

The Cruise Ship

An Example of I-CBT,
From Beginning to End



What if my baby
falls overboard?

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Module 1: When OCD Begins?



Trigger

Seeing my dad hold my 1-year-old next to the edge of the cruise ship

Obsessional Doubt

What if my baby falls overboard?

Consequences

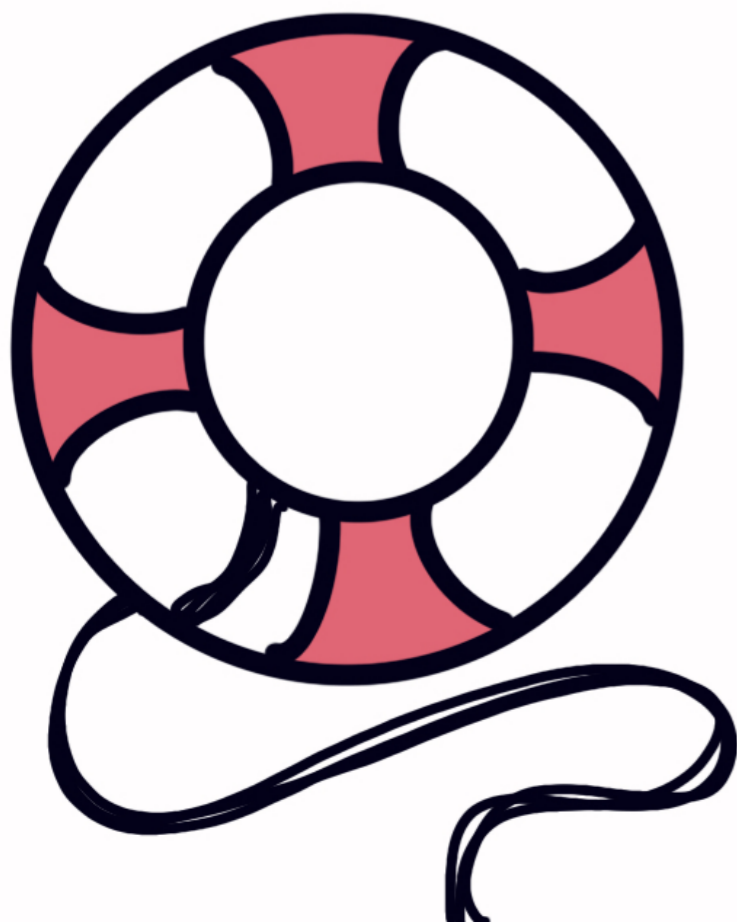
She would die.

Anxiety

I would be devastated. I would not be able to go on living.

Compulsions

Avoidance
Rumination
Reassurance seeking



This obsessional doubt isn't random! It's actually inferred. It is a conclusion based on evidence and reasoning. It did not come out of the blue. This obsessional doubt is the source of the problem. Without the obsessional doubt, nothing else would follow.

