

Sample Scripts

For Cognitive Restructuring

Contamination/Fear of Throwing Up

I'm sick of what OCD is doing to my life. It's always there at every turn, trying to ruin everything I do. I've lost countless hours each week to cleaning, washing, worrying and avoiding. My children have missed out on playdates, birthday parties and other activities because I was too scared to let them go. I now realize I can't be the mother, wife, or person I want to be if I continue to play by OCD's rules. When I give in to rituals, I not only lose to OCD in the moment, but I also sink deeper into my fears and move further away from being the person I want to be. The only way to win is to stop seeking the certainty my fear has convinced me I must have.

My children deserve a childhood full of fun memories and experiences, not memories of me always telling them to be careful... or to not touch anything... or me wiping them down with wipes the instant they touch something "dirty." From now on, I will lean into the uncertainty that one of us will get the stomach bug because I'm not being vigilant enough. Even though it's a terrifying idea right now, fear is NOT my biggest problem. My biggest problem is the control I try to exert over something that isn't meant to be controlled. From now on, I will use the fear of uncertainty to help me rather than hurt me.

For Prolonged Imaginal Exposure

Contamination – Accidental Harm

Low Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm making a chicken casserole dinner for my family. I fear I may not have washed my hands well enough after touching the raw chicken. I fear I may end up spreading germs to my family and that they may get sick and die. I fear if this happens it will be all my fault- and I won't be able to live with the guilt. The truth is I have no way of knowing what may happen in the future. I will have to live with the uncertainty that my fears may come true.

Medium Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm making dinner for my family. I cut up the chicken for the casserole and then take the knife and cutting board to the sink. I wash them and my hands at the same time, knowing I have to wash off the germs from the raw chicken so I don't spread them to my family. I really want to wash several times, in a certain way, using bleach- to be sure all the microscopic germs are removed so I don't spread them in my home. Instead, I wash everything once in hot soapy water.

As I finish up, the doubt begins to plague me. Did I wash well enough to remove all the salmonella germs that could get us sick? I want to wash it all again using bleach this time, but resist. Anxiety

mounts throughout my body as I envision microscopic particles on my hands as I'm touching other things in the house. What if my children or husband touch the same things? I resist trying to recall everything I've touched so I can go back and clean them.

My stomach tenses and my thoughts spin as the guilt of spreading salmonella to my family lodges itself in my heart and mind. What if the kids get sick and die and it's all my fault? I can easily prevent this if I just go back and wash everything the "right" way- but instead I choose to live with the uncertainty. I will face that possibility and will have to do my best to cope with whatever happens.

High Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm making dinner for my family. I cut up the chicken for the casserole and then take the knife and cutting board to the sink. I wash them and my hands at the same time, knowing I have to wash off the germs from the raw chicken so I don't spread them to my family. I really want to wash several times, in a certain way, using bleach- to be sure all the microscopic germs are removed so I don't spread them in my home. Instead, I wash everything once in hot soapy water.

As I finish up, the doubt begins to plague me. Did I wash well enough to remove all the salmonella germs that could get us sick? I want to wash it all again using bleach this time, but resist. Anxiety mounts throughout my body as I envision microscopic particles on my hands as I'm touching other things in the house. What if my children or husband touch the same things? I resist trying to recall everything I've touched so I can go back and clean them. My heart pounds as the fear and guilt of spreading salmonella to my family lodges itself in my heart and mind...

Later in the evening, we awaken to our youngest son, Timmy, crying uncontrollably. He has gripping cramps throughout his body and begins to violently vomit. We quickly gather him up and rush to the emergency room. After multiple tests, the doctor enters the room. I see it on his face before he even speaks. "Your son has salmonella. It's the worst case I've ever seen. We need to be prepared." Guilt plagues me. I could have prevented this if I'd just washed everything the right way- but I took the easy way out and now Timmy may be dying. I sit at his bedside and hear his breath becoming more and more labored. I am inconsolable that I might lose him because of my carelessness and negligence. Why didn't I do a better job of cleaning up when I had the chance? I am a terrible mother. How will I go on living with this guilt for the rest of my life? There is nothing I can do now but live with the uncertainty my worst fear may come true- and I will have to cope the best I can with whatever the outcome may be.

