

Welcome to MCT-OCD

METACOGNITIVE TRAINING FOR OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

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What does "metacognition" mean?

???

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Cognition = derived from the Latin word for “**thinking**”

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Meta = derived from the Greek word for “**about**”

What does "metacognition" mean?

Cognition = derived from the Latin word for “**thinking**”

Meta = derived from the Greek word for “**about**”

Metacognition = thinking about thinking



Metacognitive Training

Human thinking is prone to thinking traps, which are found in many mental disorders:



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- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation



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- Cognitive biases contribute to the development and maintenance of mental disorders



Metacognitive Training

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- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation
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- To a certain extent, these thinking styles can be helpful (e.g., setting a high standard for yourself to avoid making mistakes). However, when taken too far (i.e., perfectionism), they cause problems for yourself



Metacognitive Training

Human thinking is prone to thinking traps, which are found in many mental disorders:

- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation
- Cognitive biases contribute to the development and maintenance of mental disorders
- To a certain extent, these thinking styles can be helpful (e.g., setting a high standard for yourself to avoid making mistakes). However, when taken too far (i.e., perfectionism), they cause problems for yourself
- The MCT-OCD addresses the cognitive biases that are relevant to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

Homework

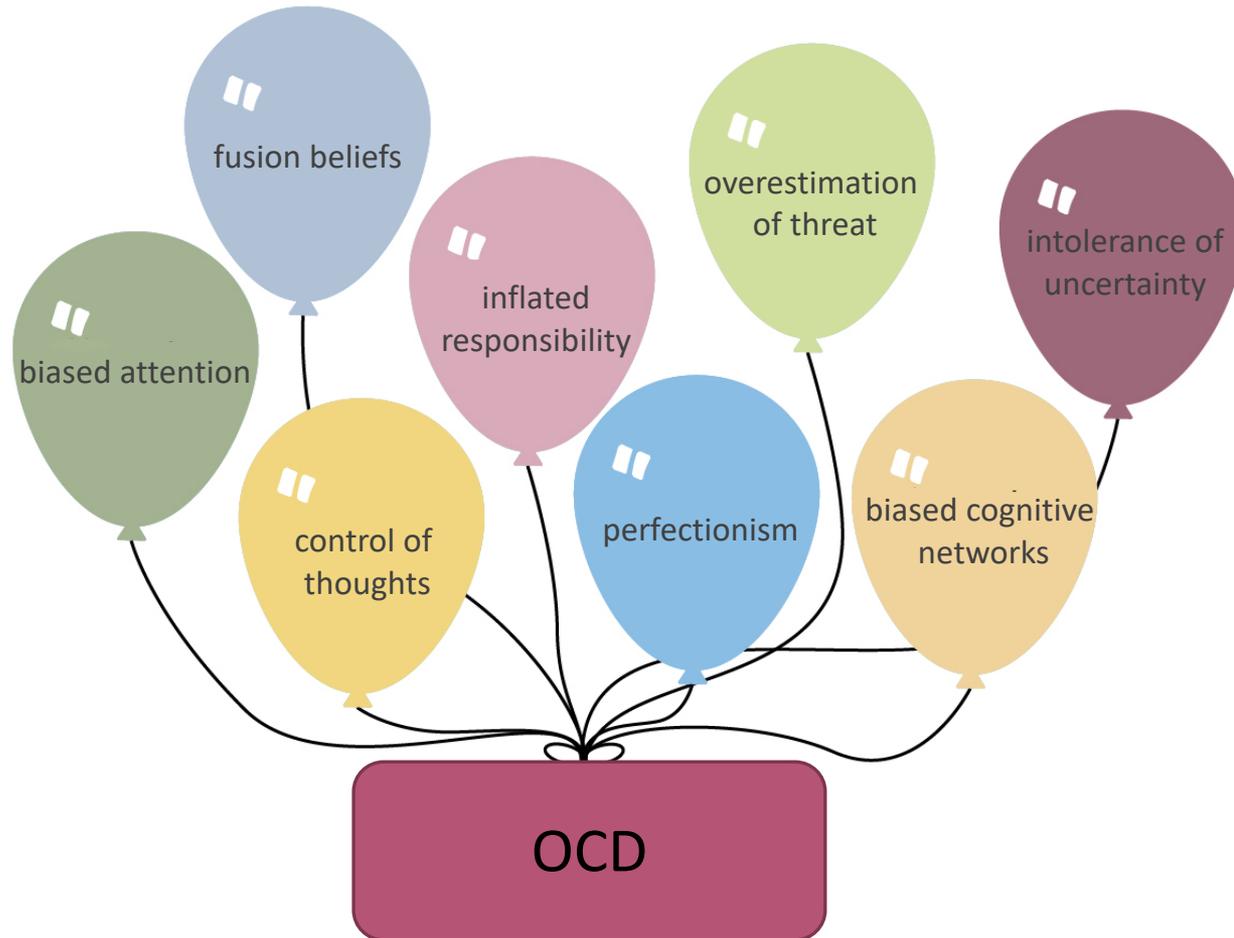
What homework
did you do?

Where did
problems occur?

