



EXPLORABLE
Think Outside The Box

Published on *Explorable.com* (<https://explorable.com>)

[Home](#) > [Learn to Tolerate Disorder](#)

Learn to Tolerate Disorder

Liya Panayotova, Psychologist, [liyap.com](#) 6.2K reads

People who experience OCD, especially those who are preoccupied with order and symmetry, may find it difficult to accept the idea of disorder. For them, a misplaced book or a tilted painting might create a significant bother.

How can we tell them that a misplaced book is humdrum and a tilted painting doesn't equal chaos? Surely by now you know that we can't, because their idea of disorder results from deeply-seeded preoccupations. However, with some effort and motivation, a bit of disorder can become tolerable and, dare we say it, even pleasant sometimes.

EXPLORABLE
Quiz Time!

Quiz:
Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz:
Psychology 101 Part 2

Quiz:
Flags in Europe

[See all quizzes =>](#)

What Is Disorder to You?

Since you are trying to improve your own life, disorder should be defined using your own terms. So what does chaos mean to you?

A desk covered in coffee stains, stacks of books and documents, would be considered messy by most. How about a pair of jeans lying around on the sofa? This last example may be considered controversial, since there are those who wouldn't even notice the jeans, and others who would be greatly bothered by them. What would be a suitable place to draw the line?

Consider Yourself

As you already know, people who are preoccupied with order and symmetry can become scrupulous when it comes to keeping their environment tidy. A pair of jeans lying on the sofa would be unacceptable. The desire to have everything arranged “just right” would not be a problem, if it didn’t interfere with other tasks and activities. Here would be a good time to consider, and preferably write down, what you consider to be disorderly. Does it take away from other aspects of your life, such as spending time with loved ones? To help you answer these questions, you can take a look at the sheet you previously filled in.

Look Around

Look outside your window and try to spot the first tree or bush that catches your eye. How symmetrical does it look? In fact, is nature characterized by order and symmetry? You’ll likely come to the conclusion that it is certainly not. Nature is the perfect example of visual chaos. Plants grow randomly depending on where the seeds have landed, leaves have various shapes and sizes and no tree is identical to another.

You Are a Part of Nature

Despite the chaos that we see in nature, this complex system managed to survive and maintain perfect balance throughout the millennia. Maybe there’s something to be learned here. Why not adopt the same philosophy? Of course, it may be difficult at first, but keep in mind that you are also a part of nature and so you are not meant to be perfectly organized.

Create Your Own Disorder

Creating your own disorder is going to help you familiarize yourself with the idea of imperfection, imbalance and “chaos”, something you’ve probably had a hard time with before. Naturally, the point is not for you to become a sloppy person, but rather to be able to tolerate disorder, at least in small doses, so that your own life can be easier on you.

Attempting Disorder

If your books are neatly stacked on the shelf, in a vertical position, try putting one horizontally. Instead of placing your pencils in order, try putting them on the desk randomly. Don’t waste your time arranging notebooks in alphabetical order. Just stack them on the table and that’s it.

When you feel the urge to engage in compulsive behaviors, such as arranging, washing, try to shift your attention to something else. In case you feel compelled to give in to your OCD - restart the exercise.

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/e/learn-to-tolerate-disorder?gid=21785>