Sexual Orientation (SO) OCD

Low Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm out to dinner with my wife and after ordering, I excuse myself to use the restroom. On my way, I pass an attractive man and our eyes lock. I fear that noticing he was attractive may

mean that I'm gay... and if I'm gay, maybe someday I'll leave my wife and family for another man. The truth is I have no way of knowing what may happen in the future. I will have to live with the uncertainty that maybe someday I will act on these thoughts.

Medium Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm out to dinner with my wife and excuse myself to use the restroom. On my way, I walk by an attractive man. Our eyes lock and he smiles and nods at me. Why did I notice him when I am in love with my wife? I enter the bathroom and soon after, he also walks in. Is he gay? Does he think I'm gay? Am I gay? Why else am I thinking about these things? Oh, gosh. Am I sexually aroused? I resist trying to figure it all out and just allow the thoughts- and the uncertainty- to be there.

An image of myself suddenly grabbing and kissing him enters my mind and my mind races wildly. Do I *want* to do that? What if I suddenly do it? Maybe I really am gay, and someday I'll leave my wife and children for a man. Oh, I can't do that to them. I'll have no choice but to live a lie for the rest of my life- and I'll never be truly happy. I allow the thoughts and images to continue- agreeing with the possibility of my fate- as I exit the bathroom and return to my wife.

Even though that could happen someday, I choose to continue confronting these thoughts and refraining from rituals the best I can- and hope for a day when I'm free from them- even if that only comes as a result of realizing I'm actually gay.

High Level Anxiety

I imagine I'm out to dinner with my wife and after ordering, I excuse myself to use the restroom. On my way, I pass an attractive man. Our eyes lock and he smiles and nods at me. I feel butterflies in my stomach and wonder why I'm feeling excited by this attractive man's attention? Am I gay? I can't be gay... I love my wife. But doubt fills me. My heart pounds as I turn and see he's also entered the bathroom.

Our eyes lock and I suddenly feel stirrings in my groin and wonder what this means? I must be gay. I am overcome as images of kissing this man fill my mind. I imagine going into the stall with this man. Why am I having these thoughts? I feel guilty as thoughts of my wife and children come to mind. But I can't be gay... I love my wife. But then why am I thinking about this man's mouth? Am I bisexual?

Anxiety becomes excitement as the man looks toward me expectantly and gestures toward the stall. My heart pounds as I imagine moving toward the stall and following him inside. What if I follow him and once inside, he pulls me close and kisses me deeply? I have trouble catching my breath. Is this anxiety or arousal? I imagine his tongue enthusiastically exploring my mouth as I surrender to what is about to happen.

I feel guilty and remorseful for even having these thoughts. These thoughts of other men must mean I'm gay, or bisexual- and maybe I'll decide to leave my wife and children to explore this emerging side of me. Or maybe I'll decide to stay and end up living a lie and never be truly happy. The truth is I have no way of knowing what may happen in the future. I know that I will have to take the risk and live with the possibility that one day I may act on these thoughts.

Postpartum/Violent Harm

High Level Anxiety

I am playing with my 3-month old baby boy, Aidan, who I love so much. We are smiling and laughing as I pick him up and set him down, repeatedly. Suddenly I think, "I could choke him to death!" A wave of fear comes over me. I'm afraid to have my hands on him and OCD tells me to put him down. But I refuse to let OCD rob me of this time with him, so I just keep playing.

My heart pounds, my breathing is fast and shallow. I feel dizzy and hot. OCD continues to attack. What if I actually begin to choke him? Am I capable of something like that? I envision my hands around his throat, as he looks up at me- terrified- and gasping for air. Oh my gosh! Am I enjoying this thought? I think I am. I think the sides of my mouth are turned upward in a smile! Does that mean I might get a sick pleasure out of choking him? Could I be such a monster? As terrified and uncertain as I feel, I just nod and agree with the possibility of every thought and image that comes my way.

