who is suffering from cancer. If your concerns are about disease, after listening to the news, you may start to doubt that you have cancer. At this point, you may find it difficult to stop and take a closer look at the situation to find the reasoning scheme that led you to doubt your health.

Don't worry if you are not always able to identify exactly which scheme the BDD is using, as sometimes one scheme can overlap with others. Simply making the effort to question the BDD is a step in the right direction.

Use your obsessive history to find these faulty reasonings or use other examples from obsessive situations you may have encountered today. Then write them down below in the category you think is appropriate.

Category Errors:

Apparently comparable events:

Selective use of out-of-context facts:

Totally imaginary sequence:

Inverse inference:

Distrust of normal perception:

This week's practice card contains exercises that will help you identify these schemes in as many BDD situations as possible. Use the practice card each day to identify the thinking errors underlying your obsessive doubts. Good luck!

TRAINING CARD 6

The Reasoning Devices of the OCD: Part 1

Major Learning Points

Reasoning devices to remember:

- a) category errors
- b) apparently comparable events
- c) misplaced concreteness
- d) imaginary sequences
- e) inverse inference
- f) distrust of normal perception

The Reasoning Devices of the OCD: Part 1

Exercise

- 1) At least four times a day, when an obsessional doubt occurs, identify the reasoning devices of the BDD that led to the obsessional doubt.
- 2) Ask yourself each time how much would remain of your doubt if you would dismiss it on the basis of the reasoning errors you have identified.
- 3) Imagine vividly how the situation in which you have experienced the obsessional doubt would feel like without the reasoning devices of the BDD. Identify what is left of the doubt.
- 4) Write down the thoughts where you have difficulty deciding on whether it qualifies as a reasoning error and bring this list with you to the next session with your therapist.

Worksheet 7

The BDD's Reasoning Stratagems - Part 2

Being aware of BDD reasoning schemes involves something very important. Indeed, do you realize that BDD schemes make your obsessive doubt totally false?

All of these BDD ploys lead you to distrust the reality around you when in fact the mere presence of these ploys indicates that there is a flaw in the original BDD argument. In other words, the obsessive story and all its reasoning errors always take you away from reality and go against your senses and direct information. This is why when the BDD doubt arises, it is always wrong. Your senses and direct information give you "certain" information and only then does the BDD doubt make you less certain.

Here's what you need to know about the BDD's ploys:

- 1) To live a doubt as if it were real does not make it real (**purely imaginary linkage**).
- 2) The fact that someone has had plastic surgery or has been criticized for their appearance has little relevance to you if your senses, in the reality around you, give you other information (**apparently comparable events**).
- 3) The fact that people with a strong unpleasant odor are usually isolated has no relation to the odor you yourself might be giving off (**selective use of out-of-context facts**).
- 4) Starting with an obsessive doubt and trying to find evidence to support it is possible, but it will take you away from reality since the doubt goes beyond the senses from the beginning. It has nothing to do with what is around you and you might as well worry about meteorites falling on your head (**reverse inference**).
- 5) Going beyond the senses will bring you very quickly into the world of BDD and everything you can feel in this world **DEPLETED OF SENSE AND DIRECT INFORMATION** will be determined simply by your imagination (**distrust of normal perception**).
- 6) Just because two categories of information look the same does not mean they are the same. With regard to obsessive doubt, it is important to remember that it is not based on reality. For example, "I may have run over someone with my car because the car I am driving is the one someone else used when they had an accident" (**category error**).

At this point, at least from an intellectual standpoint, you should be able to recognize that the BDD is wrong, not correct and erroneous. However, if you still have objections to the theoretical concepts discussed, which is quite possible, you should discuss your remarks with your therapist.

On the other hand, despite a good theoretical understanding of how BDD works, people in this therapy may be reluctant to take the first concrete steps out of BDD. They may think, "If the obsessive doubt is wrong, then what am I going to rely on? If I can't rely on BDD, then how will I decide if something is right or wrong?"

The non-BDD story that you have developed over the past few weeks is the answer. In the non-BDD story, you use a completely different rationale than you do in the BDD story. Indeed, the non-BDD story is consistent with the meanings and reality of the moment while the BDD story is not. So, in conclusion, the non-BDD story does not contain any errors in reasoning, and you can trust it!