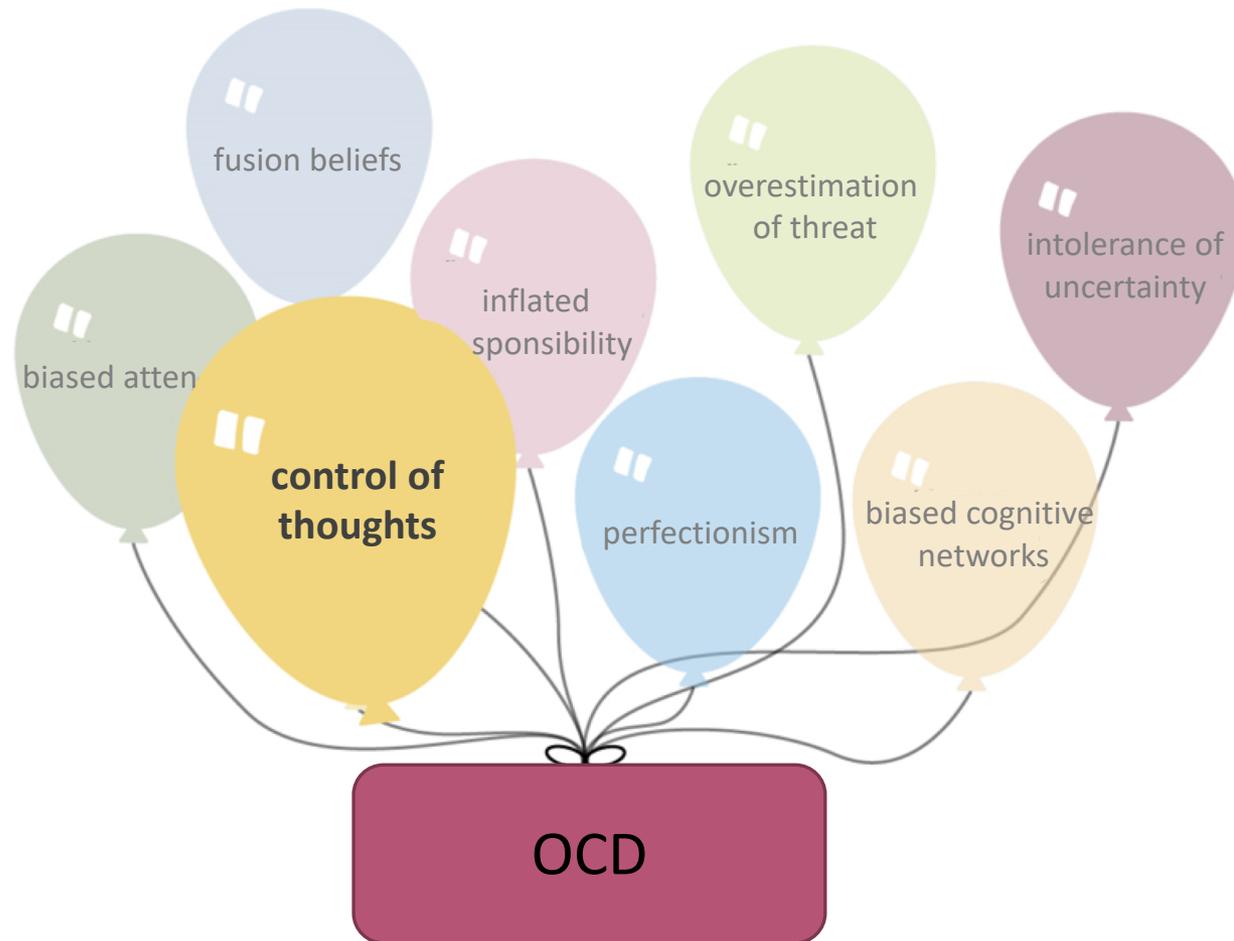
What worked
very well?



Cognitive biases in OCD



Module 5: Control of thoughts



Can we control our thoughts?

Is it possible to control all our thoughts?



Can we control our thoughts?

Is it possible to control all our thoughts?

Can you think of examples where thoughts take a different course than intended?



Can we control our thoughts?

Is it possible to control all our thoughts?

Can you think of examples where thoughts take a different course than intended?

Most of our thoughts can be controlled, but not always, and not perfectly.



Examples

Positive:

- Flashes of genius
- Wit or comebacks
- Sudden, beautiful memories, spontaneous ideas and inspirations



Examples

Positive:

- Flashes of genius
- Wit or comebacks
- Sudden, beautiful memories, spontaneous ideas and inspirations

Negative:

- Blanking during exams
- Freudian slip (e.g., "Congratulations" instead of "Condolences")
- Annoying earworms

Thought suppression

- It is normal for negative thoughts to slip in unexpectedly

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Try it yourself:

Please do not think of an elephant during the next minute!

Thought suppression

Did it work?

Thought suppression

Did it work?

Probably, an image of an elephant did immediately come to your mind.



Thought suppression

Did it work?

Probably, an image of an elephant did immediately come to your mind.

Thought suppression does not work – Quite the opposite!



Thought suppression

- Thought suppression often backfires and paradoxically increases the intensity, frequency and vividness of this thought

Thought suppression

- Thought suppression often backfires and paradoxically increases the intensity, frequency and vividness of this thought
- This is especially true for negative and stressful thoughts, such as obsessions

Thought suppression II

1. Please spontaneously complete the following sentence: „*An apple a day keeps...*“



Thought suppression II

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2. Please do not think of the of the phrase "the doctor away" now!



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Thought suppression II

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Please raise your hand if the phrase "the doctor away" came to your mind

3. What do you know about the vitamin C concentration of an apple? Will eating apples daily really eliminate the need to see the doctor?



Thought suppression II

1. Please spontaneously complete the following sentence: „*An apple a day keeps...*“
2. Please do not think of the of the phrase "the doctor away" now!

Please raise your hand if the phrase "the doctor away" came to your mind

3. What do you know about the vitamin C concentration of an apple? Will eating apples daily really eliminate the need to see the doctor?
4. Why do you think you added the phrase "the doctor away" to the sentence?

Do thoughts always tell the truth?

- Do you think eating apples daily will really eliminate the need to see the doctor?



Do thoughts always tell the truth?

- Do you think eating apples daily will really eliminate the need to see the doctor?
- What would you do if you ate apples daily and still fell ill?



Do thoughts always tell the truth?

- Do you think eating apples daily will really eliminate the need to see the doctor?
- What would you do if you ate apples daily and still fell ill?
- What if at that moment the phrase “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” came to your mind?



Do we act according to our thoughts?

Would that change anything about your actions?



Do we act according to our thoughts?

Would that change anything about your actions?

Would you do what the thought says and continue eating apples and not see the doctor?