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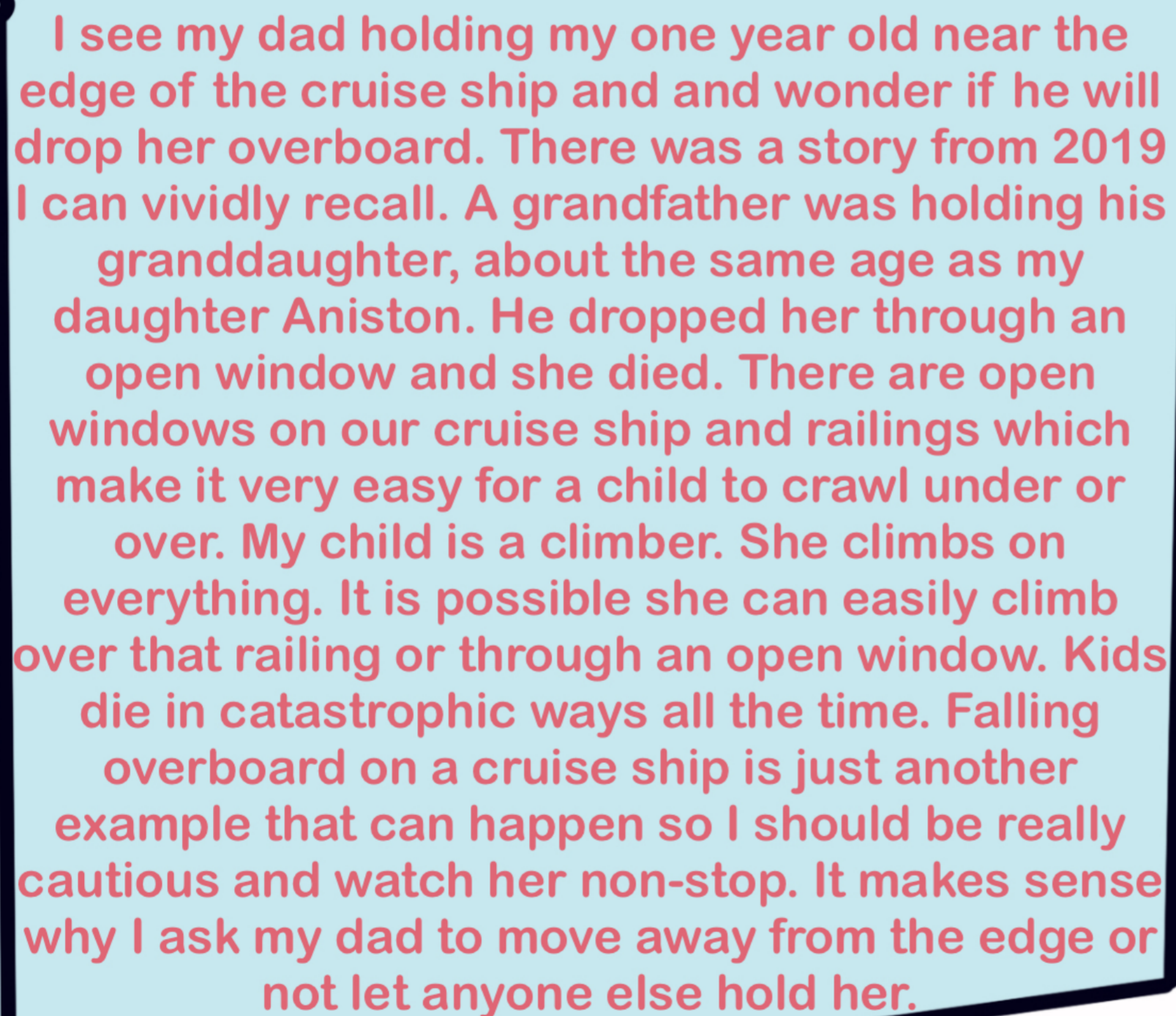
Module 2: The Logic Behind OCD



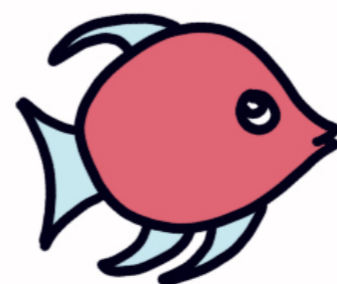
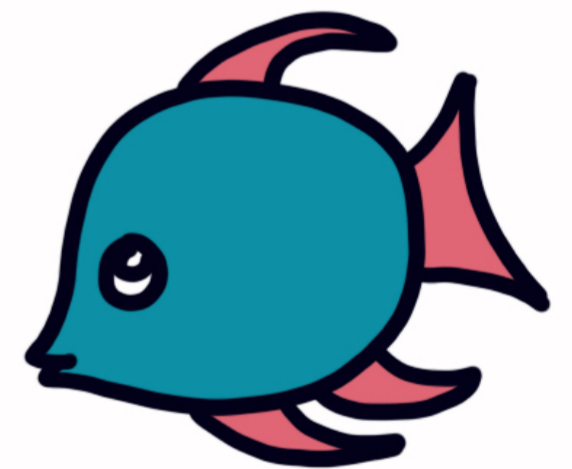
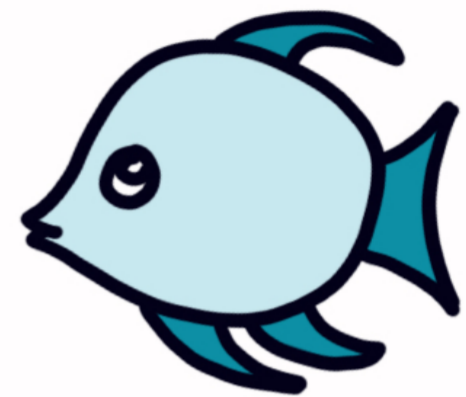
See?! There is valid logic behind the obsessional doubt that makes it feel real and credible. It didn't come out nowhere. However the problem isn't the content; it is the context of how it is being applied that makes the logic irrelevant.

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Module 3: The Obsessional Story



I see my dad holding my one year old near the edge of the cruise ship and wonder if he will drop her overboard. There was a story from 2019 I can vividly recall. A grandfather was holding his granddaughter, about the same age as my daughter Aniston. He dropped her through an open window and she died. There are open windows on our cruise ship and railings which make it very easy for a child to crawl under or over. My child is a climber. She climbs on everything. It is possible she can easily climb over that railing or through an open window. Kids die in catastrophic ways all the time. Falling overboard on a cruise ship is just another example that can happen so I should be really cautious and watch her non-stop. It makes sense why I ask my dad to move away from the edge or not let anyone else hold her.