Exercise 7

The BDD's Reasoning Stratagems - Part 2

Identifying errors in the reasoning of other people's BDD stories can help you because you are then able to better distance yourself and gain a more objective perception that will be useful in examining your own doubts.

Read the following two obsessive stories and identify the BDD's ploys. Write them down in the brackets. Each time, when you have successfully identified a reasoning error, try to figure out why it makes the doubt wrong.

In the following example, a person with OCD tells a story that convinces her that her hands might be dirty and therefore she should wash them:

So, I'm thinking, "Well, my kids were playing outside, and I know it's dirty outside (_____). I noticed dirt on the cement, and I think they might have touched something dirty(_____), picked up something in the street, dirty paper or dog feces and so I think if they are dirty, I will get dirty too(_____). Then I will get the house dirty and I imagine the house dirty and me too, with my dirty hands, I start to feel dirty(_____). So, I'll wash and not stop, you know, a voice in my head keeps telling me, over and over, you're dirty and even if you wash and you don't see anything(_____), you might still be dirty(_____).

The following example talks about someone who is worried about having a fat belly:

I'm thinking that I may be getting fatter right now because I know that my weight has always fluctuated in the past (_____). Also, a friend made a comment a few months ago that I had gained weight, so he may be right (_____). I also think that men over 35 gain weight more easily and since I am 39, it is quite possible that this is the case for me(_____). Also, I know that I have not been eating according to the food guide for quite some time and that my body is starting to suffer the consequences(_____). Finally, I know that I am feeling unwell at the moment, and this is probably due to the fact that my belly has grown(_____). This seems to be true to me because I once noticed that my belly had bloated at a time when I was feeling bad inside(_____). So, I think that when I feel bad inside, my belly bloats and then I feel even worse because I feel that my belly has

grown(_____).

How quickly were you able to dismiss the OCD and BDD stories above? If these stories are really different from yours, then you should be able to dismiss them fairly quickly.

The exercises described in this week's training card are designed to remove some of your doubts in situations where, a few times a day, you believe you are able to remove your doubts. These exercises will ask you to: **1)** identify the errors in reasoning behind the doubt, **2)** realize why the errors in reasoning are at the root of your doubt and therefore make it unjustified, **3)** recall your alternative story to replace the obsessive story, and **4)** dismiss the doubt.

Each time, the exercise should take no more than one or two minutes. If you are not able to dismiss the BDD story, don't worry too much but try again later in a situation that is easier.

Remember to continue practicing and developing your non BDD story outside of BDD situations.

TRAINING CARD 7

The Reasoning Devices of the OCD: Part 2

Major Learning Points

- 1) Obsessional doubt is always wrong.
- 2) Because obsessional doubt never starts in the senses it takes you further away from what is really there, instead of any closer.
- 3) The reasoning devices of the OCD take you away further from reality.
- 4) The non-OCD story brings you closer to what is really there since it starts out with your senses.

The Reasoning Devices of the OCD: Part 1

Exercise

Do the following exercise for no longer than 2 minutes:

1. Five times a day when an obsessional doubt occurs identify the reasoning errors that gave rise to the doubt. Only pick those doubts in situations where you have the feeling you could overcome the doubt.
2. Realize the implications of the reasoning errors and that the reasoning errors make the doubt wrong. Do NOT analyze this over and over.
3. Imagine vividly how the situation would feel like if the non-OCD story applies. Recount and rehearse the non-OCD story that starts out with the senses.
4. Let go of the obsessional doubt after you recounted the non-OCD story. It no longer requires your attention.

Worksheet 8

The Selective Nature of Obsessive Doubt

The selective nature of BDD doubt represents one of the greatest characteristics of "obsessive thinking". Indeed, obsessive doubt applies only to a limited and often small number of situations. It may not seem like it, because of course, doubts and compulsions take up a lot of your time.

But let's look at this another way. Of all the situations you encounter in a day, how many trigger obsessive doubt? Surely not many compared to all the situations you encounter in a single day.