Do we act according to our thoughts?

Would that change anything about your actions?

Would you do what the thought says and continue eating apples and not see the doctor?

What does that tell you about OCD?



Doing the right thing despite "bad" thoughts

- It is not necessary to suppress or correct "bad" thoughts

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- Thinking is often automatic. Thoughts also arise when ...

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 - ...we know they are "bad"

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- Doing the "right" thing does not necessarily require "thinking the right way"!

Doing the right thing despite "bad" thoughts

- It is not necessary to suppress or correct "bad" thoughts
- Thinking is often automatic. Thoughts also arise when ...
 - ...we do not want to have them
 - ...we know they are "bad"
- Doing the "right" thing does not necessarily require "thinking the right way"!
- You can think something "wrong" or "bad" and still act "right" or "good"

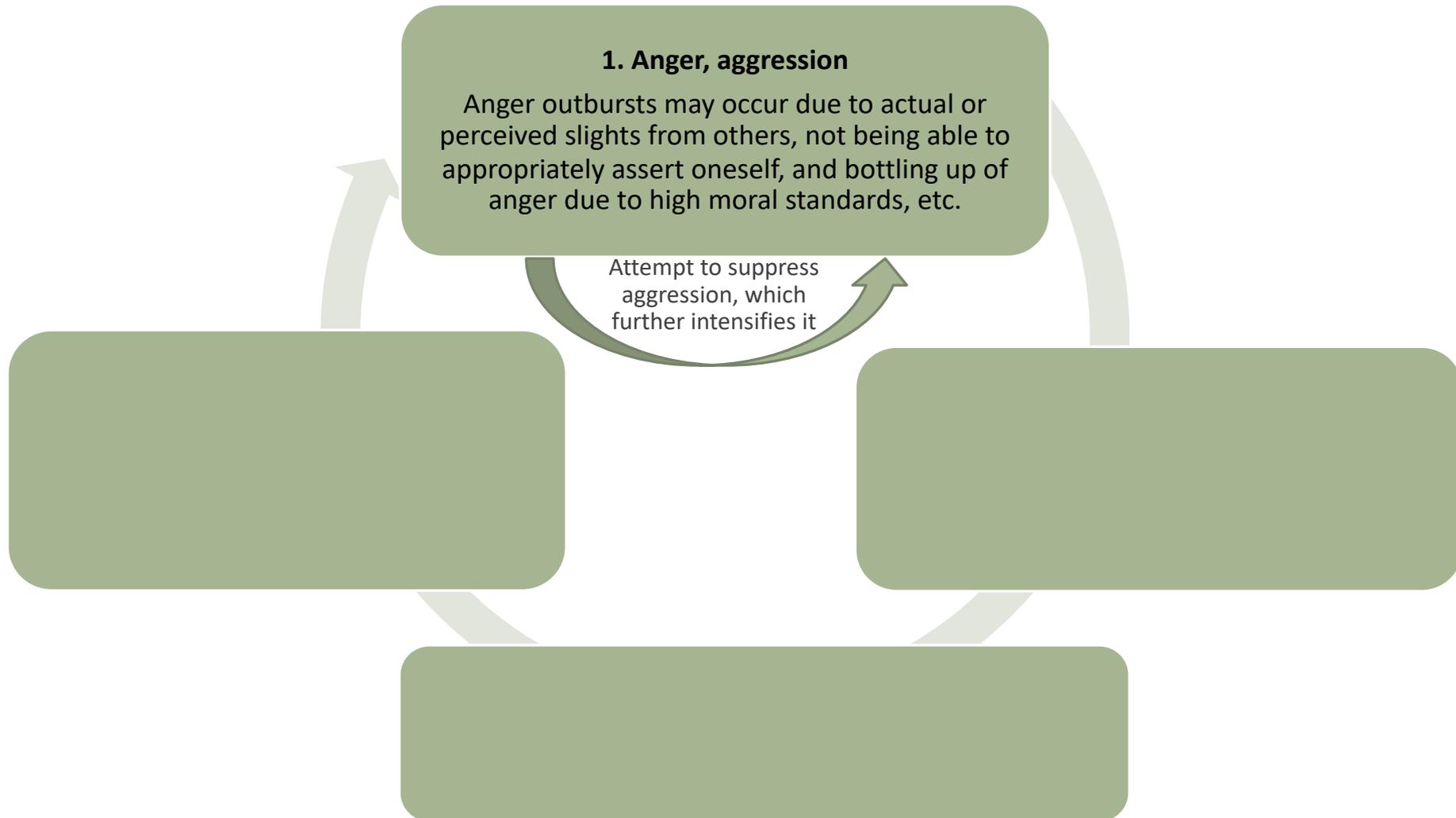
Aggressive thoughts...

