

Module 4: Fusion beliefs

- ▶ Believing there is a link between your thoughts or actions and the occurrence of unrelated events
- ▶ Those affected are afraid that something bad might happen if...
 - ... they fail to complete certain actions
 - ... they think certain thoughts
- ▶ Fusion beliefs are often related to feelings of fear or guilt. These emotions are unpleasant and people with OCD try to reduce them (e.g., by performing compulsions)
- ▶ But our feelings are not always a good guide (e.g., "I feel unsafe" is not the same as "The situation is dangerous"!)
- ▶ Fusion beliefs are problematic and can also manifest itself in the erroneous belief that one can influence people or events only with thoughts

A distinction is made between 3 types:



- ▶ Thought-Action-Fusion: Thoughts influence actions or are equated with them (e.g., *if I think I could do harm to my children, I will*)
- ▶ Thought-Object-Fusion: Thoughts can change objects (e.g., *if I have an offensive thought during worship, I am desecrating the church*)
- ▶ Thought-Event-Fusion: Thoughts influence events (e.g., *if I have a bad thought, I can cause an accident*)

Exercise 1:

Thought-(Action/Object/Event)-Fusion



When you feel that your thoughts are capable of changing things, perform the following "simple" experiments and note the outcomes:

1. With Thought-Action-Fusion:

Try to mentally cause ...		
... an old lady on the street to spontaneously throw away her walker.		

... a man to rip off his shirt.		
... the person you are speaking with to spontaneously say the word "downstream".		
Own example:		
Own example:		

2. With Thought-Object-Fusion:

Try to change objects mentally as follows:		
Recolor a car		
Make a statue lose an arm		
Turn water into soda		
Own example:		
Own example:		

3. With Thought-Event-Fusion:

Try to influence events mentally as follows:		
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Activate a car alarm		
Bring the second hand of a clock to a stop		
Open a window		
Own example:		
Own example:		

The aim of the exercise is to show that your thoughts are not as powerful as they often seem to you. Additionally, it is meant to support you in shifting your focus away from those thoughts without simultaneously suppressing them or avoiding the situation (both strategies only reinforce the problem).

Aggressive obsessions

- ▶ Aggressive actions do not necessarily follow aggressive obsessions
- ▶ The media frequently confronts us with disturbing pictures → However, having such images in your mind does not mean you intend to act on them or enjoy them. It merely means that your brain is processing those images.

Better strategies:

Instead, recognize:

- ▶ that there is no connection between your thoughts and the event, the object or the action
- ▶ that fusion beliefs are a symptom of OCD
- ▶ that you have tried, but your thoughts and actions do not influence unrelated situations

Exercise 2:

Try to influence objects or situations intentionally with your thoughts, as the fusion belief in OCD suggests:

- ▶ Try to move a feather only with your thoughts
- ▶ Predict next week's national league results
- ▶ Make a friend win the lottery
- ▶ Make a glass shatter with your thoughts

So, did it work? Here is space for your experience with the exercises:

Supplement: Self-worth

- ▶ The value that a person attaches to themselves, therefore a subjective appraisal of one's self
- ▶ Although we often think so, self-worth is unrelated to what other people think about you
- ▶ People with OCD often suffer from low self-worth because they often think that "something is wrong" with them, or that they are "going crazy", which leads to self-stigmatization
- ▶ Low self-worth can lead to psychological problems such as: Insecurity, being overly inhibited, anxiety, depressive symptoms, loneliness

Sources of self-worth

- ▶ Self-worth is not constant, rather it can vary across different domains (e.g. recreation, sports, relationships, work, etc.)
- ▶ The crucial point is whether we pay attention to only our weaknesses ("empty shelves") or also our strengths and abilities ("full shelves")

Exercise

Remember your strengths!

- ▶ Ask your friends or family what your strengths are and what they appreciate about you
- ▶ Think of concrete situations in which you did something well and perhaps received compliments for it – these can also be small things
- ▶ What do you like about yourself? What are you good at?

Think about one strength each in different areas of life that are important to you.

My personal strengths and related situations in which I have demonstrated them:

Notes

Space for unanswered questions or problems that have come up or experiences that you would like to talk about in the next session:

Other notes:
