



Volume 5, Issue 3

Giving Obsessive-Compulsives Another Lifestyle

Fall 2003

II

[to familiarize the public with OCD and OCD spectrum disorders, to educate and encourage those affected, and to promote understanding among their families, colleagues, and friends]




When nothing is sure, everything is possible. –Margaret Drabble




THREE
HAUNTED
PEOPLE

“TOM”

 The first genuine OCD experience that I can remember happened to me when I was about 6 years old. It happened one morning when I was walking to school and daydreaming. For some reason the topic of God was on my mind (my family was devoutly Christian); I was thinking about how we always said we loved God in Sunday school. All of a sudden a thought popped in my head, like a little voice daring me to say the words "I hate God". So I thought the words in my head, "I hate God". I immediately became anxious because I knew that I didn't hate God, the words had just popped into my head without my control. I tried to just shake it off, but the words just kept coming: "I hate God," I hate God." I started to get really anxious as I was thinking, "Stop it! Why am I saying that? I love God!" So I forced


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“C”

 I know how you all feel, but in a different way. It's like you can't believe anything you tell yourself because you might be wrong. Like just the thought or act of doing something wrong is such a big deal. But to me it is. I'm constantly obsessing if I said or did something WRONG. I might say something to someone and the minute I say it I worry that I might have said it in the wrong tone of voice or maybe I sounded stupid while I said it. So then I have to go back and try to explain to them what I really meant so I won't hurt their feelings and look stupid to them. Because sometimes I think I grew up thinking that everything was a big deal. Don't talk too loud or talk too much about yourself because it is wrong to do those things. And being wrong is terrible. I feel like running through the streets saying, "I'm wrong all the time so sue me and lock

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“TAMMY”

 Hi, my name is "Tammy," and I do believe I have obsessive-compulsive disorder as well as general anxiety disorder.

I remember as a small child I was continually preoccupied with whether or not we had enough food in the house. If we were running low on something, I would stress until my mother replenished the supply. This still holds true 25 years later. I can not run out of any household supplies or I feel overwhelmed. I also have an obsession with fire. I am 28 years old and have never lit a lighter or match. I remember whenever my mother would have a small grease fire on the stove, I would run out into the street to get away from the fire. I would not return until I was certain that the fire was out. While a teenager, I remember never being able to fall

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WHAT TO DO DURING OBSESSING

by R. Reid Wilson, Ph.D.
from the anxiety.COM website

This article contains seven topics, each representing a different skill. They are:

Step 1: Postponing your worries

Step 2: Changing the ways you obsess

Step 3: Letting go of tensions

Step 4: Creating worry time

Step 5: Creating a loop tape

Step 6: Creating a tape of extended obsessions and fear consequences

Step 7: Directly facing the situations you fear.

You know the preliminary step already, before you do ANYTHING else. That is, you accept the obsession. When you have your obsession, the first thing you typically do is resist it and fight it. That reaction will usually intensify your obsession. So since that doesn't work very well, try something new: accept that you just started worrying. Don't work on anything else until you commit yourself to this idea—because every other self-help technique is applied after you say (and believe), "It's OK that this just popped up in my mind."

Let me say that again. Don't work on anything else until you commit yourself to this idea. Because every other self-help technique is applied after you say (and believe), "It's OK that this just popped up in my mind."

Now once you've noticed that you just started obsessing and you've accepted that it's OK, you have two options. One is postponing the obsessions. The other is changing how you actually obsess.

Self-Help Practice 1: Postpone Your Worries

Let's start with how to work with the technique of postponing. If you respond to your obsessions by attempting to get rid of them instantly, to have them gone now and forever, you will probably fail at the task. It's just too big a change to make. Instead, take a smaller, more manageable step. Let yourself have the obsessions. Make a commitment to pay attention to your worries. Simply take control of when you worry. The essence of this technique is to stall the obsessions. You decide not to ignore your worries. However, you are simply going to postpone attending to them for a bit. This is like making a mental agreement with your fear. There's a part of you that really believes that you need to pay attention to these worried thoughts. You are not about to say "no" to them. Your fear is there because it thinks it's taking care of you. So you're going to say, "OK, I'll pay attention to you, just not now." You're going to keep the idea that you'll actually worry. You're going to change the idea that you have to respond instantly every time it beckons you.

So here are the specific steps to take.

- a. First, mentally agree to pay attention to the obsessions.
- b. Second, choose a specific time in the future when you'll return to them. That time in the future is chosen on the basis of your ability. For some of you, and for some obsessions, you can postpone for 1 1/2 hours or more. For others of you, waiting 30 seconds will be a significant challenge. It really doesn't matter how long you pick to start with. It's relative to your capacity. As soon as you postpone even for 10 seconds, you're taking voluntary control over an involuntary process. So start wherever you can, and support yourself in the effort. Use a stopwatch if you need to.
- c. Third, when that agreed-upon time arrives, then either start obsessing or consider postponing for an additional time. Whenever possible, keep postponing.

Now, why use postponing? What are the benefits? The most important is that you let time pass between your impulse and your action. You don't instantly begin that vicious cycle that stems from fighting it. The more time that passes, the more potential for control.

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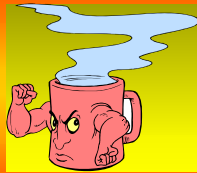
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PUNGENT EXTRACTS



Worry is like a rocking chair—it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere.

The real measure of your wealth is how much you'd be worth if you lost all your money.