- ... are quite normal

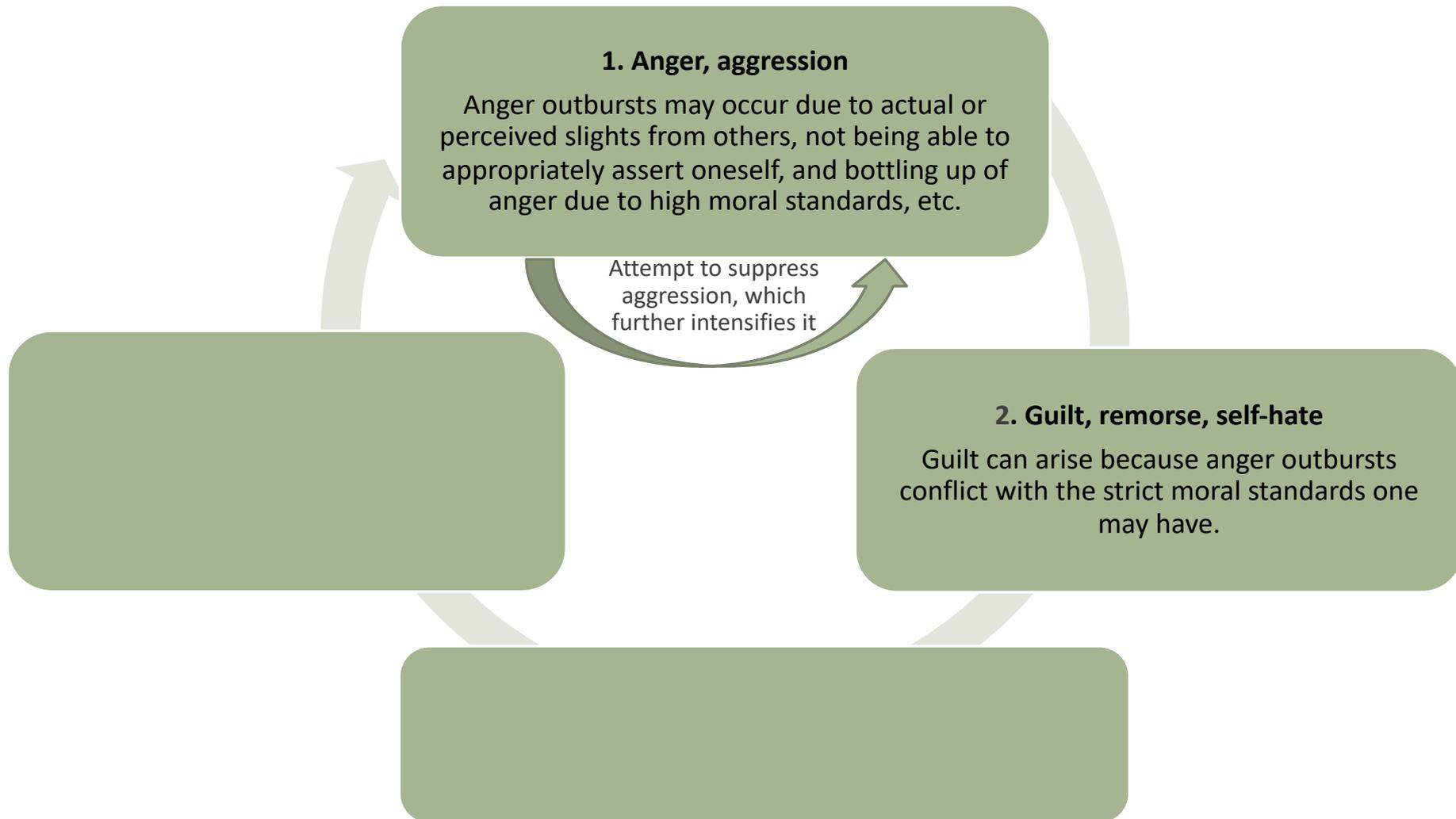
Aggressive thoughts...

- ... are quite normal
- ... intensify through suppression

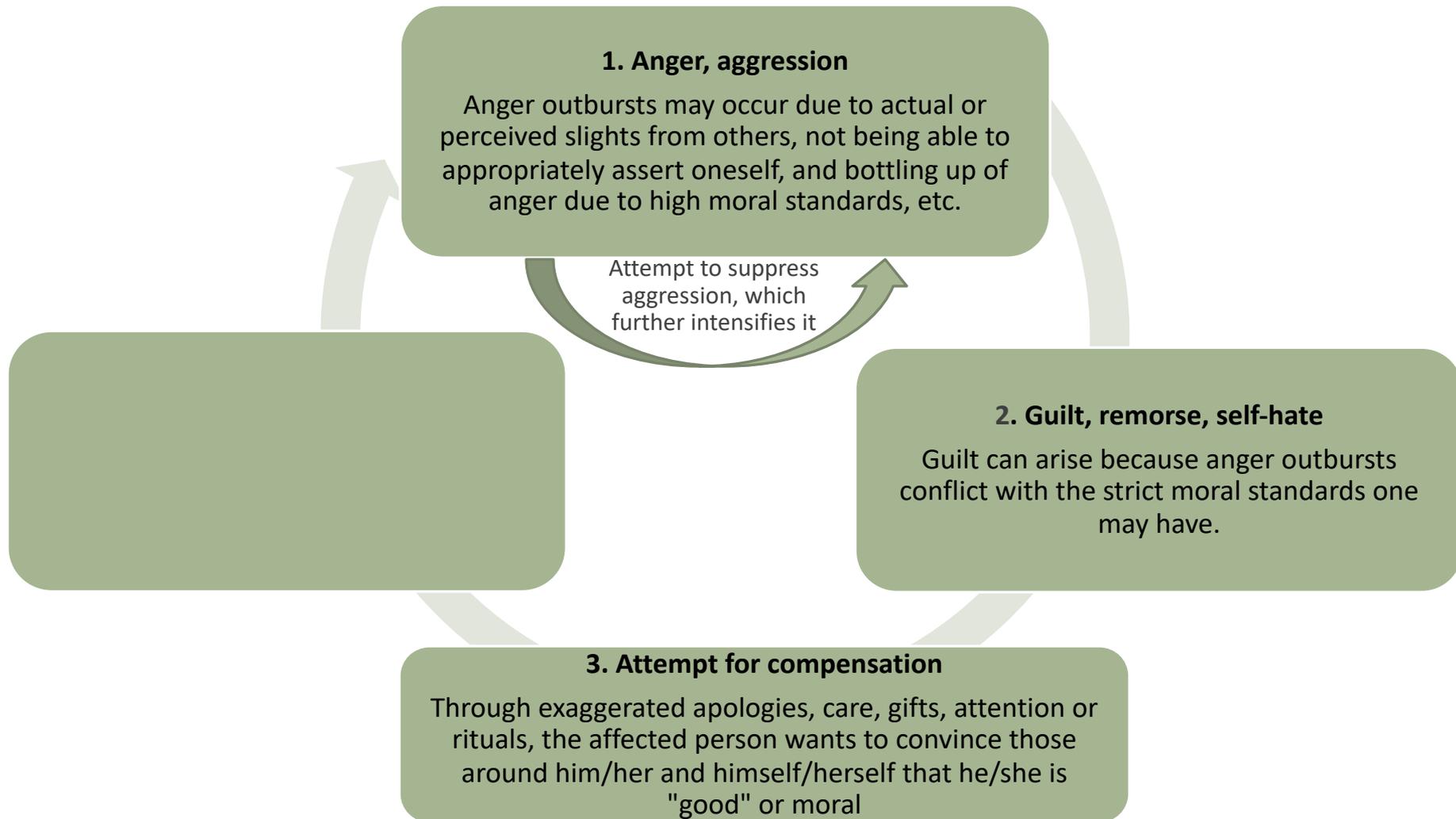
Vicious circle: aggression – guilt – disappointment



