

Uninvited Guest

NAVIGATING COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS
WHEN OCD IS IN THE PICTURE

WHAT WE WILL COVER

Communication

- Communication tools and putting them to use
- Addressing reassurance seeking
- Establishing shared values
- Responsibilities of each partner

Intimacy

- Help! OCD is in my bedroom!

What we will not cover

- Basics of ERP
- Basics of healthy relationship building

ASSUMPTIONS

- Many types of committed relationships
- One sufferer and one non-sufferer

Values

These will be your guide
for everything you do in
your partnership

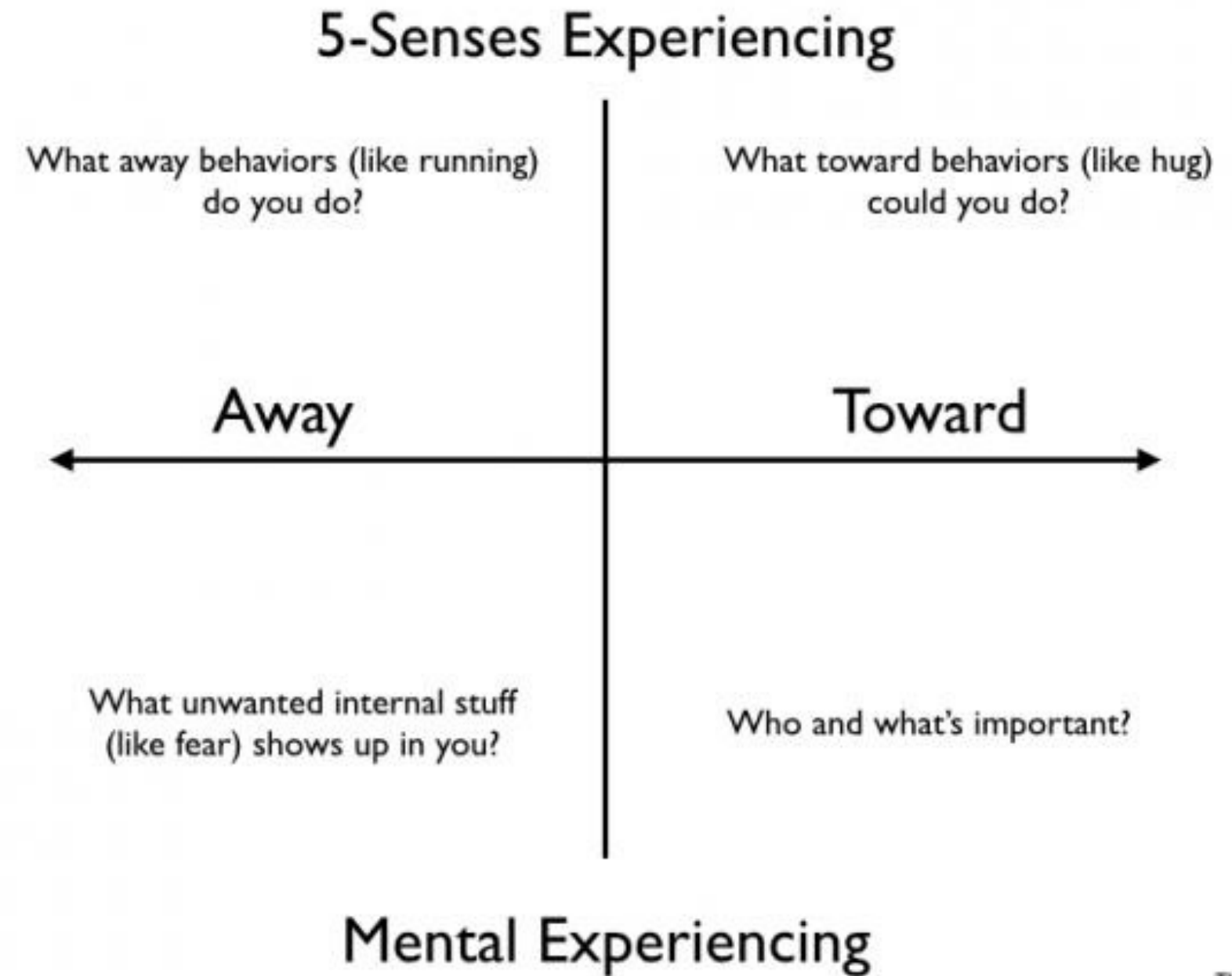


Individual Values

Who do I want to be as a partner?

Shared Values

What do we value
as a couple?