Stories are powerful. They can change how we feel. My obsessional doubt has a convincing narrative behind it which makes the doubt feel scary and real. If we change the story, we can change the doubt.

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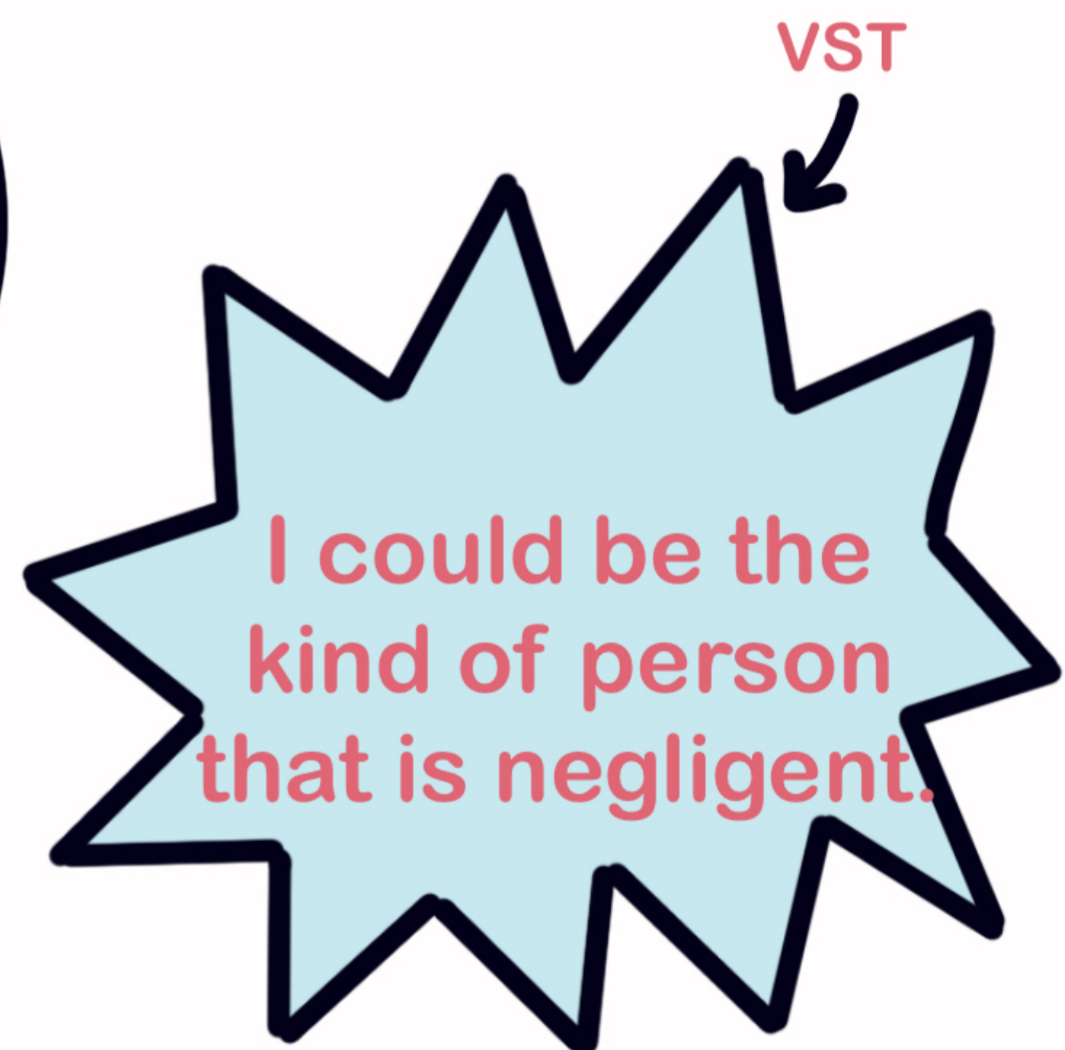
Module 4: The Vulnerable Self Theme



Obsessional Doubt



Recentered



VST



My feared self (or Vulnerable Self) is the opposite of who I am. It is who I fear becoming. It is also built in the imagination just like my obsessional story. It helps explain why my obsessional doubt feels so scary.