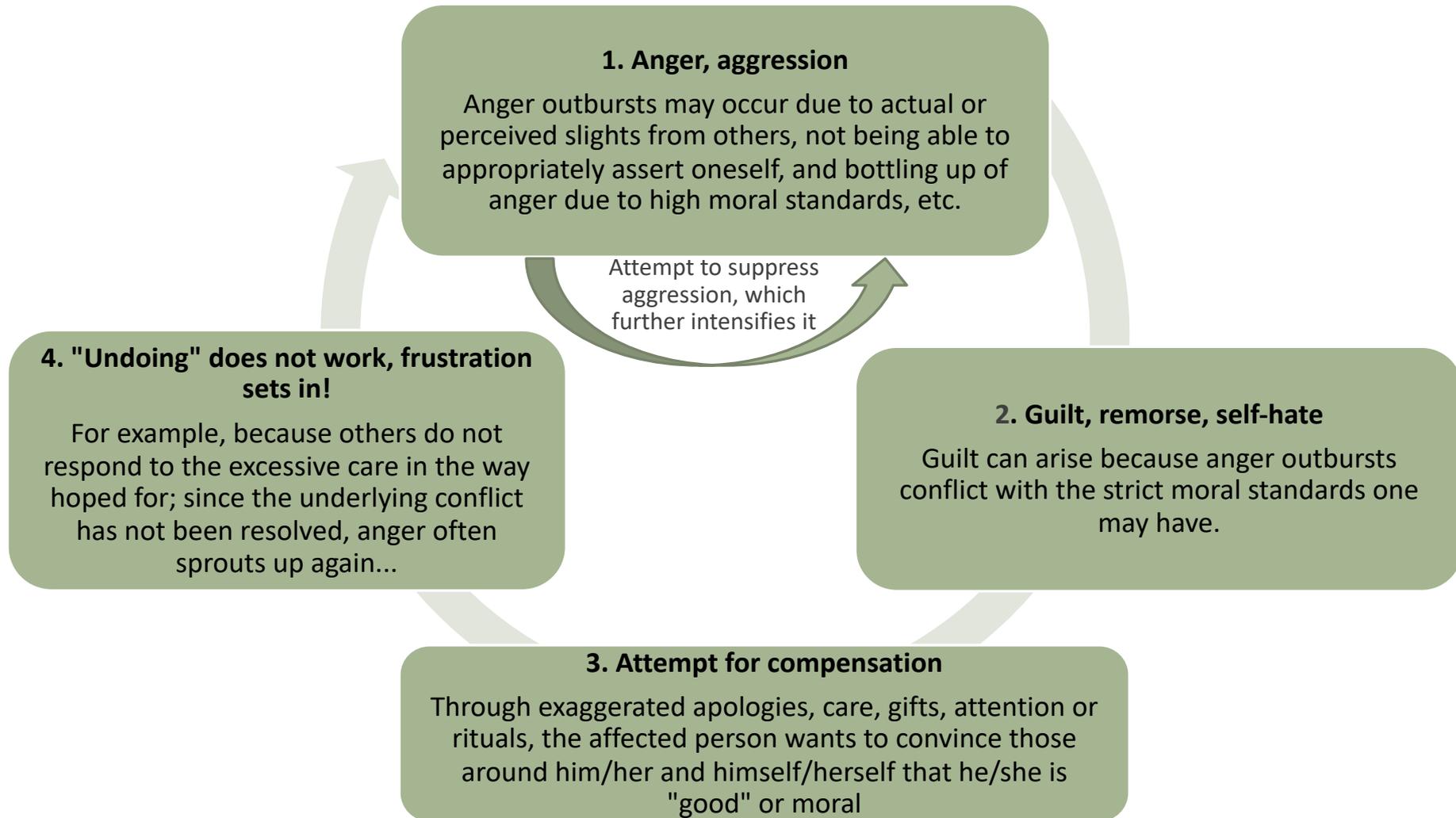
Vicious circle: aggression – guilt – disappointment



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Vicious circle: aggression - guilt - disappointment



How do I escape the vicious circle?

- Express or address negative feelings in a socially competent way

How do I escape the vicious circle?

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"Am I really worthy only if I do everything perfectly all the time?"

How do I escape the vicious circle?

- Express or address negative feelings in a socially competent way
 - Blind anger only reinforces the problem, as counter-aggression follows and feelings of guilt arise
- Questioning exaggerated morals

"Am I really worthy only if I do everything perfectly all the time?"

- Negative feelings or a bad word towards loved ones are not mortal sins, but are human

Obsessions and aggression

- Common content of obsessions: aggression and death
 - E.g. the fear that someone might get harmed

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Obsessions and aggression

- Common content of obsessions: aggression and death
 - E.g. the fear that someone might get harmed
 - Are often excruciating
- So do people with OCD tend to be aggressive and violent?
 - No

Alternative way of dealing with negative thoughts

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 - Describing and labeling the thoughts without focusing on the content

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- Do not actively suppress thoughts
 - Observe what is happening in your mind without judging it
- It's just a thought, an event in your head
 - It does not have to mean that the content is true
- See obsessions for what they are: obsessions
 - Let them move on, like other thoughts too

Helpful metaphor

1. Imagine you get a call



Helpful metaphor

1. Imagine you get a call
2. You see the number and do not feel like answering the call



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What are you doing?



