

THINKING ERRORS IN OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

1. **Intolerance of Uncertainty:** You feel as if you *must* have a 100% guarantee of safety or absolute certainty. Any hint of doubt, ambiguity, or the possibility of negative outcome (however small) is unacceptable. This is the core distortion of OCD.
2. **Overestimation of Threat:** You exaggerate the probability that a negative outcome will occur; or you exaggerate the seriousness of any negative consequences.
3. **Overestimation of Responsibility:** You believe that because you think about harmful consequences, you are therefore responsible for preventing harm from coming to yourself or others. Failure to prevent (or failure to try to prevent) harm is the same thing as causing harm.
4. **Significance of Thoughts:** You believe that your negative obsessional thoughts are overly important or very meaningful. For example, the idea that there is something seriously wrong with your brain because you have senseless thoughts.

Moral Thought-Action Fusion: You believe that your unwanted thoughts are morally equivalent to performing a terrible action. Therefore, you think you are an awful, immoral, or disgraceful person for thinking these thoughts.

Likelihood Thought-Action Fusion: You believe that thinking certain thoughts increases the chance that something terrible will happen. For example, "If I think about death, someone will die."
5. **Need to Control Thoughts:** Beliefs about the significance of thoughts lead you to feel the need to control your obsessional thoughts (and actions). You worry that if you don't control (or try to control) unwanted thoughts, something terrible could happen that you could have prevented. Some people worry they will act on their unwanted thoughts unless the thoughts are suppressed.
6. **Intolerance of Anxiety:** You feel that anxiety or discomfort will persist forever unless you do something to escape. Sometimes the fear is that the anxiety or emotional discomfort will spiral out of control or lead to "going crazy," losing control, or other harmful consequences.
7. **The "Just Right" Error (Perfectionism):** You feel that things must be "just right" or perfect in order to be comfortable. A related belief is the feeling that things need to be "evened out" or symmetrical or else you will always feel uncomfortable.
8. **Emotional reasoning:** You assume that danger is present based simply on the fact that you are feeling anxious.

