

Obsessions

Obsessions are things our brain has learned to view as threats. Because of this they feel very distressing!

They are often focused on threats to the integrity of our:

- physical status
- mental status
- social status
- spiritual status

These obsessions may show up as "what if"s. They can also come in the form of other intrusive thoughts, or even a feeling, body sensation, or external trigger.

Some examples:

- "What if I get contaminated?"
- "What if I am in the wrong relationship?"
- "What if I'm a bad person?"
- "What if I am dishonest?"
- "What if I'm a criminal?"
- "What if I hurt my family?"
- "What if I'm not perfect?"
- "What if I can't provide for my family?"
- "What if I hurt myself?"
- "What if I make a wrong decision?"
- "What if I forgot about doing something bad?"

What obsessions do you recognize showing up?

Compulsions

Compulsions are ways we try to neutralize the distress caused by these obsessions! They are physical or mental actions done to try to reduce the feeling of the threat.

We could not possibly list all the ways this is done but here are some common ones:

Checking

- making sure you didn't or can't hurt anyone
- making sure you are or aren't experiencing attraction
- making sure appliances are turned off
- making sure you didn't make a mistake
- making sure you don't have physical health symptoms
- making sure your partner still loves you

Just-right

- repeating a behavior til it feels "right"
- arranging or touching items til it feels "right"

Compulsions

Avoidance

- avoiding people, thoughts, places, or triggers that increase the threat

Mental Compulsions

- ruminating or "figuring it out"
- reviewing past or future choices or situations
- counting or repeating phrases
- praying or giving self-reassurance
- undoing or canceling intrusive thoughts

Reassurance

- googling, reading, or studying to find the perfect answer
- asking a loved one for certainty of an obsession

Again, this is not a comprehensive list!

What compulsions do you recognize showing up?

Downward Arrow

This is an exercise to walk deeper into our threats without engaging in compulsions! While not all OCD has a deeper fear behind it, sometimes we may recognize patterns that can be helpful to our treatment. It looks like this:

Initial thought

What if my friend thinks I'm being silly?



What if my friend doesn't like me?



What if no one likes me?



I won't have any friends.



Core Fear

I will be all alone.

In this case, the fear of looking silly in front of a friend is actually a deeper concern about ending up alone. By knowing this we can do more targeted ERP.

Downward Arrow

Let's try it!

Choose an obsession you experience and write it here.

If that came true, then...

If that came true, then..

If that came true, then...

If that came true, then...

What are some ways you can face this core fear?