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What will happen?



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What will happen next?



Helpful metaphor

1. Imagine you get a call
2. You see the number and do not feel like answering the call

What are you doing?

- You let it ring

What will happen?

- The person will try again

What will happen next?

- At some point the person will no longer call



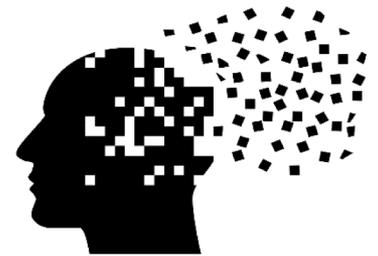
Helpful metaphor

Use this metaphor to help you find an alternative, possibly more helpful way to deal with obsessions



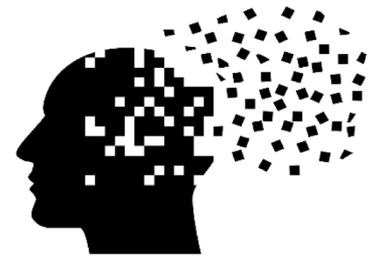
How does this work concretely?

- Let the thought come in



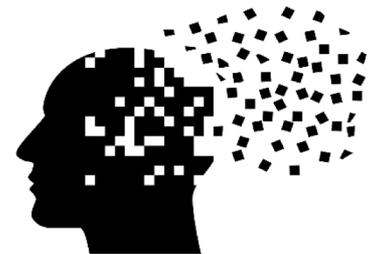
How does this work concretely?

- Let the thought come in
- Look at it from a distant position and tell to yourself, for example



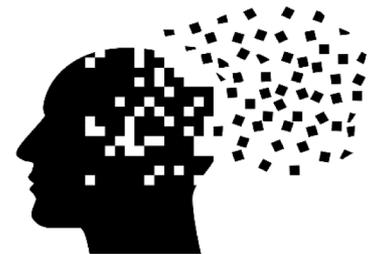
How does this work concretely?

- Let the thought come in
- Look at it from a distant position and tell to yourself, for example
 - *"There's that obsession again"*



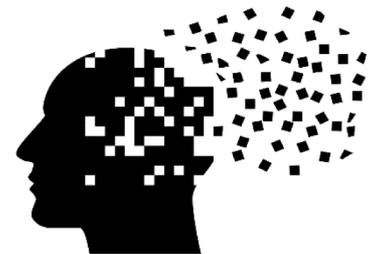
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- Let the thought come in
- Look at it from a distant position and tell to yourself, for example
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 - *"I have the thought that I am to blame"*



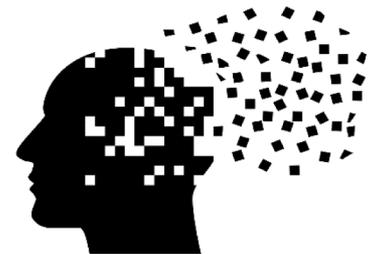
How does this work concretely?

- Let the thought come in
- Look at it from a distant position and tell to yourself, for example
 - *"There's that obsession again"*
 - *"I have the thought that I am to blame"*
 - *"I have the thought that this is dangerous"*



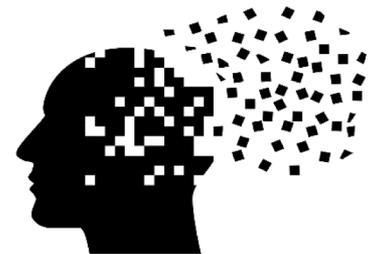
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- Acknowledge that "It's just a thought – an obsession"



How does this work concretely?

- Let the thought come in
- Look at it from a distant position and tell to yourself, for example
 - *"There's that obsession again"*
 - *"I have the thought that I am to blame"*
 - *"I have the thought that this is dangerous"*
- Acknowledge that "It's just a thought – an obsession"
- Thoughts are not necessarily facts!



Where is the difference?

Thought A

"This is dangerous"

Where is the difference?

Thought A

*"This is
dangerous"*

Thought B

*"I have the
thought that this
is dangerous"*

Where is the difference?

Thought A

"This is dangerous"

- Describes an alleged fact

Thought B

"I have the thought that this is dangerous"

Where is the difference?

Thought A

"This is dangerous"

- Describes an alleged fact

Thought B

"I have the thought that this is dangerous"

- Describes a thought
– it may or may not be true

Where is the difference?

Thought A

"This is dangerous"

- Describes an alleged fact

Thought B

"I have the thought that this is dangerous"

- Describes a thought – it may or may not be true
- Allows more distance from the contents of the thought and makes it easier to let the thought pass

Thought exercise

- Using images can help illustrate thoughts as temporary occurrences, and allow you to move on

Thought exercise

- Using images can help illustrate thoughts as temporary occurrences, and allow you to move on
- Choose a variant that works best for you

Thought exercise

Thoughts as a storm:



Thought exercise

Thoughts as air bubbles:

You can also imagine your individual thoughts like carbonic acid bubbles in a glass, which seem to come out of nowhere, rise to the top and then disappear



Thought exercise

Thoughts as a theater play:

Imagine a theater hall. Sit in the back row while your obsessions perform the same old story. This story has been performed for the umpteenth time. You yawn and leave before the play is over.



Helpful phrases for distancing

It can also be helpful to consciously practice statements to create distance from obsessions



Helpful phrases for distancing

It can also be helpful to consciously practice statements to create distance from obsessions

Can you think of any phrases to do this?