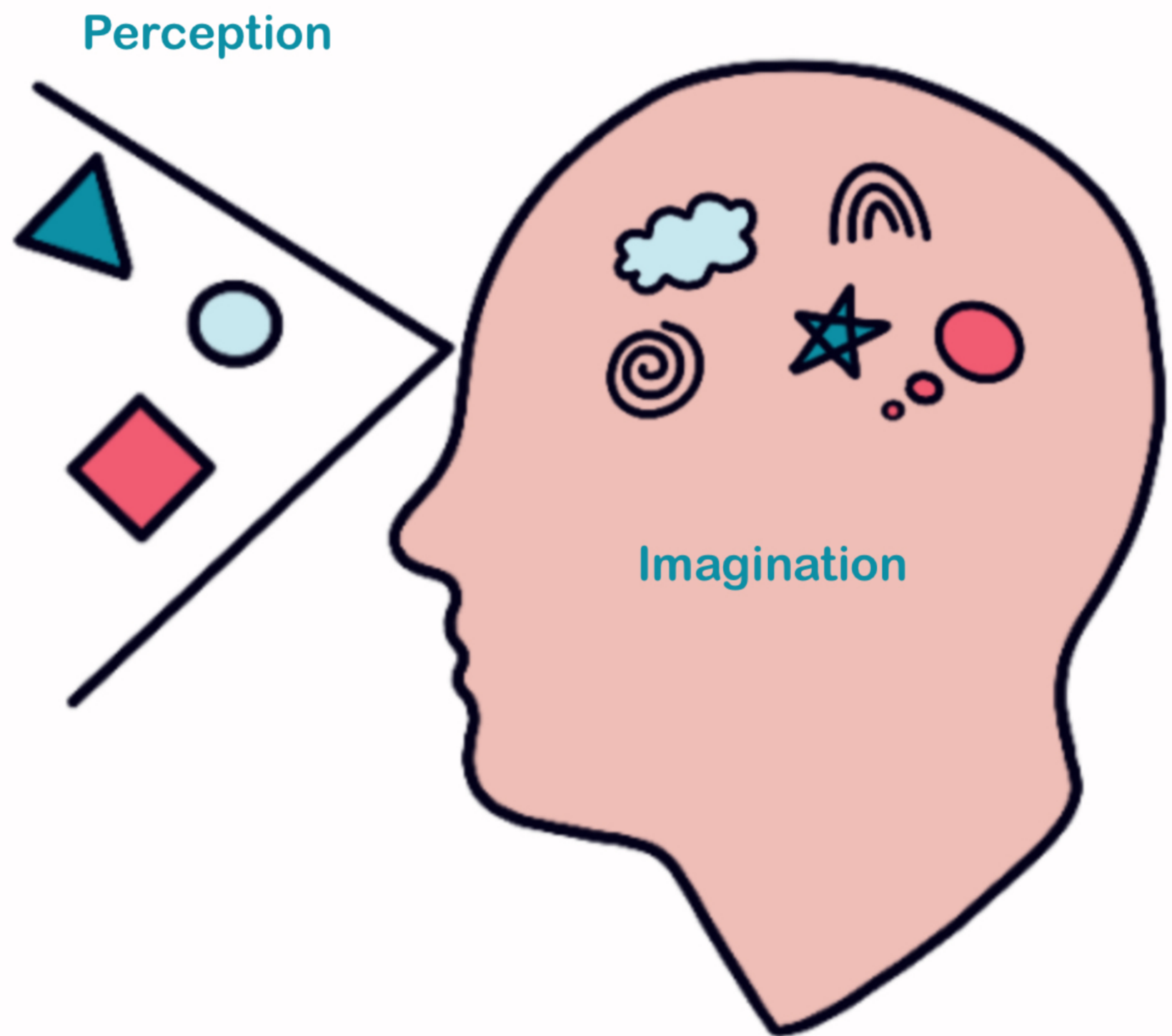
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Module 5: OCD Doubt is 100% Imaginary

Is there any direct evidence in the here-and-now that my baby has gone overboard?