If you want a kitten, start out by asking for a horse.

Nobody knows the age of the human race, but everybody agrees that it is old enough to know better.

Many a good man has failed because his wishbone was where his backbone should have been.

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.

Love, honor and negotiate!

One good thing about being wrong is the joy it brings to others.

Worry is interest paid in advance for a debt you may never owe.

Heroes and winners aren't the same thing.

Who gossips to you will gossip of you.

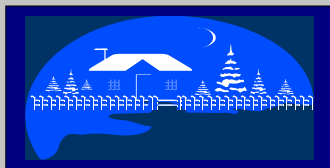
Be bold in what you stand for and careful for what you fall for.

Before you can break out of prison, you must realize that you are locked up.

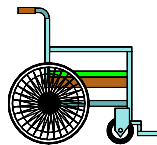
-from FunnyMail.com

The deadline for contributions to the Winter 2003-2004 issue of *The G.O.A.L. Post* is:

NOVEMBER 1.



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THE SPINAL COLUMN



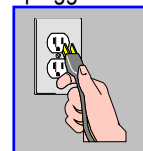
Helping to give the obsessive-compulsive backbone.

by Jene Beardsley, Editor

When I was a teacher of literature, I used to explain to my students that using the words that stand for things, metaphor works like electricity: a word that has a negative charge is brought together with a word that has a positive charge and in contact with each another they light up and give the perceptive reader a sense of unusual vividness. Not all words can do this—just the ones that have the right opposite charges. For example, in one of his poems, a contemporary British poet describes a vacuum cleaner as “grazing the carpet, its udder full.” Here, the words “vacuum” and “cow” have been brought together by way of their similarity in grazing and the full udder (the vacuum bag), and one finds the metaphor striking. If the poet had said “the vacuum standing like a fire hydrant,” the flash of metaphor would not have occurred because, in a manner of speaking, “vacuum” and “hydrant” do not have the right charges.

People are like this also. When they rub each other the right way, they generate the electricity that is the force of social magic. Some relationships, if indeed they get started at all, do not work because the individuals in them do not carry the right charges. Others do work because the individuals in them do carry the right charges. One of the major problems of the obsessive-compulsive disorder is that to one degree or another and psychologically if not also physically, it disconnects people from one another so that even the right relationships either don't happen or are seriously impaired and the sufferer is left in that broken-off deadness and darkness which is the contrary of the electric brightness of metaphor. The unlit depression of feeling disconnected from other people makes it easier to succumb to the mental and/or physical rituals that promise a stopgap but false and addictive escape from the disorder.

At the 2002 Conference of the National Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation in Philadelphia, there was an art exhibit which included a work by one of our G.O.A.L. Group members. It was the picture of an electric cord pulled out of a wall outlet and it was entitled “Unplugged.” I don't wish to be presumptuous in guessing all the artist's meanings, but in addition to—for those that knew her—the obvious reference to her obsession of unplugging electric cords from their sockets so as to avoid the fires she was always anxiously imagining, I saw in the picture the obsessive-compulsive's disconnection from other humans, from, when the charges are right, the delight of belonging, the very gladness of society.



To right this wrong is one of the reasons for a support group. It is society starting where the obsessive-compulsive person is. Through it, without lessening its own intrinsic value, it can wean the sufferer back into interacting with society at large so that with the proper balance between society and solitude—for these are charged opposites also—his or her life will light up. Π

WHAT TO DO DURING OBSESSING

(continued from page 2)

You put a wedge between the impulse and acting on the impulse, so that you might get enough perspective to say, "Naah, I don't really need to worry about that." At 8:15 AM the worry may feel strong, but when you come back to it at 10AM, it just doesn't feel as compelling. The more time that passes between the initial obsession and your attention to it, the greater chance your anxiety will diminish. As it lowers, your need to obsess decreases, and you gain more mental control.

So consider starting your program with postponing. And let yourself move one step at a time. Don't say, "Oh, well, if I postpone and then I worry, that's bad, I've done this wrong." Give yourself a chance to learn from postponing before you move on to other skills.

Self-Help Practice 2: Change the Ways You Obsess

So now, let's go to self-help option 2, which is changing the ways that you obsess.

Remind yourself that it's OK to have a momentary obsession. All adults experience irrational worries from time to time. I want you to downgrade that obsession. Consider it as a momentary, anxiety-provoking event. It's just a little glitch. Do not support your obsession by analyzing it. Do not support your obsession by trying to figure out what it means or by worrying about whether or not you're going to stop it. The goal here is not to be worry-free. It's not the actual obsession that is such a problem here, it's your reaction to the obsession. So hold a perspective that the content isn't important, and it's not bad that you are obsessing. Free up your attention so that you can begin to modify the ways you obsess, engage in specific actions that will help you change your emotion about the obsessions. The goal is not to be worry-free. The goal is to change your reaction to the obsessions.

What might you do to change your emotion about an obsession? Here are three examples.

a. Write your worries.

The first is to write them down. Carry a pencil and a small pad with you throughout the day. When you begin obsessing, write down your exact thoughts or a few phrases that describe your images or impulses. If you continue obsessing, keep writing. This doesn't mean a summary of what you said in your mind. This means a verbatim transcript of exactly what you're thinking. Act as though you are the stenographer in the courtroom. Every single utterance goes on paper!

As soon as you finish writing down the worry, if you think it again, you write it down again, even if it's verbatim what you just wrote down. Don't write down the theme, write down every single repetition of every single thing you think.

Now what's the benefit here? When you obsess, you tend to repeat the same content again and again, right? When you write out the obsessions, you recognize how repetitive and senseless they are. This perspective weakens the obsessions. After a while you will probably experience the task of writing verbatim all the obsessive content as a chore. This way it becomes more work to obsess than to let it go. It's a lot harder to write over and over again, "Oh, my God, I'm afraid I'm going to kill my son." It's easy to say it in your head 400 times. But writing it 400 times it loses its power, it just doesn't work. It begins to make the obsessions an arduous

task.

And that's how the writing will begin to help you. After a while you say, "OK, I'm obsessing. Now I'm either going to start writing it, or I'm just going to let it go. I can either go through all this effort, or I can just let it go."

b. Sing your worries.

Another way to begin changing your emotional response to your obsession is to sing your worried thoughts. You are to literally sing in your mind the words you would usually say, like "I think I've touched some germs. They're going to make me sick. I might spread it around. And everybody'll die."

That sounds pretty silly, doesn't it? Here you are, suffering from terribly distressing symptoms, and I ask you to hum a few bars. But that's the idea. The process of singing your obsessions makes it difficult to simultaneously stay distressed. Yes, it's stupid. Yes, it sounds childish.

Do it anyway!

And here's how to do it. Pick up a short phrase that summarizes your obsession. Ignore its meaning for a while. Continue to repeat the words, but do so within a simple melody. Keep up this tune for a few minutes.

I don't expect that you will start singing this little tune and instantly feel happy. In fact, it will probably be hard to feel anything but anxiety when you start singing. But stick with it. And while you're singing, work to become detached from the content of your song. Remember, that's our goal.

Whenever you feel less emotionally involved with these thoughts, let go of the tune and the words. Turn your attention elsewhere.

c. Change the image.

The techniques of writing the words down or singing them can be used when the worry is in the form of words. But what if the obsession is an image? In that case, you need to modify that picture in some way, or to replace it with another image. For example, if you imagine your boss yelling at you, replace it with a picture of you and your boss having a pleasant conversation. If you imagine yourself dying of cancer, see yourself at 101 years old, smiling, rocking on your porch, surrounded by your family. If you have just imagined yourself slapping your child, picture yourself slowly, lovingly stroking the child's hair.

Or close your eyes and imagine your worry having some physical form. Place it on a cloud right in front of you. See the cloud begin to float away. Imagine that the farther away the cloud floats, the smaller the obsession becomes and the more relaxed and comfortable you feel.

Make sure that as you see these new images, you also begin to shift from distressing feelings to pleasant ones. Choose images that will make you feel comfortable, relaxed, humored, or pleasant so that they can replace your anxiety and worry.

Another useful approach is to replay the obsessional image but change the frightening parts of the image in some cartoon-like fashion. For example, if you are intimidated by your boss's criticism, see her about two feet tall and yourself next to her as your normal size. When she attempts to yell at you, see bubbles coming out of her mouth instead of

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The Adventures of Qwerty Yuiop



BARON VON SCRUPHAUSEN

There was no response to Qwerty's first knock, so he knocked again, a little louder this time. He stood in a narrow corridor lit by a bare light bulb of economic wattage but so grimy it looked as if it were still burning in spite of being burned out. The weak illumination made only more ruinous-looking the stained, foot-worn carpeting and the brownish walls whose desolation was annotated in crayon and chalk with the clichés of a low-bred adolescence. It was five o'clock and the pungent odors of suppers from the various apartments clashed in Qwerty's nostrils. He knocked a third time. "Come in," a voice finally answered, the accent on the first word suggesting a slight annoyance. Qwerty opened the door and stepped into a dimly lit efficiency apartment whose only two windows suffered the cataracts of pulled-down shades. "What's going on, Stretch?" he asked. Stretch Castaldo, a friend of Qwerty's from his high school days, sat at the far end of what surely must have been a sofa three times handed down. What looked like an open magazine lay on his lap. He broke the dusk of the room by snapping on a small table lamp at his right elbow. His eyes were rubbed-looking and unfocused as though he just had been yanked out of a nap. "What are you reading?" Qwerty asked. "Oh...nothing," Stretch answered, shutting the magazine quickly and placing it on the cushion next to him. "Your friends are worried about you," Qwerty continued. "Nobody has heard from you all week." Stretch said nothing but only stared at the dingy throw rug in front of him. Fearing the dirt would blow in, Stretch never opened the windows of his apartment and it lacked air-conditioning. Its muggy shut-in air was too close to the body and Qwerty felt anxious. Finicky about the condition of the sofa cushions, he sat down on the magazine next to his friend. "Something's wrong," he said. "Wouldn't it help to talk about it?" Stretch just shook his head and remained silent. "We've been friends for a dozen years and shared all kinds of secrets, serious and funny. Why is this different?" Qwerty asked. Stretch continued to say nothing, and after some fifteen minutes of ineffective coaxing, Qwerty rose and said, "Well, I can't force you to talk. If you change your mind or I can do anything to cheer you up, please call me." As he was moving toward the door, the voice behind him said, "Qwert?" Qwerty turned around. "I want to talk about it," Stretch said, "but I'm terribly embarrassed. It's this thing that happened in New York."

"What thing?"

"This Jayson Blair thing with the *New York Times*." Joe held up the magazine he'd been reading.