To convince yourself of this, try, for example, to make a mental note of all the things that have happened to you since this morning. Not just the situations that cause you to obsess, but all the things that have happened to you. Perhaps you ate breakfast, looked out the window, walked down the street, made a phone call, walked from room to room, listened to music, closed a drawer, took notes, and breathed. Have you obsessed in all these situations? You may have done so during one of these situations, as people can obsess about anything. However, the majority of these situations did not cause you any problems.

This demonstrates something very important:

IN MOST THINGS IN YOUR LIFE, YOU HAVE NO OBSESSIVE PROBLEMS.

Since you have no problems in such a variety of situations, this means that your reasoning is correct most of the time. Almost always, you do not confuse the imaginary with the real.

So why should the situations in which you experience obsessions be any different? One reason is that you may not realize that your thinking in BDD situations is different from your thinking in non-BDD situations. It is therefore important to be aware of how you reason in BDD situations and how far it deviates from your usual reasoning.

To do this, let's first look at a mundane situation that does not cause obsessive doubts for the majority of individuals suffering from BDD: let's say you intend to cross a street. Beware, if this situation causes OCD doubts, you and your therapist must look for another situation. To cross, how do you decide that it is safe to do so? What information do you use to determine if it is safe to cross? You look left and right to make sure there are no cars in sight. You then decide if it is safe to cross. In other words, you will not feel the need to go beyond the direct information. So, you don't make up a story to convince yourself that, despite having already looked, a car might be coming. Indeed, your senses will override your reasoning and you will have no doubt in this situation since, after all, the idea that it might be dangerous to cross is totally fictitious.

Now, let's compare the above situation to an obsessive situation that is quite common. You are about to leave home. Although there is no direct information that tells you that your appearance is not correct, you have doubts and feel the need to check in the mirror. In this BDD situation, your reasoning is different: you are in a fantasy world and do not trust direct information! Yet, if you were to use the same reasoning to decide most things in your life, you would behave the same way you did when you decided to cross the street. In other words, you would say, *"I have no direct information that my appearance is not correct. This event is no different than crossing the street.*

If before you leave you realize that the doubt is not based on direct information, in principle, you should be able to confront the BDD situation with the same confidence as crossing a street. The problem is to realize how similar BDD situations are to all other situations you encounter in your everyday life and therefore there is no reason to act differently in BDD situations.

Exercise 8

The Selective Nature of Obsessive Doubt

It is common that when several people with BDD meet, they look at each other in disbelief as they learn about each other's obsessions. They can't understand each other's obsessions. Yet, fundamentally, one person's obsession is no different from another person's obsession. It is based on the same processes. It is interesting to realize how similar all obsessions are so that you can distance yourself from your personal BDD story. Why would you give credit to one BDD story, your own, and not to those of others?

To understand how any situation can turn into a BDD situation, let's go back to the situation where you have to cross a street but add the following story:

"It is dangerous to cross the street. I heard about an accident that happened to someone who was always very careful. So, accidents can happen unexpectedly even if you are paying attention to cars. When I cross a street, I don't look left or right twice or three times. Instead, I stand there and wait for a long time to see if there are any cars coming. Even if I don't see any cars, there may be one that suddenly turns the corner. Or it may be a silent car that I can't hear since there are electric cars now. Finally, I often decide not to cross the street. Simply put, I don't feel safe even though there is no traffic."

As you can see, we have invented a story to make a banal situation problematic. How could we make a situation so obsessive that it is possible to consider never crossing the street again? The answer, of course, is the one you've heard about many times before...*going beyond the direct information*. Revisit the story and identify those elements that go beyond the direct information and thus bring doubt into a situation that from all points of view is not dangerous if you use the direct information.

With your therapist, now choose a situation that does not trigger BDD and, as in the previous example, we want you to make this trivial situation obsessive. In other words, think of all the reasons why this situation might be problematic. Also consider all the reasons why this situation, which is neutral to you when you perceive it non-obsessively, might turn out to be a problem. Write all this down in a story of about 5-10 sentences. When you have written this obsessional story beyond the direct information, put it side by side with your BDD story. Consider the similarity between the two.

