The Art of Persuasion: Changing the OCD Mind

ADAA
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Change your frame of reference

 Disclosure
I have no conflicts of interest.

“This is serious!” “This is a mental game”

If a fearful thought pops up, take it seriously
I must get rid of my doubt
I must get rid of my distress

The content of my worries is irrelevant
I want to be uncertain
I want to be distressed

Leveraging the Habituation Model

Frequency
Intensity
Duration

“I have no conflicts of interest.”

“This is serious!”

“This is a mental game”

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Honest Stance toward symptoms/worry/uncertainty...

Purposely, voluntarily, choose to want it!

✓ want more of it
✓ want it to last
✓ want it strong

The amygdala

“I want this”

Terrified of it!

“Give it to me!”

OBJECT OF FEAR

I want to GET RID OF this [thought, feeling]

You CAN’T get better here!

Hey! Give it to me!

I’m willing to experience this

You want to END UP here

I’m looking for this

Or aggress here

Start here

Try to feel sure that everything’s OK
Try to get comfortable
Treat fearful thoughts seriously
Protect & defend yourself
Stay safe

seek out doubt
Provoke your own discomfort
treat fearful thoughts absurdly
agress into new, unfamiliar territory
Take a risk, scare yourself
The Gameboard

OCD dominates

WORRIES

"watch out!"

UNCERTAINTY

DEFENSES

avoid, fight, run, brace

Clients' Orientation Toward Doubt & Distress

ABSURD!

This is [or will be] horrible. I'll lose if this happens

I really don't want this to happen.

RESIST

I want this to happen. I can tolerate this happening.

PERMIT

I really want it to keep happening.

PROVOKE

Anxiety wins.

You win

Your challenger—OCD—taught you rules so IT could win

Here they are...

OCD Rules

1. Be careful or you might cause a horrible problem
   OR Be worried that you've already caused one
2. If a fearful thought pops up, take it seriously
3. Feel absolutely certain
4. Use your anxiety as a gauge: if you feel uncomfortable, then there is still danger
5. Always act defensively

Winning Strategy

1. Do NOT pay attention to your content
It's NOT about the content

It's about purposely choosing to feel the generic sense of uncertainty & anxiety

Winning Strategy

2. Accept obsession when it pops up
   “It's fine I just had that thought.”
   “There's OCD, giving me that obsession again. I expected that.”

Winning Strategy

3. WANT to make yourself uncertain

Winning Strategy

4. WANT to be anxious & stay anxious

Moment-by-Moment !!

absorption dissociation

How to apply principles RIGHT NOW
Urge to get rid of doubt/distress
**It’s where you put your attention**

| Awkwardly, clumsily, courageously follow protocol | Harm someone/something? Contamination? Terrible mistake? |

| focus att'n here? | Or here? |

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**Zero-sum Game**

- “This is hard, & I want it.”
- “I can handle this.”
- “I’m too afraid!”
- “This is a very bad idea!”

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**To seek out doubt & distress...**

*How it might sound in the moment...*

- “Did I do something wrong?”
- “Oh, no! I need to find out!”

  - Good. There’s my obsession. I’m not answering that question. I WANT to not know.

  - I’m scared!

    - Good. I’m looking for anxiety too.

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**Behavioral rehearsal**

Hebb’s Law:

“Neurons that fire together wire together.”

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"No, but, really... what if it DOES happen?!"
"BUT, wait... it IS possible that that COULD happen!"
"BUT... what if it really means something this time?"

"Oh, well."

**PRACTICE: Look for chances to feel doubt & distress**

Can I create some doubt here?
Can I practice being willing to be uncertain & anxious here?
Can I invite OCD to make it stronger?
Can I invite OCD to make it last longer?

**Points**

1 point each time—while you are feeling anxious or doubtful—
you say any of these statements and mean it:

- "I can handle this"
- "I want this"
- "I can take this hit"
- "I want this to stick around"
- "I'm willing to feel anxious right now"
- "I'm willing to feel unsure right now"
- "Give me your best shot!"

OR WRITE YOUR OWN HERE:

**How do you know you’re practicing?**

You’ll be saying.

"This is a very bad idea."

**Talking to yourself**

- "... Good opportunity to practice"
- "I want this"
- "I want to take this hit"
- "I can handle this"
- "I want to be uncertain"
- "I want to be clumsy"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’m willing to feel unsure right now</th>
<th>I want this to feel intense</th>
<th>I can handle this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m willing to feel anxious right now</td>
<td>Gimme your best shot!</td>
<td>I can take the hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be scared &amp; do it anyway</td>
<td>This is a good opportunity to practice</td>
<td>Seek out discomfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go toward what scares you</td>
<td>Risk losing something</td>
<td>I want this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the opposite of what anxiety expects</td>
<td>Seek out uncertainty</td>
<td>I must risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose active over passive</td>
<td>I’m willing to feel awkward &amp; clumsy</td>
<td>Love the mat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want this to stick around</td>
<td>I want my life back!</td>
<td>My job is to push forward</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Follow your commands

- “Don’t figure it out”
- “Leave the room now!”
- “Don’t go into the bathroom”
- “Call someone”
- “I must risk”
- “Keep moving; don’t pull over”
- “Gimme your best shot”

“Run hills hard”

Step 1: Create Your Strategy
1) get body forward by dropping head & raising arms
2) apply energy to task  3) push forward & up
4) get faster turnover of legs

Step 2: Generate Commands
- “Raise the arms”  • “Look 5-6 feet ahead”
- “Swing the arms”  • “Shorten stride”
- “Pick up tempo”

Once commands relegated to unconscious...

Step 3: Frame the Action

“Run hills hard”

Step 1: Create Your Strategy
1. Act as though the content is irrelevant
2. Accept the obsession when it pops up
3. Seek out uncertainty
4. Seek out anxiety
5. Create rules if you need them

Step 2: Generate Motivations or Commands for each practice

- “I want this”
- “Stop washing”
- “Don’t figure it out”
- “Let go”
- “Give me your best shot”
- “I gotta risk something here”

When you are ready to simplify your message...

Step 3: Frame the Action “I want this” or “Let go”

Modifying the Obsession or Ritual

1. Make sure they are “on board” with principles
2. This is collaborative treatment — “What do you think?”; “Does this make sense to you?”
3. “Our goal is to look for patterns and mess with them”
4. “We’re going to throw the symptom cluster a bone. OK?”
5. As part of homework: create commands
### Characteristics of rituals which can be altered

- Specific actions
- Specific thoughts
- Order of action
- Number of repetitions
- Particular objects used
- Physical stances
- Corresponding emotions
- Locations
- Special triggering thoughts or events

### Modifying the Ritual

**Collaborate!**

1. “Our goal is to mess with the pattern”
2. “Your goal is to find ways to be uncertain (& therefore uncomfortable)”
3. Outline the steps of the ritual
4. Brainstorm ways to interrupt the pattern… to generate at least some uncertainty
5. From that, decide on the homework — As part of that: create commands