I want to tell my husband the thoughts and images are worsening. Maybe it's getting to the point where I shouldn't be left home alone with Aidan anymore. Maybe I am crazy! Maybe I'm dangerous! OCD urges me to confess my worsening thoughts and to seek his reassurance, but I refuse and stay the course of treatment.

I eventually live to regret that decision- but the lesson is learned too late. Shortly after my husband left for work one morning, I choked my dear little Aidan. All the news stories depict me as a sick, unfit, deranged, and dangerous mother. I can't say they're wrong. I may be locked up in a psychiatric hospital for the next several years, and I wouldn't blame my husband for divorcing me and never wanting to see me again.

Even though this could happen, I'm going to continue to live with the uncertainty. I'm going to fight to be the strong and courageous mom Aidan deserves. I won't let OCD take that away from him- or me.

Contamination/HIV

Medium Level Anxiety

Jeff and I are part way through dinner at my favorite restaurant when I notice a reddish-brown stain on the tablecloth. As an exposure goal, I intentionally refrained from checking the tablecloth when we first sat down, and now my carelessness has put myself and loved ones in danger. What if the stain is a dried drop of someone's blood infected with HIV? Maybe I touched that spot with

my hand- or laid my fork on it before using it to eat- and maybe the HIV-infected blood is now in my body? I am overcome with panic as my heart pounds out of my chest.

My thoughts race. What if I ate food with my fork and got HIV in me? What if I touched that spot and the blood was absorbed through my skin and into my bloodstream? What if I'm now carrying HIV and give it to Jeff, or a friend, or family member by touching them? I could infect everyone I love! I have the urge to wash my hands in case it's not too late to wash it off- and to Google the risks and what steps to take to be safe and minimize the risk of hurting other people- but I refuse. I haven't come this far and fought this hard to give in to OCD now.

I agree with the barrage of thoughts that follow. Yes, maybe the stain is infected blood. Yes, maybe I ingested or absorbed it through my skin. Yes, a thoughtful, responsible person would have been more careful. Yes, maybe I'll infect Jeff and then he might leave me. I could infect and kill my loved ones. The guilt keeps mounting. Here come the terrifying thoughts of dying from HIV and never living the life I'd envisioned. Yes, I could take a series of HIV tests over the upcoming months, but NO- I'm not going to. Instead, I choose to live with uncertainty.

At some point in the future, maybe I'll start to feel sick and worn down- and when I finally go to the doctor, I'll unexpectedly test positive for AIDS. All my family and friends will look down on me for putting them at risk and will fear coming close to me. I'll be considered "untouchable" and will live the rest of my life abandoned, alone, feared, and miserable.

Religious Scrupulosity/Blasphemous Thoughts

Medium Level Anxiety

I'll never know how God is going to judge me in the end. There have been times in my life I was selfish and did not consider God in my decisions. When I pray, I doubt God hears everything I say. I zone out during my prayers and maybe I don't mean every word or include everything I intended. I want to go back and repeat my prayer to ensure I prayed "right"- but I resist. Dread and anxiety fill my body and my stomach is in knots. Maybe I will go to hell for not fixing my prayers.

Maybe I take advantage of God's grace by committing sins while just assuming He'll forgive me. F*** God, F*** Jesus, F*** the Holy Spirit! Is that what I really think? Is that how I really feel? My pastor, church friends, and family would be shocked by my blasphemous thoughts. How can I have any doubts about what the Bible says and still call myself a Christian? Maybe God IS sending me signs to "get right with him" and I'm just ignoring them for the sake of exposure. Maybe that will set me up for Satan to ultimately win my soul. Or maybe all along, it's always been my intention to side with Satan and spend eternity in hell with him.