Helpful phrases for distancing

*I know that this is a
obsession and I will not pay too
much attention to it.*

Helpful phrases for distancing

*I know that this is a
obsession and I will not pay too
much attention to it.*

*This thought is telling me that I
am responsible for that. However,
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Helpful phrases for distancing

*I know that this is a
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*This thought is telling me that I
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*That is irrational. The
thought doesn't help me
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Helpful phrases for distancing

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am responsible for that. However,
thoughts may not be reliable.*

*People make mistakes
all the time.*

*That is irrational. The
thought doesn't help me
now.*

*A thought is not
a fact.*

Helpful phrases for distancing

I know that this is a obsession and I will not pay too much attention to it.

This feels threatening and urgent to me. However, feelings are not necessarily facts.

This thought is telling me that I am responsible for that. However, thoughts may not be reliable.

That is irrational. The thought doesn't help me now.

People make mistakes all the time.

A thought is not a fact.

Helpful phrases for distancing

*I know that this is a
obsession and I will not pay too
much attention to it.*

*This feels threatening and
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are not necessarily facts.*

*This thought is telling me that I
am responsible for that. However,
thoughts may not be reliable.*

*That is irrational. The
thought doesn't help me
now.*

*People make mistakes
all the time.*

*It is a good exercise to let
go of this fear.*

*A thought is not
a fact.*

Directing attention

- Instead of suppressing thoughts, you can also consciously direct your attention, for example to...

Directing attention

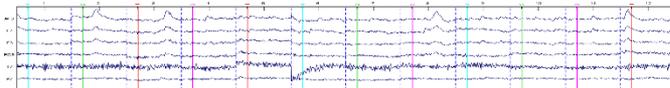
- Instead of suppressing thoughts, you can also consciously direct your attention, for example to...
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Directing attention

- Instead of suppressing thoughts, you can also consciously direct your attention, for example to...
 - ...another thought
 - ...what you were about to do before being interrupted by obsession

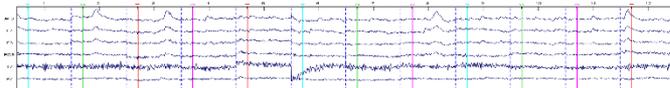
Directing attention

- Instead of suppressing thoughts, you can also consciously direct your attention, for example to...
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- You can consider thoughts as a kind of "background noise"



Directing attention

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 - ...another thought
 - ...what you were about to do before being interrupted by obsession
- You can consider thoughts as a kind of "background noise"



- It is up to you which sounds you want to listen to and which not!

Thoughts as an orchestra

- You are the maestro and decide who gets heard in your thought orchestra, when and how much.

Thoughts as an orchestra

- You are the maestro and decide who gets heard in your thought orchestra, when and how much.
- Which thought plays the first fiddle?



Thoughts as an orchestra

- You are the maestro and decide who gets heard in your thought orchestra, when and how much.
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- Who gets a solo today?



Thoughts as an orchestra

- You are the maestro and decide who gets heard in your thought orchestra, when and how much.
- Which thought plays the first fiddle?
- Who gets a solo today?
- Who has a time off today and takes a break?



Learning Objectives

- Thoughts are often directable, but not fully controllable

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Learning Objectives

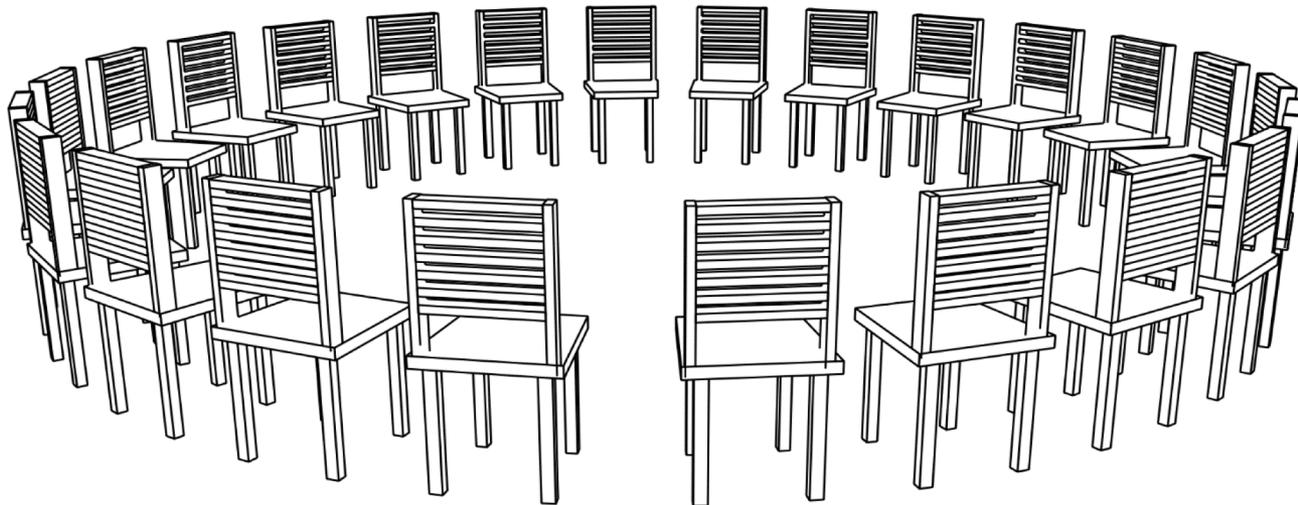
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- Notice obsessions, label them and let them pass by

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- Thoughts are not facts!
- Notice obsessions, label them and let them pass by
- Look for helpful phrases that make distancing easier

