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Replace Irrational Thoughts

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If we were to personify OCD, it might resemble a tiny, but extremely annoying jester, who's desperately trying to get people's attention.

We've already discussed the main beliefs that people with OCD usually have. Now it's time to answer back, with a series of alternative thoughts meant to replace the old, dysfunctional ones. We're about to explore a series of affirmations that might prove extremely helpful in fighting off obsessive thoughts and images.

The banner features the Explorable logo and the text "Quiz Time!". Below this are three quiz cards:

- Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2 (Image: Red roller skates on a wooden deck)
- Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2 (Image: A fan of colorful pencils)
- Quiz: Flags in Europe (Image: A Ferris wheel at sunset)

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“I can't control everything”

As much as we enjoy being in control, it's impossible to oversee every little aspect of our complicated lives. However, we cannot blame people for wanting to be in control either. It's a natural instinct motivated by a thirst for power and the need to avoid uncertainty.

People who struggle with OCD are not always aware of how much energy they waste on desperate attempts to gain control over the “uncontrollable”. It's like a never-ending struggle that will eventually suck the life out of you.

Influence What You Can, Accept What You Cannot

Since we cannot gain full control over our lives, what's the point of trying? A better alternative

would be to discriminate between situations that we can and can't control. In this way, you'd be able to focus your efforts on what you can control and work on accepting and focusing on the positives, regarding what you cannot control.

“Not every thought is my own”

Remember when we talked about the main causes of OCD? Oftentimes, this condition is caused by rigid parenting styles. Sadly, not everyone is lucky enough to grow up in a healthy family environment. Also, let's not forget that children are impressionable which means that criticism and blame will always leave a mark on them.

You Have the Power Now

Obsessions are not always the product of our own minds, but rather the result of constant criticism from parents, caregivers, and other adults. For instance, if your mother repeatedly told you to “wash your hands, otherwise you'll get sick”, this seemingly harmless phrase can easily turn into an obsession. As you can see, some of our thoughts were “planted” into our subconscious mind, long before we were able to think for ourselves. However, a crucial aspect of this is that you are now an adult who is responsible for their own thoughts and behaviors. Even if some of your obsessive thoughts were born during your childhood, you now have the knowledge and power to change them.

“Just because I believe it, doesn't mean it's true”

As you already know, the human mind is not a perfect system. We cannot always trust our thoughts to be reality-based and functional. Given their intensity and intrusiveness, obsessions often seem much more valid than they really are.

For many of us, the fact that a certain thought keeps reemerging in our minds, can certainly be misleading. As strange as it may sound, we often choose to believe in our obsessions not because we have valid reasons, but because it's more convenient.

Don't believe everything your mind says. Instead, make an effort to seek real, objective evidence to support your beliefs.

“My obsessions are irrational”

If our obsessive thoughts were somehow useful or healthy, we wouldn't have to go through all this trouble to eliminate them, since they would indeed be keeping us safe. By definition, obsessions are irrational because there's not a shred of realistic, plausible evidence that can sustain them.

Once you start seeing your obsessions as irrational, you'll soon begin to question their importance. Although it might take a while, you'll eventually get used to this idea. Just keep telling yourself that obsessions are nothing but irrational thoughts and seek evidence to discount them.

“I can’t waste my time on pointless rituals”

Have you ever asked yourself how many hours you spend each day doing what your obsessive thoughts tell you to do? Is it 2 hours, 3 or maybe even more? Pause for a moment and reflect on this idea. You can also take a look at the worksheet that you creating for tracking your progress, to get an idea of how much time of your life is wasted on rituals.

There Is Better Use for Your Time

Even though compulsions are meant to reduce anxiety, this is just a temporary solution. If you look at the big picture, you’ll see countless hours flushed down the drain, just so you can reduce anxiety, based on irrational beliefs. Is it truly worth it? Wouldn’t it be better to eliminate obsessive thoughts, thus freeing yourself from the negative effects of anxiety? Is there anything you’d like to do but never found the time for? Perhaps freeing yourself from your compulsions is what will enable you to engage in much more pleasant and helpful behaviors, such as taking up a hobby, learning a language, having a better social life, etc.

Time is the most precious resource you have. Make sure you put it to good use.

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