You should be able to see that your BDD story is not at all different from the one you *fabricated* in the exercise above. So now ask yourself this question: Why am I going to use

a story that goes beyond direct information for my BDD doubt in one situation but not in the others? After all, the story you just wrote is no different than your obsessive story. If you are able to realize that the mundane situation you made obsessive is no different from your BDD story, then perhaps you can behave in obsessive situations the same way you do in mundane situations.

The practice card for this week contains a similar exercise. It will ask you to make a daily note of all the situations around you in which you rely on direct information. Then you will compare these to situations where you use BDD reasoning. We want you to realize that your reasoning is normal in many situations and encourage you to trust direct information in BDD situations as you already do in 99% of your everyday life situations.

TRAINING CARD 8

The Selective Nature of the Obsessional Doubt

Major Learning Points

- 1) In most of your life you have no obsessional problems at all.
- 2) Obsessional doubt is highly selective and represents only a few aspects of your life.
- 3) The reasoning applied in OCD situations is very different from the reasoning you normally apply in situations
- 4) To be aware how of your normal reasoning is to be aware how the OCD doubt is wrong.

The Selective Nature of the Obsessional Doubt

Exercise

Do the following exercise at least four times a day:

- 1) Identify a situation where you experience obsessional doubts or a need to engage in compulsions.
- 2) Compare the obsessional situation to another situation where you *do* use your senses and do *not* have obsessional doubts. Ask yourself, would the obsessional situation be any different if you would use your senses?
- 3) Try to imagine how you would act in the obsessional situation if you would use and trust your senses as you do in many other situations.

Worksheet 9

The Theme of Vulnerability in Obsessional Stories

As we near the end of the worksheets, we want to explain the selective nature of obsessive doubt. In other words, why do you have obsessive doubt in some areas of your life and not in others?

One way to explain this is to realize that, for whatever reason, you are very vulnerable to thoughts that hit you hard. These may be different from person to person because they relate to a different theme that is personal to you. Often this theme runs through the BDD story. For example, if you generally worry about what others think of you, this theme of vulnerability makes you prone to developing obsessions in this area of your life. You may then develop obsessions and doubts about the possibility of having done embarrassing things even if your senses tell you otherwise. We are all vulnerable to something, but from person to person it is expressed differently. Also, not everyone develops a fear of body dysmorphia. It is only when these vulnerabilities are part of the process of confusing reality and imagination that you are on track to develop BDD.

Your vulnerability to BDD is a story in which you play the lead role and become the person

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you think you are (your identity). For example, if you frequently have obsessions about "smelling bad," then somehow you see yourself as the "type" of person who is likely to neglect their hygiene. Let's look at a story in this style:

"I have always felt different from others. Ever since I was a child, I had to hide that my parents and my home were different from everyone else's because my classmates might have ridiculed me. So, I always managed to make them believe that I was like them and hide what was different. Today, what is different from the others is the skin on my face. My complexion is uneven and I have several pimples and blackheads. I feel like I have to cover up these imperfections because otherwise people might notice them and ridicule me, or even reject me completely."

You may or may not identify with this story. However, it is clear that this person sees herself as someone who is different from others. In her view, her difference is likely to lead to a variety of negative consequences. Since she sees herself in this way, it is relatively easy to imagine that she will be vulnerable to certain types of obsessions and compulsions.

What is your vulnerability? Below are some examples of how to link your main obsessions and compulsions to your vulnerability.

If your doubt involves catching a disease, then your vulnerability might look like this: "I am the type of person who could get sick."

If you need your hair to be perfectly styled, then your vulnerability may look like, "I'm the type of person who might not be groomed enough."

If you are constantly trying to memorize things and are afraid of forgetting them, then your vulnerability may look like this: "I'm the type of person who might forget things."

After identifying how your obsession or doubt relates to your particular way of seeing yourself, the next step is to identify the story that convinces you to see yourself that way. What are the reasons for your particular way of seeing yourself?

Exercise 9

The Theme of Vulnerability in Obsessional Stories

The vulnerability theme leads you to have credibility in obsessive doubts. In a way, BDD is doing its best to undermine your self-confidence in the most important aspects of your life. We do not argue that this is the cause of BDD. The root cause of BDD is still not well known. But it is certain that this image of yourself as someone who "might be rejected" or "might be perceived as neglectful" contributes to maintaining the problem.

