S4C2. Obsessions in ROCD

Obsessions are thoughts that cause anxiety, are intrusive and disturbing (Goodman et al., 2014). Obsessions in ROCD may take many forms. They may take the form of a thought. Thoughts could be in the form of doubts or questions. For example, '*What if I don't love my partner?*' or '*Is my partner right for me?*' OCD is called a 'what-if' disorder because there are many thoughts or fears in OCD that start with a 'what-if'. '*What if there is someone better for me out there?*' '*What if I am in the wrong relationship?*' '*What if my partner has stopped loving me?*' OCD is also called a doubting disorder and doubting is a standard feature of OCD. Any doubts regarding the relationship may be obsessions. For example, '*I doubt if I love my partner.*' Or, '*Are my partner's lips too fat or too thin?*' Or, '*Does my partner have a good sense of humor?*'

Obsessive thoughts may take the form of definite statements. For example, the obsession could be '*I don't love my partner*' or '*I should leave my partner.*' When definite statements become obsessive, people have a hard time as they believe them to be real thoughts. But they are still obsessions, because they cause distress. If you did not love your partner anymore and wanted to leave her, it would not cause you anxiety.

However, if you believe that your partner does not love you (without a doubt), you may either have low insight or you may be experiencing abuse, both of which you should not try to handle on your own and get professional help for.

Obsessions may be in the form of still or moving images. You may be bothered by recurrent images of your partner's perceived flaws. Or, you may be bothered by images of enjoying sex with someone else. Or you may get images of how awkward your partner was at your office party.

Obsessions may be in the form of dreams. Like all other obsessions, you do not have control over your dreams either. Thus, intrusive thoughts may make themselves visible in your dreams. You may begin to feel that your dreams indicate your real intention since dreams are considered to be a manifestation of your innermost desires.

Obsessions may be in the form of urges or impulses. For example, you may get the urge to break off the relationship. This thought needs to be distinguished from the urge to do compulsions, though.

Obsessions are not to be confused with normal day-to-day worrying. Obsessions are consuming, take up a lot of your productive time, may be sticky, and may bring about distressing emotions like anxiety, guilt, jealousy, hatred, or shame. If you are able to dismiss the thought that you may be with the wrong partner, it is not an obsession. If however, you do not want to leave your partner, the thoughts cause distress that you cannot handle without compulsive rituals, they are obsessions.

Obsessions also seem real. They do not feel like thoughts that have been thrust upon you. As if they are your own thoughts. As if you want them. You feel that if they were not real why would you get them? Yet, you also know that you do not want them. Otherwise you would not be struggling so much to get rid of them. There would be no ROCD.

Obsessions outlined in the Y-BOCS symptom checklist (Goodman et al., 1989 a, b) have been provided in Additional Resource 7. Read through them to identify if any of them seem similar to what you experience. Using Additional Resource 5 and earlier worksheets (2, 3, 4, 5 and 10) write down your obsessions in Worksheet 11.

First, write down the name of your ROCD (such as Kay) in the space provided (Cell D4). Next make a list of all your obsessions. Observe your behavior and along with your partner identify what your obsessions are. Then convert your obsessions into statements beginning with '*Kay is telling me*' or '*Kay is asking me to*'. Complete this exercise before moving to the next chapter.

In the next chapter, we shall understand the concept of cognitive defusion for knowing what to do when the thoughts seem real.

To-Do:
Refer to AR5 - the Y-BOCS symptom list - obsessions
Complete WS11 - obsessions