

Slaying the Dragon: How to get over your partner's sexual past

I wrote this guide to be a help to others. This isn't all original thought, but rather my own thoughts mixed with bits and pieces that I learned along the way from some smart people who I really appreciate. I actually overcame, and you can to. But, it will be like overcoming a heroin addiction. Not everyone will be successful in overcoming, and it will take a monumental effort. I've spent big money going to counselors about this problem. Here is what I have learned.

If you've been upset for a while, you probably have **Retroactive Jealousy**, which is essentially a nasty form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).
Congratulations.

No one's going to say that it's easy to deal with your partner's sexual past, especially if it's more colorful than your own. If you're finding it difficult to get past the jealousy, you're not alone. Though not everyone experiences debilitating rage when they think of a partner's past, it would be safe to say that jealousy is something that most people have to deal with at one point or another.

Note from some other dude about your girlfriend

Hello there. If you don't stop what you are doing, you are going to lose your girl. Then I am going to start dating her. I won't care about her sexual past, because I have one of my own. In fact, I'm very experienced. That is a reason she likes me... she knows I don't care about how many guys she has been with, which was such a downer in her relationship with you. The sex is amazing and I love being with her. Sexually, she has opened up to me like to nobody before because she now feels so free, after her experience with you. I appreciate her for the great time that she is giving me NOW, which is all that is important. I know she had sex with you a ton, but I don't care. She is an amazing woman and she is MINE now!

Step 1: Realize that *you* are the problem, not your partner.

You Have an Addiction – Very important to realize

The purpose of this guide is to treat your terrible feelings that won't go away regarding your partner's sexual past. You have OCD. OCD is in many ways a bad habit. Looking at it as a habit is your best bet to overcome OCD. You may not understand this, but you are addicted to thinking about your partner's past and having obsessive thoughts about it. We will talk about

your thoughts and your compulsions. Compulsions are things you do to try and get rid of your thoughts and to feel better. They are highly addicting – as addicting as the worst drugs. They could be quizzing your girlfriend about her sexual past. They could include reading this guide. They could include dwelling on your girlfriends graphic sexual details.

VERY IMPORTANT: We'll discuss in detail how to recognize compulsions in this guide. Always remember, when you notice that you are doing these compulsions, what you can say to yourself is, "I would rather start the apocalypse than do this certain compulsion." You care about this of course, but you cannot do the compulsion under any circumstance. You'll just have to trust that you would be satisfied if you had actually gone through with the compulsion. Doing any compulsion has no effect whatsoever on the past and doesn't stop anything bad from happening - in fact they could be the cause of something bad. Again, you are dealing with a habit that needs to be treated like any other habit.

Don't avoid the triggers

Don't necessarily seek them out aside from the therapy that I recommend. If you avoid movies, songs, places, people with certain names, etc., you are less likely to recover. You will run into those places everywhere. For example, let's assume you are destroyed inside that your girlfriend had a threesome with guys named Bill and Jed in Wendy's bathroom in San Antonio. You will meet guys named Bill and Jed every day. You will hear about San Antonio every day of your life. Every single TV show you watch will have a Wendy's commercial. Sound familiar? Don't avoid it. It is called habituation.

Better fix it now:

RJ can be a crippling problem, but you have to remain positive. Plus, if you can't get over it with this girl/guy, it probably means that you can't be in a relationship with anyone. That thought should terrify you in action (or inaction).

Words for your partner – Have your partner read this

I'm sorry you are in a relationship with some that has retroactive jealousy. It sucks for you. That said, I've had a gun to my head many times because of a tornado inside of me that wouldn't stop. Literally, it never stopped – it showed up first thing when I woke up, and hung around until I went to sleep. Sometimes it was in my dreams too. Graphic and awful thoughts

and conclusions ran rampant in my mind. It was complete torture. The tornado was fueled by terrible thoughts about my wife and her past relationships with men. It's not explainable really. Just trust that it is absolutely terrible. Assuming you aren't actually sketchy currently, this problem has nothing to do with you. Make sure you support your partner with the ideas that are found in this document, especially the "contract". A good thing is that your partner will be a much better person if they can get through this. It will open their eyes to a new world. They will also appreciate you immensely.