VALUES LIST

- Accomplishment
- Achievement
- Acquisition
- Adventure
- Altruism
- Amusement
- Attractiveness
- Authenticity
- Autonomy
- Awareness
- Balance
- Beauty
- Being active
- Boldness
- Calm
- Challenge
- Charity
- Citizenship
- Community
- Compassion
- Competency
- Connection
- Consideration
- Consistency
- Contentment
- Contribution
- Cooperation
- Courage
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Delight
- Dependability
- Determination
- Directness
- Discovery
- Diversity
- Education
- Elegance
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Empathy
- Encouragement
- Energy
- Enlightenment
- Entertainment
- Environment
- Equality
- Ethics
- Excellence
- Experience
- Expertise
- Fairness
- Faith
- Fame
- Family
- Fitness
- Finances
- Freedom
- Friendships
- Fun
- Generosity
- Grace
- Gratitude
- Growth
- Guidance
- Happiness
- Harmony
- Health
- Honesty
- Humility
- Humor
- Imagination
- Improvement
- Independence
- Influence
- Information
- Inner Harmony
- Innovation
- Inspiration
- Integrity
- Intelligence
- Joy
- Justice
- Kindness
- Knowledge
- Laughter
- Leadership
- Learning
- Love
- Loyalty
- Meaningful Work
- Openness
- Optimism
- Originality
- Peace
- Perception
- Play
- Pleasure
- Poise
- Popularity
- Power
- Preparation
- Presence
- Proficiency
- Recognition
- Relationships
- Relaxation
- Reliability
- Religion
- Resourcefulness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Responsiveness
- Risk
- Safety
- Security
- Self-awareness
- Sensuality
- Serenity
- Service
- Simplicity
- Socialization
- Spirituality
- Stability
- Status
- Stimulation
- Strength
- Success
- Superiority
- Support
- Teaching
- Tenderness
- Touch
- Trust
- Understanding
- Wealth
- Wisdom

Reassurance Tools

REASSURANCE NOTEBOOK

Create a notebook to store common reassurance questions and reference rather than answer again.

REASSURANCE COUPONS

Determine the number you would like to limit your reassurance seeking to and make coupons for the day to keep track.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Use predetermined language for calling out OCD and redirecting.

REMINDERS

Be responsible for your own reminders to take pressure off your partnership. Sticky notes, phone apps, wear meaningful symbols.

Sufferer's Responsibilities

- Remain open and non-defensive
- Avoid using OCD as an excuse
- Constantly work on your OCD

Shared Responsibilities

- Remain empathetic toward your partner
- Assume the other person is well-intentioned
- Remain **CURIOUS, CREATIVE and FLEXIBLE**
- Self-care

Partner's Responsibilities

- Resist accommodation
- Use agreed upon language to help reorient

Communication Tools

SAFE TOPICS/CHANGING THE SUBJECT

"Since that's not knowable, how about we book our hotel for our vacation instead?"

"Okay but what would you like to bring to the cookout on Friday?"

HUMOR

"Yes Dear, I'm playing the long con and I'm just staying in this for the dog."
(sarcasm)

CODE WORDS

Use code words to mean:

"Let's revisit this later when I've cooled down."

"OCD is taking over and we need to move away from it."

ENCOURAGEMENT

"You're amazingly strong and I know you can handle this."

"You don't need me to answer that. You can trust yourself."

BLUNTNESS

"That sounds like your OCD."

"That could happen."

EMPATHY

"That sounds really scary and stressful."

"That WOULD be really sad if that happened!"

RETURNING RESPONSIBILITY

"Sounds like you're having a hard OCD day. How can I support you?"

"What does your wise mind (gut, etc.) say about that?"

"Hmm what do you think your therapist would say in this moment?"

Example VIDEOS

Disclaimer: We are not professional actors, nor do we claim to be particularly gifted at script-writing. However, we hope these dramatic reenactments will illustrate potentially helpful communication tools.



INTIMACY

“He may appear to be “in his head” to escape from reality, but more likely he’s trying to escape from his head, trying to get back to you.”

Jon Hershfield , When a Family Member Has OCD, 2015, page 163

OCD

INTERFERENCE

DISTRACTION

The "what ifs" and intrusive thoughts can keep you thinking about anything except sex.

SHAME

OCD often brings about shame and there are few emotions that will shut down intimacy quicker than shame.

FEAR

Sometimes the content of intrusive thoughts during sex can be terrifying ("I thought about my nephew, what if I'm a pedophile?").

SOMATIC CHECKING

Placing meaning on sensations and emotions during Intimacy can start an OCD spiral ("Am I turned on enough?").

Tools TO TRY

VISUALIZATION

Imagine all the OCD worries leaving the room. They must stay outside during sex and they may come back in afterward.

COMMUNICATION

Talk about each of your needs in the bedroom. Create safety around the topic of sex and reduce shame. Watch out for reassurance seeking, however.

THE ULTIMATE EXPOSURE

Treat sex as you would any other exposure. Sit with discomfort, embrace the unknown, push outside of your comfort zone without overdoing it.

JUST DO IT

Say "no" to perfectionism and criticism when it comes to sex. Be willing to try try again with playful attitudes.

MINDFULNESS

Be present with sensations without judging them or placing meaning on them. Just notice and experience.

COUNSELING

Be open to couples or individual counseling. Intimacy is very nuanced and has roots in each person's upbringing. Sorting through past wounds and expectations can be very helpful for all parties.

MOVE TOWARD VALUES

Have the intimate life you and your partner wish to have, not the one OCD tells you to have.