"You mean the journalist who embellished or made up all those newspaper stories out of his own imagination and presented them as pure fact?"

"Yeah."

"What's that got to do with you?"

Stretch fell silent again. "What's that got to do with you?" Qwerty repeated. Joe just stared ahead of him into the murk of his own misery that no one else could see.

"Qwert," he finally said, "Do you think I'm an interesting conversationalist?"

"Yes," Qwerty said matter-of-factly.

"Colorful?"

"Yes."

"Well, what if I tell you that my colorfulness depends on lies?"

"I don't follow."

"I mean I want to look interesting to people, so I'm constantly telling them stories about myself that never really happened, or if they did happen, I build and paint them up beyond recognition—I'm a chronic liar, and when I read about the firings and resignations following its exposure, this Blair thing touched off a guilt in my conscience. I became aware of how decent society condemns this sort of thing. I feel condemned."

"But Blair did it for money. You don't."

"Are we Americans so materialistic that a thing is wrong only because it takes money on false pretenses?"

"The issue here isn't money but trust," Qwerty answered. "Exchange of money is one of the languages trust speaks. And Blair's offense wasn't just that he took money under false pretenses. He cheated to outcompete fellow-journalists, he disseminated false information, and so forth."

"Don't I betray the trust of those I lie to?" Stretch asked, unwilling to discredit his guilt.

Qwerty fell silent. He didn't quite know how to say that those who knew Stretch knew that he made up stories and exaggerated his pedestrian facts until they had the color of folklore—and that he was rather liked for it. Something in Stretch's delivery alerted even the stranger not to take these tall tales too seriously. Stretch interrupted the silence. "How do I know that something I've lied about hasn't harmed someone down the line?"

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BULLETIN BOARD

On the refreshment table at meetings of the G.O.A.L. Support Group is a DONATION BOX. Please put in it what you can to support the Affiliate's services to you.

The Affiliate would like to thank all those who had a hand in making the June 22 TAG SALE a success.

From now through the fall, The G.O.A.L. Support Group will meet at 8 PM in the AATC on:
October 1 October 29
October 15 November 12
December 10

Note: The meetings that coincide with Thanksgiving Eve and Christmas Eve have been cancelled.

The Affiliate now has a website. It may be accessed at <http://philaocdgoal.org>. This and future issues of *The G.O.A.L. Post* will be found here.

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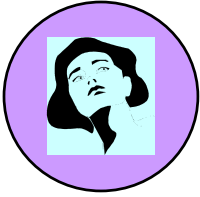
The Affiliate receives financial credit for each member who joins this organization in its name.

For bad-weather and other emergency CANCELLATIONS of the G.O.A.L. Support Group meetings, tune in to KYW radio, or after 12:30 noon call the Affiliate's voice mail at Extension 26 of the AATC's telephone number: 610-667-6490.



HOW OCD AFFECTED MY LIFE

by Marlene, G.O.A.L. Group Member



I am a 46-year old woman. OCD has controlled my life like a tormenting battering husband. When I was a little girl, even before the age of five, I had agoraphobia. I rarely went out of the house and had no friends. A kid would be at the door, but I would just watch television, I was afraid to look up at people, and in grade school I retreated into safety from them by writing words over the top of each other until the page ripped. I didn't like being hugged or touched. From the "step on a crack and you break your mother's back" rhyme, OCD has followed me. It has ruined my life. I have had low self-esteem and have been unable to complete many things, goals I wanted to achieve and dreams I wanted to live. It was triggered as I got older by deaths in the family. I also had agoraphobia. I stayed in the house for five years and did things over and over and had no idea why I acted like this. I hid everything in the closet like a gay person, ashamed and unable to explain what was wrong with me. My family never knew because I could hide it from them. I could do my ritualizing in my room. But of course it travels with you everywhere as it gets more and more complex. My mind was like a calculator or sometimes like a nervous tic.

The worst part of OCD is the lost years. Without therapy early on and knowing what was the matter, it grew and grew like the nasty disease it is. I had to get angry to fight it. I tried to fight it before I even knew there was a name for it. I thought I was the only one in the world who would get up and down, counting, retracing my steps, flipping light switches, going over lines with a pencil or pen if the thought occurred to me that something would happen to someone in my family if I didn't do the repetition. Believe me, an OCD's imagination is endless and complex, constantly going in an exhaustive manner to the point where I would sleep at night and in my dreams my actions were of checking. Sleep provided no escape.

I got lucky in my early 20s when my mother read an article in the paper about the Agoraphobia and Anxiety Treatment Center (AATC) in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania. I was living a good distance away in New Jersey and I had to overcome my fear of buses or driving in what I thought of as the "big city" to get there. At the AATC while in a neighboring pizza place, I explained to the therapist this strange thing I did: moving salt-and-pepper shakers from spot to spot when I was in a restaurant. She said, "You have OCD." I said, "Oh, no, something else." I went from the AATC to Temple University's EPPI (Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute) where I was formally diagnosed with OCD. I worked with Gail Steketee there. I was desperate for

for help, for relief from this and the severe depression that was constantly with me. I entered a study, and while filling out what seemed to be a million forms, I learned about what was wrong with me and a kind of weight was lifted off me. There were other people like me!