So how will you change this negative self-image? First, be aware of the person the BDD says you are and the person the BDD says you are not. Start by writing a story about what the BDD says you are. Use your main obsession as described on the worksheet. For example, "I may be the type of person who could get sick if I am not careful" or "I am the type of person who can make a lot of mistakes". Try to expand on this story as much as possible by writing down all the reasons why you might be the type of person as dictated by your BDD.

After writing the story as dictated by the BDD, write a second story whose content supports the opposite. For example, if the first story says, "I am the type of person who might have poor personal hygiene," then the second story should support, "I am the type of person who takes care of their hygiene. Similarly, if in the first story you gave reasons why you believe you are that type of person, in the second story, give reasons why you are the opposite; in other words, a completely different type of person than the one imposed by the BDD.

Then compare the two stories. If you look at both stories when you feel calm and collected, which one really describes you? In all likelihood, the alternative story is much more accurate. For future sessions, bring both stories with you to share with the therapist your intuitions about your true nature.

Another exercise, which is one of those described on your training card, is to reconsider what you say when you talk about yourself. Avoid using automatic phrases, metaphors, or sayings that you usually use and that may reinforce the negative view of yourself. When you are aware that you are talking about yourself in a way that could reinforce your personal BDD theme, you need to pull yourself together and use more appropriate language that will help you see yourself in a non-BDD way.

For example:

"I botched that job again!"

to be replaced by:

"I don't think I missed out on everything in this job"

"I am different, I am outside the norm

to be replaced by:

"I am different and that is refreshing and interesting"

"I have no head, I forget everything!"

to be replaced by:

"It's rare that I forget really important things"

TRAINING CARD 9

The Vulnerability Theme

Major Learning Points

- 1) You only have certain types of obsessions because you have specific vulnerability to these obsessions.
- 2) You are vulnerable to exactly those obsessions in a particular area that you care about the most.
- 3) The self-referent doubting theme like the obsessional doubt is unfounded

The Vulnerability Theme

Exercise

Make yourself very familiar with the alternative story you wrote about yourself. Then, at least three times a day, take some time to imagine and rehearse this story as vividly as you can. Immerse yourself in it with as much detail as possible. You can do this verbally or use imagery, or both, depending on your preference. Imagine each of the elements and make them as real as possible to yourself by going in as much detail as possible. Creatively add new elements to your story. Reposition yourself by the way you refer to yourself in language and metaphor.

Worksheet 10

Reality Awareness - Tolerating the Void

We are coming to the last worksheet of your therapy. The progress you have made depends on many factors and results vary from person to person. Some people will need more work, while others may benefit from a short course of therapy. You may still have obsessions that you have not worked on with your therapist and it may be necessary to review the worksheets from the beginning. In addition, during the upcoming sessions and even after therapy ends, when you practice on your own, it is important to deepen and reinforce what you have learned so far during your therapy. Gradually, you will increase your ability to dismiss obsessive doubts in increasingly difficult situations.

However, by now, one thing should be quite obvious: obsessive doubt is totally different from normal doubt.

You may agree with everything you have learned in therapy. Yet you are often still plagued by strong compulsions. This is NOT possible because if you really agreed with everything you have learned up to this point, and we do mean agreed, then you would not have obsessive doubts or compulsions. Since as long as you don't address the aspects of therapy that you don't agree with, it is quite possible that you will continue to suffer from BDD, so you need to identify the aspects of therapy that are still problematic and talk to your therapist about them.

You may also have already begun to notice that a change in your compulsions has occurred during the course of therapy. Perhaps your doubts have diminished in intensity and in a very natural way and without too much effort, at least for some situations, you have started to engage in less compulsive behaviors. So, now, how do you move forward? To overcome BDD, the goal is to be fully aware of the reality that surrounds you in BDD situations and to tolerate the emptiness and discomfort that leaving BDD involves.

Being aware of reality requires engaging the "here and now" information. This means that you must truly perceive what exists around you instead of making assumptions based on an imaginary BDD story. Instead of avoiding a situation or adding doubt based on your imagination, you must rely on a reality that uses direct information. As you have learned in your therapy so far, if you rely on direct information, there will be no room for obsessive

doubt. For example, do you wait for outside information before checking in? Often people with BDD do not pay attention to this kind of information because the BDD story has found a way to do without outside information, this is the only reality that can resolve your obsessive doubt. In other words, you have to learn to trust direct information again and you have to realize that this is enough.