NO

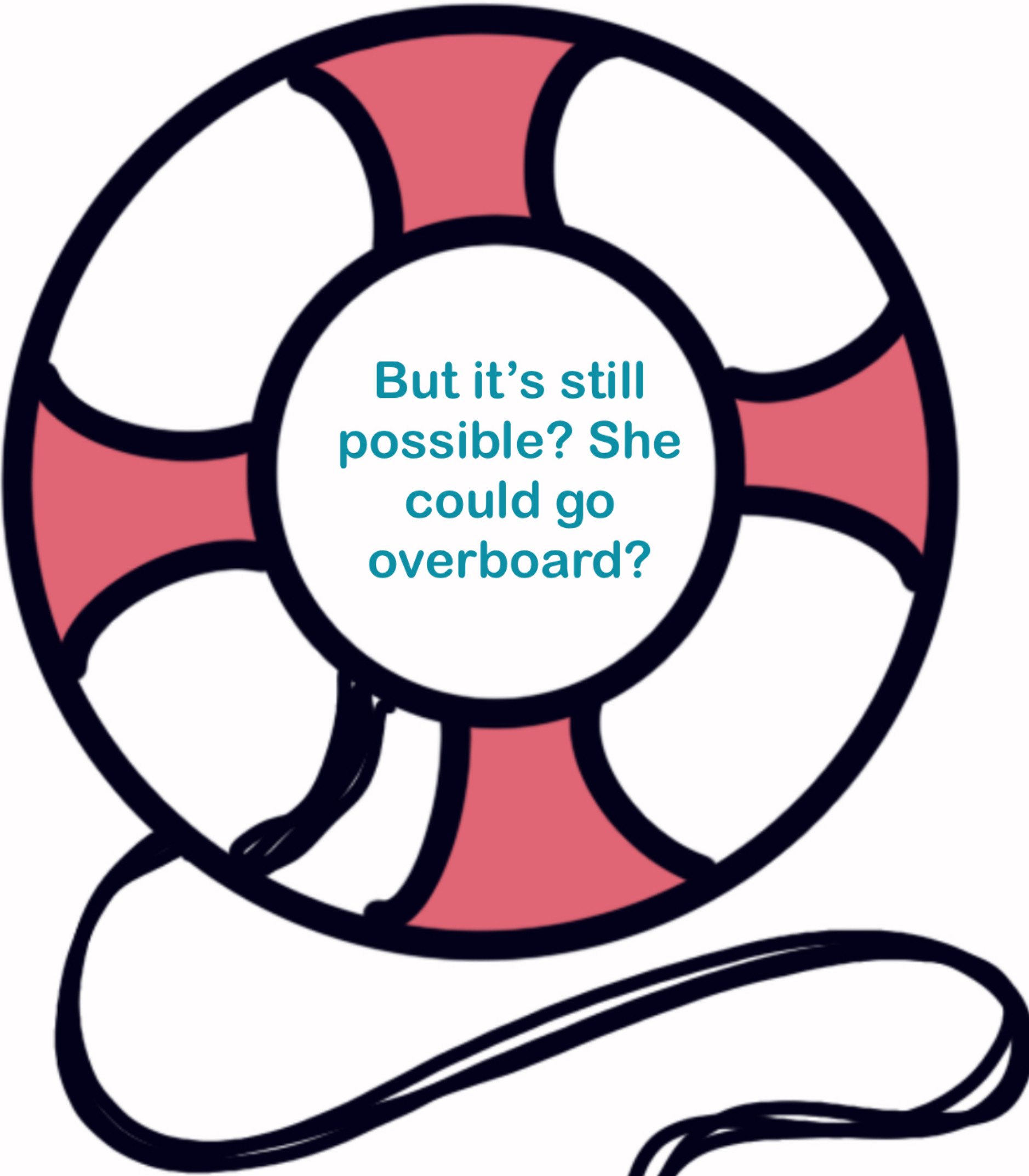
(For example, do I see the baby climbing out the window, do I see my dad yeeting her over the plexiglass wall, do I hear the screams of passengers)



If there isn't direct evidence in the here-and-now, the story is coming 100% from my imagination. The story has been generated from within myself.

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Module 6: OCD Doubt is 100% Irrelevant

