

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR SCRUPULOSITY

Rationale for Treatment/Education Points:

- OCD tries to eliminate doubt/get rid of risk 100% but *faith* asks you to accept/doubt/trust things you cannot prove or disprove.
- OCD inappropriately inserts itself into the details and doubt that is inherent in faith. Faith's working definition is taking risks and believing things without any obvious, 100% clear evidence of proof. An individual cannot have true faith with OCD involved in faith; it is necessary to embrace doubt in order to have true faith.
- True prayer is communication with God and *not* about reducing anxiety. True worship is connecting with others and celebrating, not about reducing anxiety.

How scrupulosity differs from strong religious beliefs (Greenberg, 1984):

- 1) Scrupulosity goes far beyond requirements of religious law and custom.
- 2) Scrupulosity has an overly narrow, trivial focus or gives excessive attention to performing practices "just right"/perfectly rather than as a way of forming a relationship with God.
- 3) Healthy religious beliefs don't interfere with normal practices of religion.
- 4) Persons with scrupulosity often spend so much time on minute/trivial aspects of observance that they often neglect more important aspects of spiritual life (e.g., charity for less fortunate, fellowship w/ others)
- 5) Often preoccupations with scrupulosity are similar to the typical OCD beliefs and behaviors of checking, repeating, and asking for reassurance.

Goal of treatment:

- Have faith unencumbered by anxiety. Exposure is a way to get out of OCD and have true faith in God. Exposure is OK to do and won't harm your relationship with God. God sees your rituals and grieves that you are suffering from fear. True faith is not just words—exposure is just saying words to make you less afraid of the obsessions.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR SCRUPULOSITY

Suggested reading:

- Abramowitz, J.S. (2001). Treatment of the scrupulous obsessions and compulsions using exposure and response prevention: A case report. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice, 8*, 79-85.
- Ciarrocchi, J.W. (1995). *The Doubting Disease: Help for scrupulosity and religious compulsions*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press. ISBN 0-8091-3553-1
- Antony, M. M., Purdon, C., & Summerfeldt, L. J. (2006). *Psychological Treatment of Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder: Fundamentals and Beyond*. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Hyman, B. M., & Pedrick, C. (2005). Scrupulosity: When OCD Gets Religious. In B. M. Hyman & C. Pedrick, *The OCD Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications. ISBN 1-57224-169-1

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR SCRUPULOSITY

SUGGESTED HIERARCHY

Scrupulosity occurs when OCD inappropriately inserts itself into the details and into the doubt that is inherent in faith. Cognitive behavioral therapy strives to help patients embrace doubt in order to help them attain true faith. Treatment interventions that are employed to promote this process include repeated exposures to anxiety-eliciting thoughts and situations, prevention of avoidant behaviors and rituals, and cognitive strategies to evaluate the accuracy of scrupulous beliefs. Below is an example of a SAMPLE fear hierarchy of exposures for a particular patient seeking treatment at an anxiety specialty center. It is important for clinicians to receive specialized training and supervision when pursuing these types of exposures and response prevention activities before treating these individuals and pursuing these exposure activities.

Description of the exposure		SUDs
1.	WATCHING NEWS/READING NEWS STORIES ABOUT DEATH/TRAJEDY	4
2.	LOOKING AT PICTURES OF JESUS	5
3.	USING "GOD" IN VAIN	6
4.	LOOKING AT PICTURES OF SATAN	6-7
5.	LOOKING AT PICTURES OF JESUS WHILE FOCUSING ON IMMORAL THOUGHTS	7
6.	THINKING OR SAYING SOMETHING DISRESPECTFUL ABOUT SOMEONE	7
7.	IMAGES OF ACCIDENTS AND FAMILY GETTING HURT	7-8
8.	USING "GOD" IN VAIN IN CHURCH PARKING LOT/CHURCH	7-8
9.	SPITTING AND BLOWING NOSE IN CHURCH PARKING LOT/WHILE DRIVING PAST CHURCHES	8
10.	THINKING ABOUT SATAN AND SATAN WORSHIP	8-9
11.	SEXUAL THOUGHTS INVOLVING JESUS AND MARY MAGDALEN	9-10
12.	GOING INTO CHURCH AND FOCUSING ON IMMORAL THOUGHTS	9-10