While waiting for Dr. Steketee one day, I noticed in the hallway a man putting his hands in the trash and moving papers around. He was picking up the trashcan and I thought, on my first sighting, "a man with OCD." He was wearing jeans and had a beard and long hair. It turned out this man was a therapist, but not just any therapist. This was the therapist who would change my life. It was Dr. Jon Grayson, who had just begun the support group G.O.A.L. (Giving Obsessive-Compulsives Another Lifestyle). The year was 1983. Dr. Grayson and this support group changed my life. I no longer physically hid in closets with blankets over me, petrified of people. I learned how to read without checking, get through tremendous crises, work, move on my own, take care of myself. He taught me through exposure therapy how to go through the pain until the OCD dissipated. If I got knocked down in life with OCD slips and setbacks, he taught me how to get up again and fight this thing—to get angry at it, to say "I haven't gone through all this to give up now." He showed me the true meaning of support.

For a few years I was symptom-free, and now that I know that joy, I don't want to go back to any of the thought patterns, rituals, and habits, but the disorder did come back—not all but some of it when I was under a tremendous amount of stress recently. It's better to nip it in the bud. It's like being on a diet and reaching the goal of losing 100 pounds but lately regaining five or ten pounds. You can't let it go—you can't let things get out of control. The relapse was triggered by my losing three family members in a row, the first two being especially close to me, and by my being unemployed and finding no new job.

Nonetheless, I would like people to know that love and someone believing in you goes a long, long way. I believe that if a friend or a family member gives unending support and love, the person with OCD will heal twice as fast. People can change if they let go of the hurting people and find a solid belief in themselves from persons like a support group or a person like a therapist—or maybe God or themselves—who loves them no matter what.

Medication helped me greatly with behavioral therapy. Sometimes you get lucky in life and an antidepressant works and you feel like, wow, this is what people feel like all the time! Also, on my own decision, I have learned to cut people out of my life who made my OCD worse. Sometimes that was as difficult as getting rid of the OCD itself. Furthermore, I refuse to be ashamed anymore. I, like many people I have met over the past twenty years, hid my illness (rituals and other symptoms) from my family. I was ashamed and now I'm done with that. I'm not ashamed. I just carefully choose whom to let in—whom to let know, and

(continued on page 9, column 1)

"TOM" (continued from page 1, column 1)

myself to say in my head, "No, I love God," but it didn't help. The words just kept coming and coming and coming: "I hate God," "I hate God." I was fighting back the tears because I was really scared that God could hear me. When I got to school I was really shaken from what had happened. I tried to forget it, but for the rest of the day it was stuck like a splinter in the corner of my mind. When I got home I ran to my mother and tried to explain to her what had happened. I was in tears I was so upset. I tried to explain to her that I couldn't stop saying "I hate God" and was trying to counteract it by saying "I love God." I can still see the perplexed look on her face as she regarded me. I could tell that she knew I was in pain but had no idea why. She told me that it was all right and that I shouldn't worry about it. She comforted me by saying, "I know you love God, it's okay." Even though I was only 6 years old, I had a feeling that I was being placated (obviously not in a way I could articulate then, but in retrospect, I think I knew). That's where my self-esteem took a downturn, as I became increasingly aware of how different I was.

I wasn't diagnosed with OCD until 16 years later in my senior year in college. I'd like to think that if I'd been diagnosed earlier, those 16 years in between wouldn't have been fraught with such agony. How can you raise a child to be a healthy, well-adjusted individual when his/her mind is broken (and neither you nor the child is aware of it)? You try to reason with the child and understand his/her reality, but the responses just don't make sense. If I had just been taught to separate out what is and is not reasonable in my thoughts, I think a lot of my pain could have been avoided (or at least softened). But that's life, and all you can do is work to heal yourself now. It's taken me two years of therapy and medication to finally rise above the trees. Now I've gotten a better view of where the OCD ends and I begin. The way I look at it, everyone has a gift and a wound. One of the many challenges in life is to find people who won't merely flatter you when they see your gift, and who won't run away when they see your wound. OCD is a really tiring, frustrating, and painful wound, but it's just a wound. Try to push it aside and embrace your gift. You'd be surprised what can heal with effort over time. ☐

--Reprinted from HealthyPlace.com

"C" (continued from page 1, column 2)

me up." I also obsess if what I say to my daughter every time I talk to her is in the right tone of voice or if I am giving her the "right" advice about things. I feel very anxious most of the time because I am afraid I will screw her up. I try to rationalize to myself that there aren't directions to life so I can relax, but then another thought asks, "But aren't there directions to some things?" I have this ongoing argument with myself all the time trying to come to a conclusion about things so I won't have anymore questions and then I will know it all so I would be at peace. I have a hard time accepting that there are no absolute answers to things. I also have to make sure I speak to my mom and dad every day or kiss them every day because in case they died I won't feel guilty for not having done that. But then I am always wondering if I talked to them enough that day. And what is "enough?" Someone tell me so I'll know so I won't be wrong and won't feel guilty. Everyone says, "Just do your best," and the thought goes, "Well, how do I do my best?" as if there are specific directions for doing your best. How do you ever convince that questioning part of you that no one in the entire world knows what he or she is doing and that it just doesn't matter? And then I think, "Well, what does matter?" I feel like I'm nuts. But I think I'm just very afraid of screwing up. I have this conversation with myself every day while putting on make-up: "Why am I putting on this make-up? Is it because I think I'm ugly and I'm trying to hide myself?" So I sit there and obsess whether or not to put this makeup on because if I did I would be afraid of betraying myself because wearing makeup just proves that you don't like yourself and not liking yourself is wrong. So I try to rationalize that I need to look decent for work, and then again argue with myself that you can look decent without it. Sometimes I wish everyone could just walk around with no teeth and look like crap and no one would care. I know sometimes I think of suicide from this nonsense, but then I am afraid I would go to hell and have this go on for eternity, whereas if I die on God's time frame I might go to heaven and find peace. Also I'm afraid if I killed myself I'd really screw

(continued on page 9, column 1)

"TAMMY" (continued from page 1, column 3)

asleep until my father woke up. I was prone to stay up and fire-watch to keep us all safe. My obsession with fire has somewhat subsided, only because I control my house environment with four smoke alarms, a CO2 detector, and fire extinguishers. And even though I know in my mind that is plenty, my instincts tell me I need more.