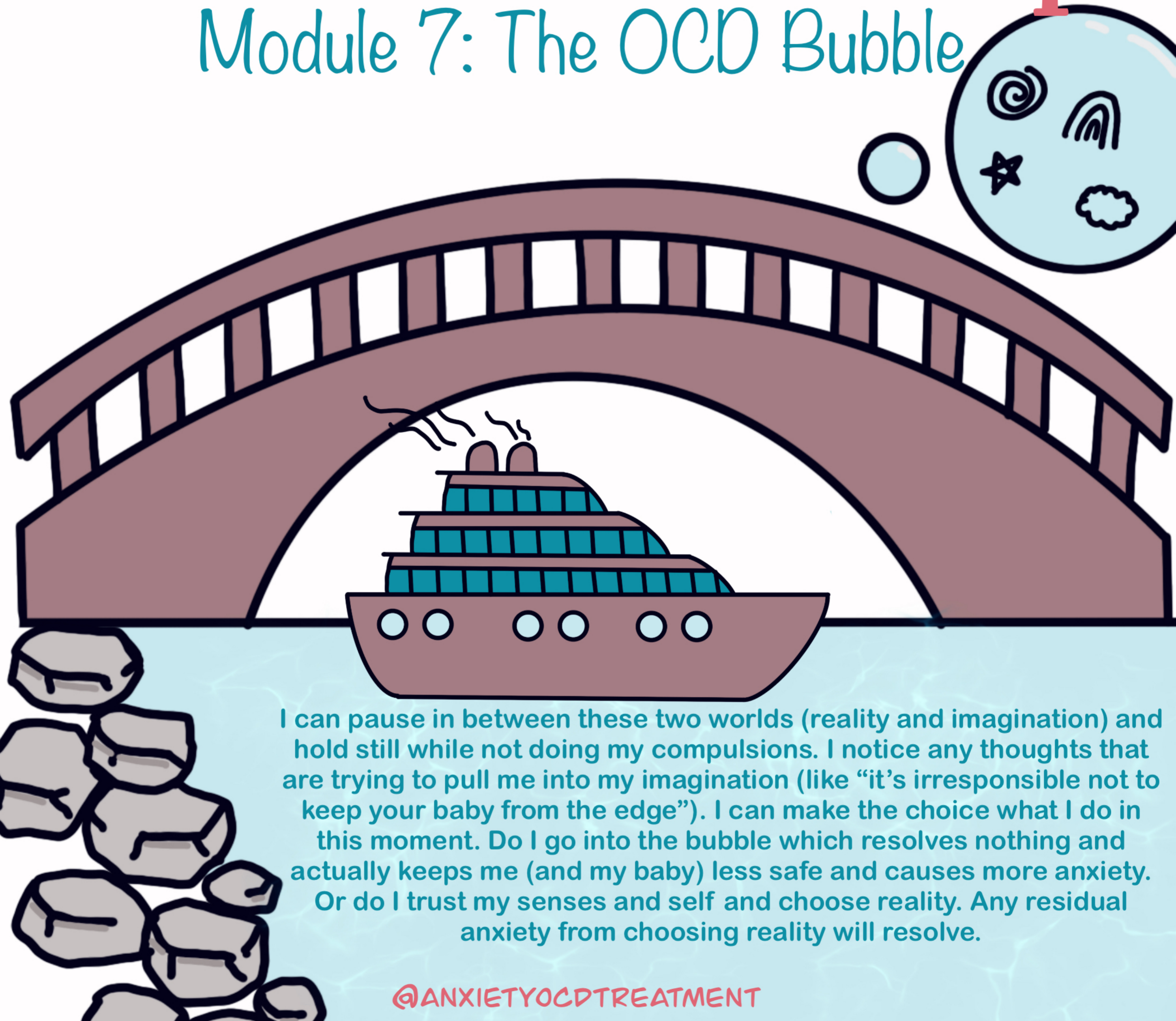


But it's still possible? She could go overboard?

I don't act on possibility alone in non-OCD situations. It is possible my baby could die of a virus because she is licking everything on this cruise ship, yet I'm not anxious about this. It is possible the cruise ship sinks, but I am not ruminating about this. I only act on possibilities that have direct evidence in the here-and-now. This goes to show how selective my obsessional doubt is being right now.

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Module 7: The OCD Bubble



I can pause in between these two worlds (reality and imagination) and hold still while not doing my compulsions. I notice any thoughts that are trying to pull me into my imagination (like “it’s irresponsible not to keep your baby from the edge”). I can make the choice what I do in this moment. Do I go into the bubble which resolves nothing and actually keeps me (and my baby) less safe and causes more anxiety. Or do I trust my senses and self and choose reality. Any residual anxiety from choosing reality will resolve.

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Module 8: Reality Sensing

I see my family members holding my baby in their arms.

I see her on the boat.

I see her smiling.

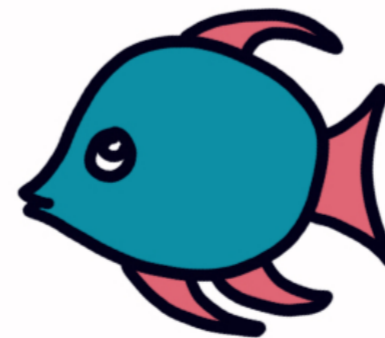
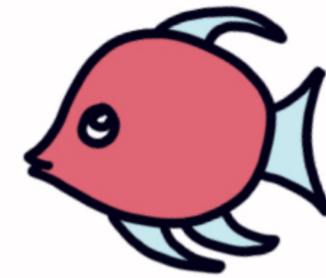
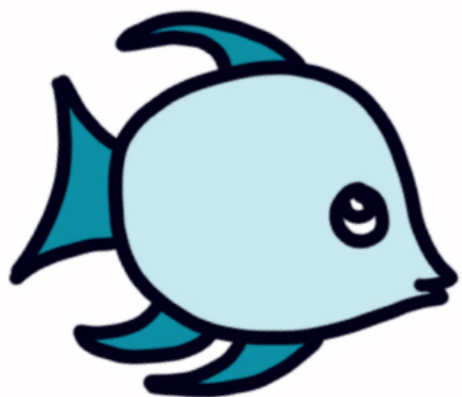
My common sense says she is safe with them.

I can trust my senses like I do everyday.

I don't have to stare.

I don't have to double check.

I can use my senses effortlessly like I do in non-OCD times.



