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## S5C10. The trickery of reassurance-seeking

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You know that reassurance seeking is a compulsion. Yet, reassurance seeking is...well...reassuring. When your friends understand that offering reassurance seeking is unhealthy, they may learn responses like '*You know the answer to this*' or '*You know you're seeking reassurance*'. On their part, they are doing the right thing. In some cases, you may not be satisfied and still insist on being reassured. In some cases, you might understand that you shouldn't be seeking reassurance and try to stay with your anxiety without getting it.

Both these situations are not a problem. In the former, until you learn to handle the anxiety without seeking reassurance, it may be alright for your friends to provide you a limited number of reassurances. In the latter, if you are agreeing to stay with the anxiety without acting upon it, that's even better.

The problem is a third type of response. It is possible that your mind begins to look at any response which is not a confirmation of your fears as a reassurance. So, even if your friends say '*You know the answer to that*' or '*Do you really want reassurance?*' it may be already a reassurance for you. Your mind might tell you that if the relationship was wrong, your friends would panic too. The fact that they're not panicking means that everything is safe. So, even if your friends do not actually provide the reassurance, the response might still end up reassuring you without either you or your friends realizing it.

You need to come to an agreement about how many times you will seek reassurance in a day. Restricting this number will automatically reduce the instances. This puts the onus of managing anxiety on you and not on your friends and, you will learn to manage this sneaky feature of reassurance.

Educate your partner and family about reassurance. Let them understand what responses to provide when you seek reassurance. Worksheet 20 can be used to reduce reassurance seeking. Under each day, write a Yes, every time you seek reassurance. At the end of the day, write the total number of reassurances in the Total column. That becomes your benchmark to beat the following day. You should attempt to seek fewer reassurances every succeeding day.

With cooperation from your family and with the right follow through, you can thus reduce the number of reassurances you seek.

In the next chapter, we shall discuss another sneaky feature of OCD called the backdoor spike.

### **To-Do:**

**Complete WS20 - reducing reassurance seeking**