My other obsession is with death. Every day I am plagued with thoughts of death, that of loved ones and/or myself. I vision how I, as well as others, would cope. I can't shake the feelings of sorrow, and no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to rid my head of these thoughts. I am sick. I worry continually about the actions I am taking as if they are my last or the last of someone I care about. I never want to end anything on a bad note for fear that I may never see again the others involved because of death. I perform ritualistic tasks so that every time I leave, everything will be constant. People think I am crazy. Am I? I also have doubt in myself—did I remember to lock the door? I cannot rest until I get up and check myself every time the thought enters my head. I feel that if I do not check this time, it might be the last time I have. The same goes for the stove, the water supplies in the basement, saying my prayers, and thanking the Lord. If I think it, I must do it, or it consumes me.

I am afraid of driving, and every day my fear gets worse. I am afraid of having an accident, hurting someone else, or hurting myself. I hardly drive now as a result, and I have to be driven to work—for two reasons: the fear of driving and the ritual to keep things the same. When I do drive, I am on edge, afraid to do anything but drive straight. Turns, merges, lane changes bring on panic and the shakes. If by rare occasion I do drive, I am afraid to take passengers for fear of getting them hurt in an accident. I also fear making mistakes and not being perfect. It affects me because I try so hard at everything I appear clumsy. It is that I am only trying to do it as fast and perfect as possible so that I please people. My relationships have failed because I loved too much, and I now seek to get

(continued on page 9, column 2)

HOW OCD AFFECTED MY LIFE (continued from page 7)

they have to be someone special. When recovering you don't need an ignorant remark to undermine your strength. I refuse to be ashamed for something I didn't ask for. I mean, people have diabetes and that's the way it is. I have OCD, which affects the serotonin level on the left side of the brain. Perhaps people don't think of it in this manner. I guess there is no connection between shame and my parents not wishing for a baby with OCD. It's more guilt, I guess. The moment my mother found out what was wrong with me, she was my number-one supporter. She tried to understand so as not to be an enabler but how to live with a person who was not easy to be around. My guilt comes from the fact that I feel I drained her of money and in other ways. I was supposed to take care of her and most of the times in my life, she took care of me. I know this will end because I choose it to. ☐

“C” (continued from page 8, column 2)


up my daughter and I could never take the chance of doing that. So some fear is good. It's sometimes good that I can't make a decision! I pray for everyone in the whole world every day that has these types of problems and more. This problem has made me a very compassionate person and I feel you can never judge anyone for anything because you don't know what he or she is going through. If we could all just learn to deal with the stupid fears that hold us back we could all be free. ☐

--Reprinted from HealthyPlace.com

TRY

To the Housebound with Love

**HOLD YOUR HEAD A LITTLE HIGHER
TAKE IT EASY, NICE AND SLOW.
WALK OUT THROUGH THE OPEN
DOORWAY
THINKING "COURAGE" AS YOU GO.
JUST ONE STEP, AND THEN ANOTHER
LET YOUR ARMS GO LIMP AND SLACK.
AND IF YOU CAN GO NO FURTHER
THERE'S NO SHAME IN TURNING BACK.
YOU WILL TRY AGAIN TOMORROW
AND TOMORROW COME WHAT MAY.
TRY AND WITH EACH TOMORROW.
FRIEND, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY.
HOLD YOUR HEAD A LITTLE HIGHER
TAKE IT EASY, BREATHE IN SLOW.
DON'T DESPAIR WHEN FEAR ASSAILS YOU
LET IT COME AND LET IT GO.
LOOSEN, DON'T LET TENSION HOLD YOU.
STEP BY STEP, LET ARMS GO SLACK.
TRY AND TRY, AND ONE FINE MORNING
YOU WON'T FEEL LIKE TURNING BACK.**



[Reprinted from The Venturer, a Canadian publication for agoraphobics, courtesy of Marlene, G.O.A.L. Group Member]

“TAMMY” (continued from page 8, column 3)

help and control from the monster within me so I can regain my life. I want it back. And I hope it is not too late. I don't know if my loved ones understand. They tease me and say I am nuts—if they only knew how close I am to that, they would eat their words.

I also have general anxiety disorder. I can't stop planning everyday tasks—not while visiting friends and family, working, resting, relaxing, or sleeping. The everyday routines hang in my thoughts. I plan out even the smallest details and think about the what ifs. I plan for them too. I worry about stuff that the normal person would just do or not do—dishes, dusting, making the bed, etc., all while working a full-time job. I force myself to stay on top of all of this, to the point that I never get time to myself. I never have enough time to squeeze everything in, so it gets pushed off on to the next day, and then with even more stuff to do, I am even more stressed out. This cycle never ends. I am never done! Every day it is something.