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Module 9: A Different Story



I see my dad holding my baby at the edge of the cruise ship. His arms are wrapped around her, as they are the millions of other times he has held her. She is smiling at him as he talks to her. They look through the clear plexiglass that safely keeps them on board, as he points out the water to her. He continues to walk around the cruise ship with her just as he has done with her on numerous occasions and as he has done with all of his children and grandchildren. I hear her babble and talk to him, which she calls him 'papa.' She is safe and enjoying her time on vacation.

This alternative story is one more story that exists. It does not replace the obsessional story and it is not used to challenge the obsessional story. It creates doubt about the doubt. It shows that they are both equally possible, but the alternative story is more convincing and believable because it is built on here-and-now details. This story exists in reality instead of the imagination.



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Module 10: Tricks and Cheats of the OCD Con Artist

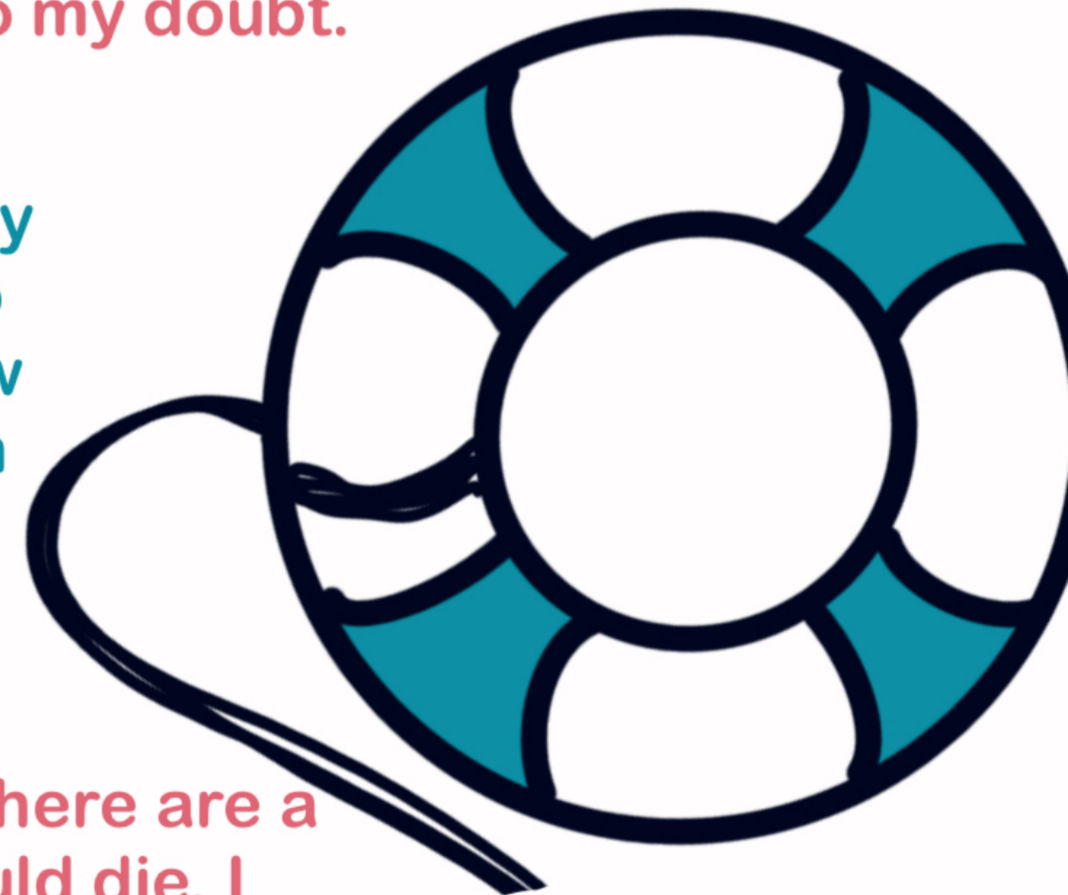


Mismatching:

OCD attempted to present information to me that happened to someone else (the 2019 story), to give credibility to my doubt.

Out of Context Facts:

OCD attempted to present many “facts” that have nothing to do with the here and now (like how catastrophic things do happen and kids do die)



Selectivity of the Doubt:

OCD was very selective in this doubt. There are a million ways in which my children could die. I didn't get stuck on any of those.

OCD is like a con artist, using certain tricks to make your obsession appear like it is based in reality, but it only takes you further from reality. By becoming familiar with these tricks, it can keep you from getting absorbed into the OCD Bubble. But don't try and argue with the content. Recognize how the tricks flaw your reasoning process.

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Module II: The Real Self

I supervise my children.

I am present with them.

I watch for true signs of danger.

I follow a good routine with my children.



