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## S1C2. Note to the partner

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Mental disorders have an effect on families, particularly relationships between couples. It is undeniable that the partner of an ROCD sufferer also suffers terribly. Having OCD is definitely not easy, but being a partner to someone with OCD is no vacation either. Especially when you are neither able to feel what the other person feels nor able to understand what to do. If you want to be supportive, you could end up enabling the partner's ROCD rather than providing the right support. If you are frustrated because of your partner's ROCD, no one can blame you, but it may worsen your partner's condition. But the fact that you are continuing to be in the relationship to help your partner through this struggle, is commendable. So, here are some things that you as a partner need to be aware of. (I have used the pronoun *he* to refer to the sufferer of ROCD and *she* to refer to the partner. These pronouns are used for the sake of convenience only. The concepts apply to all genders equally, though).

**Education in OCD is a must:** OCD is a poorly understood disorder and to help your partner, you need to educate yourself on how OCD works in general and how ROCD works in particular. Educate yourself on what you can do, what you can't, what you can say, what you can't and what you should believe and what you shouldn't. The more information you have, the better prepared you are to handle the disorder.

**It is no one's fault:** It is not your fault that your partner has ROCD. But it is not your partner's fault either. Neither you, nor your partner should consider yourselves on the opposite sides of each other. Both of you are on the same side against ROCD. Neither should your partner's compulsions be enabled, nor do you have the permission to be mean or rude to your partner because of your frustration. What is understandable is not necessarily justifiable. So, both of you need to be kind and compassionate towards the other person because both of you are suffering.

**Your partner is not in control:** Or let me say it differently. Your partner is not in control *right now*. Whatever is happening to your partner is because your partner's ROCD is in control. He does not want to feel the way he does. He does not want to behave the way he does. His ROCD forces him to. You may notice that your partner is not really happy. If he really liked doing what he does, wouldn't he be happy? He isn't because he doesn't want to do it, but cannot seem to be able to stop.

**It is not your responsibility to fix your partner:** In your concern for your partner, when your partner comes and offloads his anxious thoughts on you, you may end up using words like '*Don't worry, we will fix this*'. This is neither true nor correct. It is not true because it is offering your partner a false reassurance that you know how to fix it, which is not true. And, it is not correct because if you believe it is your responsibility to fix your partner's ROCD, it may make your partner also believe that it *is indeed* your responsibility. He may depend upon you unreasonably to get him out

of it and he may blame you if you are unable to do so.

Also, if you are not able to help him through it, you may blame yourself and go down a rabbit hole of guilt that could have been avoided. You may begin to feel inadequate for not being able to help your partner. These are traps that you should watch out for and avoid.

**Your partner loves you:** Believe it or not, whatever happens in ROCD is not because your partner stops loving you, but because he loves you *more*. Any form of OCD affects a person because he has strong beliefs about something and OCD tries to negate those beliefs.

So, this is ROCD's way of trying to negate your partner's love for you. It is like ROCD telling your partner '*Do you really think you love your partner? Despite her asymmetrical eyes?*' And because he seems to lose the ability to distinguish between a real thought and an obsessive thought, he begins to question himself. So, I repeat. ROCD shows up because your partner loves you more, not less, as it may begin to feel.

**You need to make time for yourself:** This is very important. In addition to being available for your partner, make sure you make time for yourself as well. Seeing your partner suffer may make you feel guilty about having a good time yourself, but remember, you need to recharge yourself for two people. So, be kinder to yourself than you would usually be. Go for a drink with friends. Go watch a movie. Go spend time with your parents. Go spend time on your hobby. Guilt-free.

**You need to have patience, have faith:** ROCD being what it is, it is easy to get frustrated. But you need the most patience when your partner seems to be dead against you. Remember, if your partner could help it, he would not do what he is doing. Remember also, that convolutedly, your partner behaves the way he does because he loves you and not because he doesn't.

**Saying the wrong things should be avoided:** It might seem difficult to control your temper or frustration with your partner sometimes and you might end up saying something you may regret later, but they are only going to lead to making your partner's ROCD worse. So, here are a few statements that you should definitely stay away from:

- If it feels wrong to you, then maybe we should take a break.
- I am beginning to lose interest in you.
- Stop being so negative all the time
- How can you think that about me?
- How come I don't have similar thoughts about you?
- Maybe you should ask your friends if they feel the same way as you do.
- How about using Google to see if you are right or wrong?

## INTRODUCTION TO OCD AND ROCD

- Love is a feeling. If you don't feel it, maybe you are not in love with me anymore.
- Other people have it worse. What are you complaining about?
- Your thoughts are irrelevant.
- Don't worry, everything will be alright.

Keep these points in mind in your journey with your partner to help him with his ROCD. Given the nature of this disorder and the impact it can have on people and relationships, it is easy to lose sight of these points and end up ruining a perfect relationship that could otherwise have been salvaged with the right help. Make sure that this does not happen to your relationship by being better prepared.

In the next chapter we shall talk about the maladaptive accommodation of ROCD by the partner.