You've got a decision to make

Hopefully by now, you've made the decision that this issue is making you so unhappy that you have to make a choice - let something you have no control over constantly make you feel this way OR take the issue on and beat it. I challenge you to choose the latter. Once you make that decision, it will only be a matter of a couple of weeks before you have completely overcome it

What is ERP?

In a nutshell, ERP is exposing yourself to a thought you don't want to have, or situations that evoke that thought, and then preventing yourself from responding with compulsions in order to make your anxiety go away. So if I have the thought that the ache in my side is appendicitis, which strikes fear into my heart, because I need to know for sure, and right now, an exposure could be saying "Yes, I may have appendicitis. I don't know for sure," and response prevention could be staying off Google, not researching the symptoms, or calling my doctor, or going to the emergency room, or poking at my side to see if it still aches. And the ultimate result will be less sensitivity to that thought, an ability to let it float in and out, and continue on with my life. There are some thoughts that if I imagine letting them pass, I get very anxious, because I must make sure they aren't true, or I believe they say something about me as a person. Let that thought be there. A part of you knows all this is harmless and it's just OCD playing games. Let the anxiety response be there, don't fight it (doing so will keep it there) and go on a game or read a book or watch T.V. and take a step back from giving this thought attention it doesn't deserve.

Exposure - You've spiked at a trigger for some reason

Response - Anxiety, think and analyze the thought, but instead:

Prevention - Let the thought and anxiety be there, don't wrestle with it.

For exposure to succeed in erasing the fear, there are two necessary conditions. First, rituals, and any other means of dodging the exposure, must be prevented. The use of false fear blockers will be fully discussed in the next section. For now let's discuss the second of these conditions, the need for prolonged exposure. Exposure sessions must be long enough for you to experience a noticeable decline in your distress during the exposure. This means your sessions could be for an hour or more. What people typically feel during their sessions is a gradual rise in distress, which levels off after several minutes. Then it starts to decline. It is during this phase that you're receiving the benefits of the exercise. Whatever the trigger, it's losing its power to provoke fear. With the next exposure session, and subsequent ones, you'll find that the fear at the beginning is lower and falls away faster, until eventually

you'll feel little or no distress. You will have neutralized the trigger, and learned that exposure alone will free you from anxiety without resorting to the use of faulty fear blockers. Don't stop while anxiety is up. For both types of exposure exercises, it is of the utmost importance that you do not stop them while your anxiety is up. If you do, desensitization is prevented and you can even be further sensitized to the situation you're trying to neutralize. With this in mind, schedule your exposure sessions at times when you have enough time to complete them, and know that you will not be interrupted, or distracted. The best results are obtained when you practice every day, including weekends and holidays. A momentum develops that makes the practice easier with faster results. I also recommend that you do the exercises early in the day. This way you're less likely to put them off and the thought of doing them is not hanging over your head like the sword of Damocles for the bulk of the day. A false fear-blocker is any action or thought immediately following an obsession that reduces the fear. I use the term "false" because the reduced fear is only temporary and returns with the next obsession. Its greatest harm is blocking exposure, which prevents recovery.

The most common false fear blockers are: physical and mental compulsions; distraction; avoidance; and reassurance seeking. Relabel Intrusive Thoughts: Make conscious recognition and mental registration of the obsessive or compulsive symptom. You should literally make mental notes, such as, 'This thought is an obsession; this urge is a compulsive urge.' Do this assertively. Don't try to make them go away or vanish. The Goal: Learn to resist them. The goal is to control your responses to the thoughts and urges, not to control the thoughts and urges themselves.