I follow recommendations from doctors/dentists.

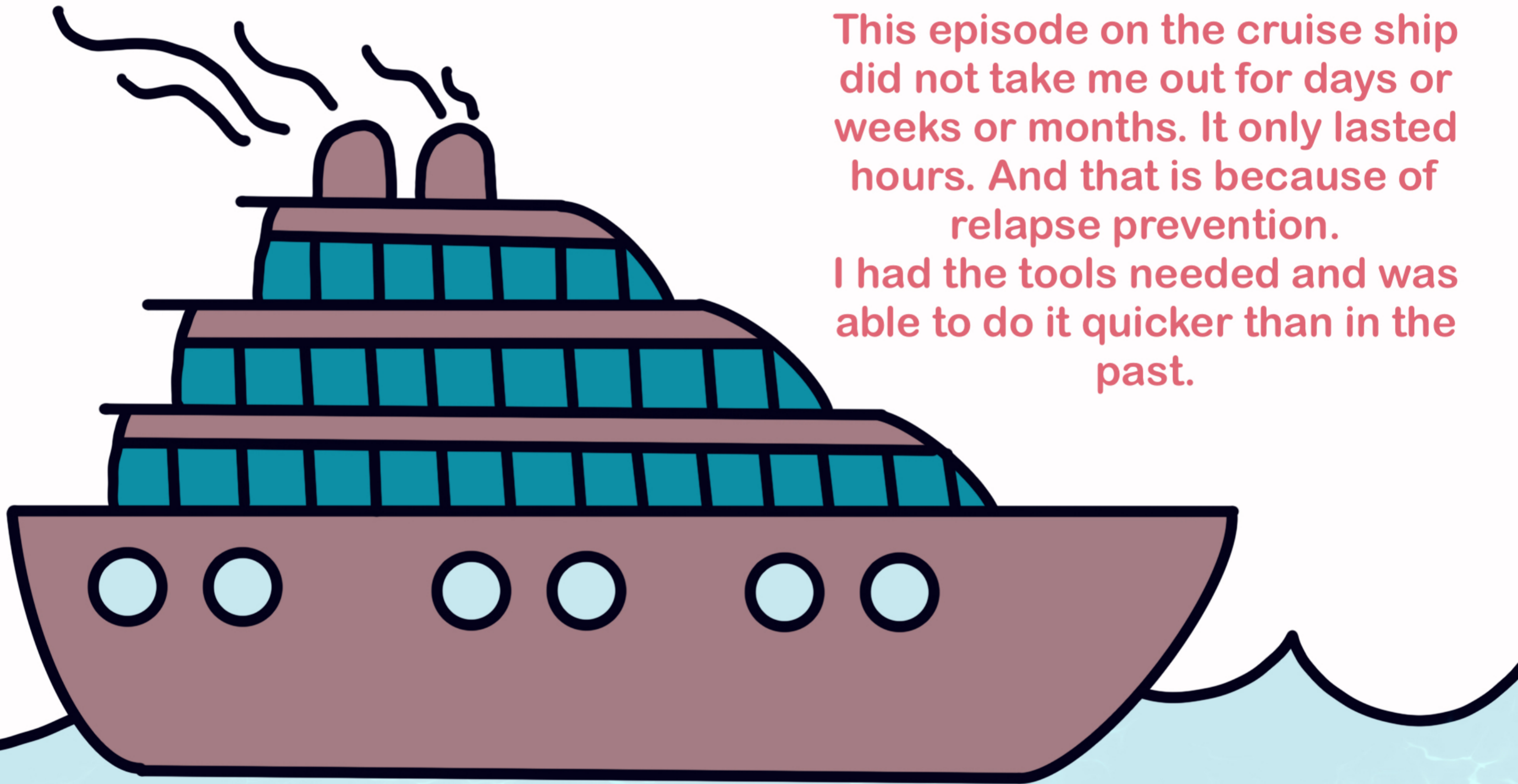
They have never been hurt in my presence (more than a skinned knee).

I follow simple safety guidelines like seat belts and safe sleep practices.

My authentic self, that I know to be true, is actually very careful, cautious, attentive, and conscientious. This is who I am based on direct evidence from reality.

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Module 12: Moving On and Preventing Relapse



This episode on the cruise ship did not take me out for days or weeks or months. It only lasted hours. And that is because of relapse prevention.

I had the tools needed and was able to do it quicker than in the past.

I was able to review steps such as the obsessional story, my VST/real self, reality sensing, and the tricks.

I didn't catch myself before going over the bridge, which would have been ideal. It took me a bit to recognize I was the inferentially confused one (at first I thought everyone else was nuts for allowing an infant near the edge).

But once I recognized it was an obsessional doubt and this was OCD, I had confidence in the skills and put the knowledge into action.

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