Is it possible that this is as easy as trusting direct information? Yes and no. It is easy because if you truly trust direct information, then you will not have obsessive doubt. However, it is not easy because you will feel that you are not doing the right thing when you trust direct information. You will be faced with an unpleasant feeling of emptiness. This can produce anxiety and discomfort. Yet, you are doing the right thing and indeed, trusting direct information is all you can do to get out of BDD.

Rest assured, this feeling of emptiness and discomfort is only temporary and will eventually disappear. Take heart, it's time to start trusting direct information again!

Exercise 10

Awareness Of Reality - Tolerating the Void

The exercise on this page is the culmination of all the exercises you have done so far. A strategy for dealing with obsessions is included. If the BDD is very strong, you are not expected to use this strategy all the time, but only when you feel you can step away from the BDD world and return to the real world where everything is safe. You will gain more and more confidence in yourself as you continue to practice this exercise. In fact, you will become more and more able to handle situations that you once found more difficult. If you can do this often enough, you will find that the obsessions do not come up as frequently or as strongly as they used to. If the obsessions do not arise at all, then this implies that you are truly aware of the imaginary nature of the obsessive doubt.

- 1) When you have an obsession, stay calm, do nothing. Imagine that you are between two worlds: in the middle of a bridge connecting reality and imagination.
- 2) Focus on the world of reality. Look at what is there. Look only once to catch the direct information transmitted by your senses. Do not make any effort to do so.
- 3) At this point, you must realize that what you see is all the information you need. Any effort to get more information means you are tipping into the world of BDD.
- 4) Look down at the bridge you are standing on. The emptiness you observe represents your feeling of not having done enough. It also represents all the anxiety and discomfort you feel when you don't rely on direct information but dive into the world of BDD. Stop for a moment to realize that this world is imaginary. The certainty of reality is only found in the world of direct information, and you do not need to cross the bridge.
- 5) Next, act on the direct information you have obtained. Thus, do not get involved in compulsive behaviors and discard obsession.

Since BDD will encourage you to go beyond what is necessary, at first it will be difficult for you to rely on direct information and to perceive what is really around you. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to several things during the exercise. Truly relying on direct information involves letting your senses tell you, naturally and in exactly the same way as in non-BDD situations, what is around you.

This excludes:

- 1) Staring - if you stare, it implies that you are trying too hard to overcome your BDD.

In fact, the moment you stare, you dive into the BDD world.

2) Taking a quick look - when you take a quick look, you create ambiguity/inexactness, which enhances your imagination.

3) Using the imagination to untangle uncertain perceptions - when you cannot perceive something clearly, then be aware that this way of going about it is not the correct way to really look.

This exercise, like all the others, should show you that certainty does not come from a major effort. Indeed, certainty is there in front of you and has always been there. The thing that BDD takes away from you is the reassuring perception of reality. As you begin to act on direct information, you can increase your confidence in yourself. It will then be obvious to you that you don't need to do more. Gradually, the emptiness will fade away and make way for your true self, that's the good news.

So don't hesitate, dive into the real world and get to know yourself!

TRAINING CARD 10

Reality Sensing-Tolerating the Void

Major Learning Points

- 1) Reality sensing is staying with the information from the here and now.
- 2) There already is certainty before the obsessional doubt.
- 3) Trusting your senses will add to your confidence each and every time.
- 4) The less you do, the more your real personality will emerge.

Reality Sensing – Tolerating the Void

Exercise

Do the following exercise three times a day:

- 1) When an obsession occurs hold still and don't do anything. Imagine yourself between worlds.
- 2) Focus your attention back to reality and look what is there. Don't put any effort in this at all.
- 3) Realize for a moment that this is all the information you need. Look down from the bridge you see yourself standing on and take note that it is the void which makes you feel you are not doing enough.
- 4) Take a moment to realize that this void is merely imaginary.
- 5) Next, act upon the information from your senses by not engaging in compulsive behaviours and dismiss the obsession.