
S4C16. Rationalizing in ROCD - Type 1

We shall now rationalize the first example mentioned in the anxiety hierarchy for ROCD Type 1. Remember that rationalization is always...*always*...to be done only in a non-triggered state and *never* when you are triggered - preferably with the help of your partner. Let us look at the example (numbered A, typed in blue color in the MS Excel workbook) in the Anxiety Hierarchy Worksheet (Worksheet 15). The trigger is watching a romantic movie.

When you watch the movie (or do anything else that you have been avoiding) to trigger yourself, remember it is like sitting with your face to the waves. You are mindful, and more aware that the wave of intrusive thoughts may hit you. This awareness prepares you for restricting yourself from not doing the compulsion and practicing response prevention.

Your mind may tell you that if you watch a romantic movie, you may get the intrusive thought that your partner's nose is too long. This obsession may feel real when you do watch the movie. You may then want to compare your partner's nose to the nose of the person on the screen. This would be your compulsion. You may compare noses, and you may either find your partner's nose better or worse. If you find your partner's nose better, you may get temporary relief but the doubt will not dissipate.

You may keep comparing the noses from various angles until you find an angle where your partner's nose looks worse and you may get anxious. Or you may compare your partner's nose with some other person's until you find one that makes your partner's nose look worse. You may be so critical and painstaking in the comparison exercise that you may indeed find something to be anxious about. Your belief that you are right about this obsession may get reinforced, and you may spiral into repeated compulsive behavior. Sounds familiar? So how do we deal with this? Let us take a step back and rationalize this obsession.

The rationalization process has five steps. I repeat and strongly remind you that the rationalization process has to be followed only in the non-triggered state. The responses can be kept ready for the triggered state but the process cannot be started in the triggered state. I cannot emphasize on this enough. In the triggered state, the reasons are not important. Logic is not important (Prudovski, n.d.). You just have to provide the response identified earlier and not try to derive the response through logic again. The debate has ended. I am repeating this over and over because it is very important. Let us look at the five steps now. For this example, let us consider the compulsion of comparison.

Step One: Rationalization of the Compulsion: This step needs to be followed in the non-triggered state. For different people, different kind of

THE RECOVERY PROCESS

rationalization conversations may help. In Additional Resource 10, all the compulsions spoken about in the chapter on compulsions have been rationalized using one specific way in a simple to understand manner. You may rationalize your compulsions in the way that suits you. Particularly for this compulsion of comparison, the rationalization may look as shown below.

- Why do I need to compare? - To ensure that my partner is the best.
- Why should my partner be the best? - So that I do not feel like I am compromising in the relationship.
- Why do I not want to compromise in the relationship? - Because I want my brother to approve of my choice.
- If my brother does not approve of my choice, would I leave my partner in favor of someone else who seems better? - No.
- Does comparing help then? - No.

Thus, the compulsion of comparison may be to ensure that your partner is the best, so that there is no compromise being made by you in selecting a partner. In this case, the presenting fear (the obsession) is about finding the best partner, but the core fear is that you want your brother to approve of your choice. However, despite getting the strong feeling that your brother may not approve of your choice (your core fear coming true), you would not be ready to leave your partner for someone 'better'. So, comparison does not help. This means that doing the compulsion is a futile exercise because no matter what happens, you will not leave your partner.

Step Two: Mindful Acceptance of ROCD: This step can be followed in the triggered state. Acknowledge the following:

- I have ROCD and these thoughts are bound to be there. Accepting my ROCD diagnosis will not surprise me or shock me or disappoint me every time I have these thoughts.
- These thoughts are bound to feel real. I accept this as well.

Step Three: Distancing from the Obsession: This step can be followed in the triggered state as well. You can distance yourself from the episode by reminding yourself of the following:

- This is Kay's deviousness at work. Kay is asking me to give meaning to the obsession and to look for compulsions to do.

- Kay always lies to me and is only interested in making my life miserable, so I will not listen to Kay and I will not believe what Kay tells me.

Step Four: Distancing from the Compulsion: This step can be taken in the triggered state. The suggestion for doing the compulsions is given by Kay. Acknowledge that you again choose to not listen to Kay and will not do the compulsion.

Step Five: Formulating the Response Prevention Script: This step can be followed in the triggered state. In this final step, the essence of the rationalization exercise is condensed into the response prevention script. The response prevention script almost always follows a template of sorts. The response prevention script for this compulsion can be as shown below.

- If I do not compare and anything goes wrong as a result, that is, I realize later that my brother does not approve of my choice, I will handle it then. I will not dwell on it now.

Of the five steps above, the first step can and must only be followed in the non-triggered state. In the fifth step, as you can see, you are not only handling the obsession as it is but also preparing yourself for handling the core fear if it comes true. This completes the rationalization process for ROCD Type 1 obsession.

In the next chapter we shall look at rationalizing an obsession from ROCD Type 2.