Closing round

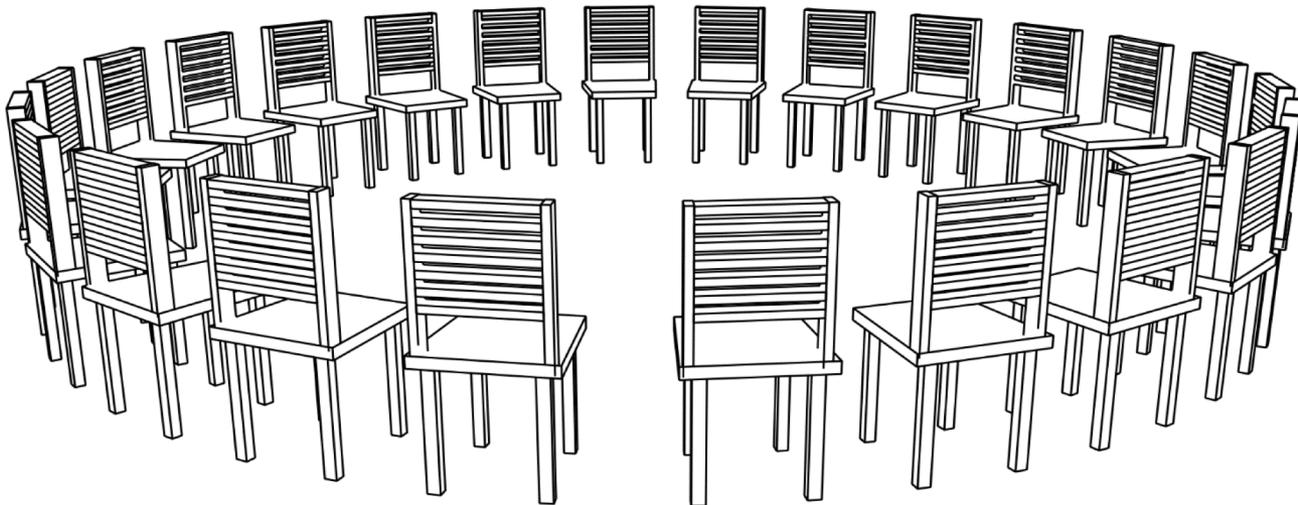
What have I learned today?

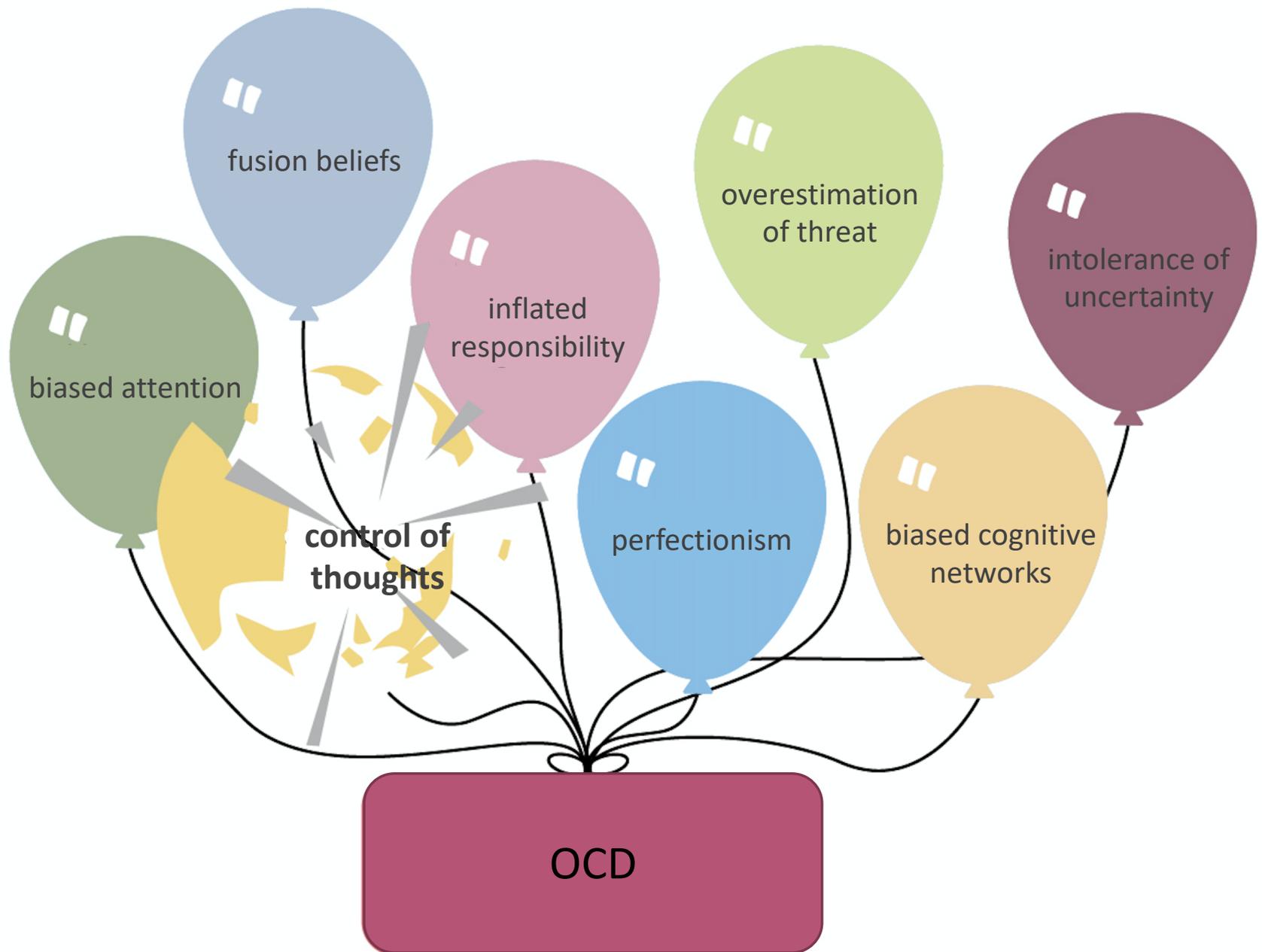


Closing round

What have I learned today?

Which of the presented strategies do I want to practice this week?





Thank you very much, that's it for today.

MODULE 5: CONTROL OF THOUGHTS

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GDJ	clipartx	Bright Idea	CC	Idee
designerpoint	pixabay	Afrikanischer Elefant	CC	Afrikanischer Elefant

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