I have not turned to illegal drugs or alcohol yet. I have no addiction there. I have started taking Paxil, but it is too soon to tell if this will help. I do feel better and I need to get on the right track to recovery. ☐

--Reprinted from HealthyPlace.co

THE G.O.A.L. BLOG

is looking for stories, poems, essays, questions for its professionals, and artwork. Subject matter may relate personal victories, personal defeats dealt with meaningfully, insights, strategies, sources of strength, humor, etc. Writings submitted should be literate (correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.), legible (typed, preferably), and of a reasonable length. All submissions accepted for publication are subject to editorial changes and must be properly attributed to their creators, who will be identified in the newsletter unless they request otherwise. No submissions will be returned. Send them to:

NEMuscoot@aol.com

Or to:

**Jene Beardsley, Editor
5 East Golf Club Lane C-4
Paoli PA 19301.**

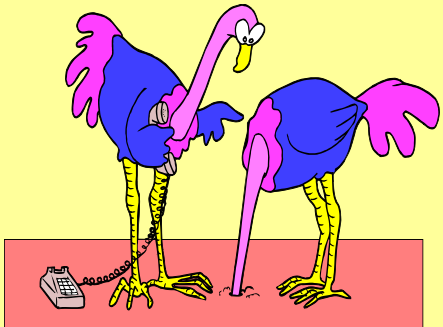


The OC Funnies

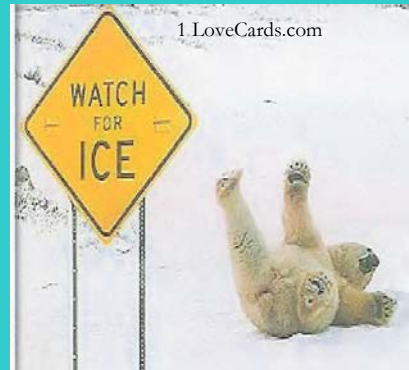


FunnyMail.com

Now that we've gotten rid of all this hoarding junk, I suddenly realize we have no furniture in here.

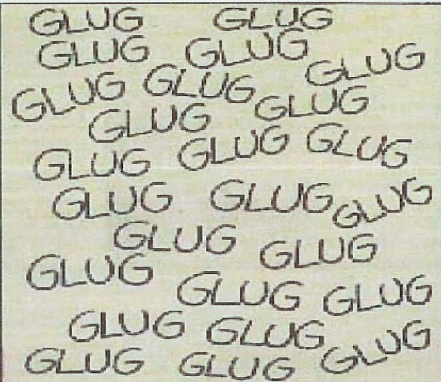
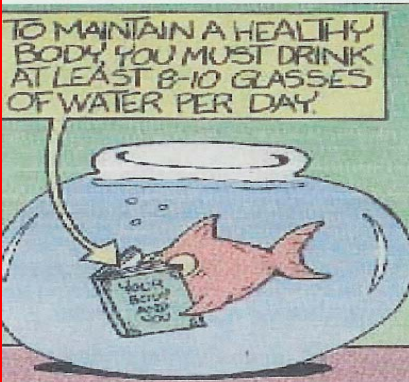


It's your therapist. He says that's enough contamination exposure for today.

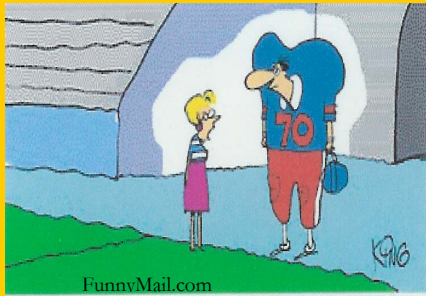


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Even Experts Aren't Perfect.

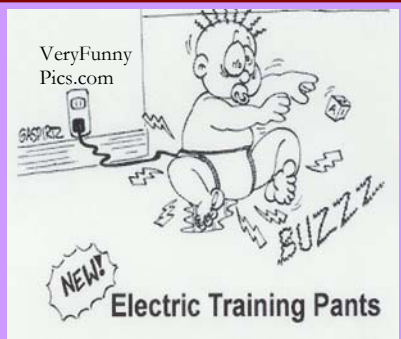


FunLOL.com



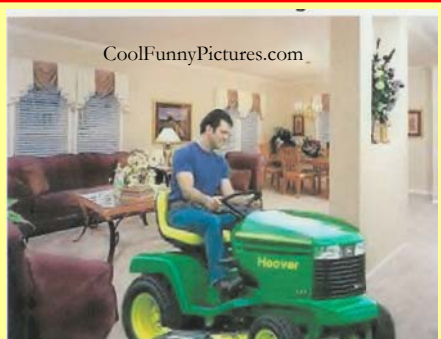
FunnyMail.com

No, I'm not washing your underwear. You've only worn it up to half-time!



VeryFunny Pics.com

FOR OC MOMS



CoolFunnyPictures.com

Ralph felt conventional vacuums didn't get the dirt out of his carpets.

"You don't," Qwerty answered. "But you could ask the same question even of every truth that's ever spoken—of everything we do or say. Probably even every good word or deed has hurt someone somewhere at some time. What's the answer then: to say and do nothing? That's more likely to hurt people."

"Now I'm afraid even to tell the truth!"

"Look," Qwerty said, losing some patience. "If you insist on being guilty, why don't you give guilt the job of toning down your exaggerations instead of allowing it to loiter in the dim lamplight of these afterhours?"

"So you do think there are grounds for my guilt!" Joe asked with a slightly whitening face.

"I've got to go, Stretch," Qwerty said. "I only dropped by for a few minutes on my way to a barber's appointment down the street. I'll talk with you more about this later." He left his friend half rising helplessly from his seat as though to keep Qwerty from getting to the door.

The back of Qwerty's shirt was dark with sweat. It felt cold in the air outdoors. Three houses down the street, Qwerty saw moving toward him through the evening shadows of the maple trees a fellow he did not like. "Well, well, well!" said Emil Cleckendorf in mock welcome. "Look who it is!"

"Hello," said Qwerty tonelessly.

"You're looking sweet," Emil continued.

"Many thanks."

"One will do." It was this kind of flippant assumption of superiority that Qwerty disliked in the man and that could not, for those who knew him, be mistaken for the tease of a good nature. He was one of those people who needed to help people more than they needed to be helped and was so impressed with his popular understanding of psychology that he was unaware of its limits and often gave people hurtful advice. So when Qwerty saw him turning as though up the steps toward the door of Stretch's apartment building, he hopped on an impulse and raced it full-throttle toward Emil.

"Are you going to see Stretch?" he asked with bumbling nonchalance.

"If I must tell you, yes," Emil answered. "He owes me some money."

"I wouldn't do that if I were you."

"Why not?"

"I just came from him and he's in a foul mood."

"From what?"

"I don't want to go into the details, but he was in a rage and nearly tossed me out, saying he just wished his so-called friends would leave him alone. He threw a glass of water at me as I left." Qwerty turned around to show him the back of his shirt.

Unless he was the author of it, Emil hated unpleasantness, but he eyed Qwerty for one or two seconds. Then he said decisively, "Well, I am late for dinner with my mother. Maybe I should collect my debt another day. Keep the world laughing, Kid." To Qwerty's relief, he went back down the street the way he had come.

A minute or so later, Qwerty entered the barbershop. He felt he needed a shearing. He was disgusted with himself. □

WHAT TO DO DURING OBSESSING

(continued from page 4)

words. In this same way, if you have frightening, repetitive images of stabbing someone with a knife or scissors, you can replay those images immediately after they occur. If a knife was used in your image, change the knife into Styrofoam and make it three feet long. If it was a pair of scissors, turn it into Silly Putty and see it drooping in your hand.

Once you've made that shift away from your intense anxiety by singing the obsession, writing it down, altering the imagery, or any other changes that you create for yourself that would shift your emotion, then turn your attention to other activities in your life. Don't create a void after the shift, because the mind is going to go to whatever next thought has the strongest emotion. So if you've got a bunch of nice, easy little thoughts and images and then you have this thought that's terrifying, your mind's going to go right back to what is fearful. So turn your attention to some new activities.

It may take you a while before this technique gives you benefits. Some obsessions feel so strong that you won't be able to let go of them right away. Nonetheless, continue to practice this approach as a way to get some perspective on your irrational worries.

(continued in the next newsletter)

(R. REID WILSON, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist who directs the Anxiety Disorders Treatment Program in Chapel Hill and Durham, North Carolina.. He is also Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Dr. Wilson specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders.. He is author of Don't Panic: Taking Control of Anxiety Attacks (Harper Perennial), now in its Revised Edition, is co-author of Stop Obsessing! How to Overcome Your Obsessions and Compulsions (Bantam), and is co-author of "Achieving Comfortable Flight," a self-help kit for the fearful flier. He designed and served as lead psychologist for American Airlines' first national program for the fearful flier. Dr. Wilson served on the Board of Directors of the Anxiety Disorders Association of America for 12 years. He served as Program Chair of the National Conferences on Anxiety Disorders from 1988-1991.) □

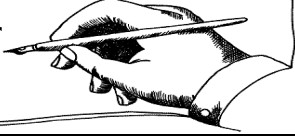


The views expressed in the articles of this newsletter are those of their authors and do not necessarily represent the Philadelphia Affiliate.



I want to thank the Affiliate and the G.O.A.L. Group for their gifts, telephone calls, cards, and e-mails during my open-heart surgery and convalescence this spring and summer. These expressions created for me the spirit of a neighborhood that offset the distance from familiar things I felt I was cast into by the suddenness and the seriousness of the operations. They were no small source of my healing.

Sincerely,
Jene Beardsley, Editor



The Philadelphia Affiliate of the National Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation serves as a clearinghouse for information on the obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and provides the following free professionally assisted support groups for those with the disorder.

A support group for young people is meeting every other Thursday from 7 to 8 PM in Suite 9 of the Rosemont Plaza Apartments, 1062 Lancaster Avenue, Rosemont. For more information telephone Judy Kolman at 610-525-1510.

Those seeking to enter the G.O.A.L. Support Group must first consult with therapist Jon Grayson. This group is meeting at 8 PM every other Wednesday in the Anxiety and Agoraphobia Treatment Center, 112 Bala Avenue, Bala Cynwyd. A family group is meeting in the Center at the same time. For more information on the G.O.A.L. Group, telephone Gayle Frankel at 610-660-0549. For more information on the family group, telephone Sally Allen at 610-525-1510.

The Trichotillomania Support Group is meeting on alternate Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:45 PM in Suite 9 of the Rosemont Plaza Apartments, 1062 Lancaster Avenue, Rosemont. For more information telephone Sally Allen at 610-525-1510.



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AND

A
HAPPY
THANKS-
GIVING.