Exercise: What are my Fear Blockers:

Examples: Physical and mental compulsions, Distraction, Avoidance, Reasoning, Reassurance seeking

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Exercise: Practice ERP

Step 1: Relabel

Recognize that the intrusive obsessive thoughts and urges are the RESULT OF OCD. "This thought is an obsession, this urge is a compulsive urge."

Maintain awareness as an "Impartial Spectator". Take a step back in order to see what another person would think of what you are obsessing about and compulsing about.

Train myself to say, "I don't feel the need to quiz my wife about her past or try to solve it and label her one way or another, I'm having an compulsive urge to act on my obsession with my wife's past"

Realize that your responses to the thoughts and urges are within your control, no matter how strong and bothersome they may be. The goal is to control your responses to the thoughts and urges, not to control the thoughts and urges themselves.

Step 2: Reattribute

Realize that the intensity and intrusiveness of the thought or urge is CAUSED BY OCD; it is probably related to a biochemical imbalance in the brain.

"It's not me, it's my OCD" - Understanding why the thought is so strong will increase will power.

Learn to shift gears. The most effective thing you can do something that will help you change your brain for the better in the long run--is to learn to put these thoughts and feelings aside and go on to the next behavior This is what we mean by shifting gears: Do another behavior Trying to make them go away will only pile stress on stress--and stress just makes OCD thoughts and urges worse.

Using the Reattribute step will also help you to avoid performing rituals in a vain attempt to "get the right feeling" (for example, a sense of "evenness" or a sense of completion). Knowing that the urge to get that "right feeling" is caused by a biochemical imbalance in the brain, you can learn to ignore the urge and move on. Remember, "It's not me--it's my OCD." By refusing to listen to the urge or to act on it, you will actually change your brain and make the feeling lessen. If you take the urge at face value and act on it, you may get momentary relief but within a very short time the urge will just get more intense. This is perhaps the most important lesson that people with OCD must learn. It will help you avoid being the "sucker" and taking the false bait of OCD every time.

Step 3: Refocus

Work around the OCD thoughts by focusing your attention on something else, at least for a few minutes: DO ANOTHER BEHAVIOUR.

In Refocusing, you have work to do: You must shift the gears yourself.

When the thought comes, you first Relabel it as an obsessive thought or a compulsive urge and then Reattribute it to the fact that you have OCD - a medical problem. Then Refocus your attention to this other behavior that you have chosen. Start the process of Refocusing by

refusing to take the obsessive-compulsive symptoms at face value. Say to yourself, "I'm experiencing a symptom of OCD. I need to do another behavior"

Step 4: Revalue

Do not take the OCD thought at face value. It is not significant in itself. Recognize the urge for what it is, the disorder is OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER AND I HAVE THAT.

(When the thought comes, you first Relabel it as an obsessive thought or a compulsive urge and then Reattribute it to the fact that you have OCD - a medical problem. Then Refocus your attention to this other behavior that you have chosen. Start the process of Refocusing by refusing to take the obsessive-compulsive symptoms at face value. Say to yourself, "I'm experiencing a symptom of OCD. I need to do another behavior". You must train yourself in a new method of responding to the thoughts and urges, redirecting your attention to something other than the OCD symptoms. The goal of treatment is to stop responding to the OCD symptoms while acknowledging that, for the short term, these uncomfortable feelings will continue to bother you. You begin to "work around" them by doing another behavior. You learn that even though the OCD feeling is there, it doesn't have to control what you do. You make the decision about what you're going to do, rather than respond to OCD thoughts and urges as a robot would. By Refocusing, you reclaim your decision-making power. Those biochemical glitches in your brain are no longer running the show.)

Source: Jeffery Schwartz – Read more about his ideas online. He also has some good books to buy. Very smart dude!

Mental Exercise: Slay the dragon

1. Select a trigger, an obsession-compulsion combination for elimination.
2. Practice exposure: by bringing on the obsession in reality and in imagination.
3. Practice ritual prevention by refraining from doing compulsions and fear blocking behaviors.
4. Practice acceptance fully experiencing the triggered thoughts, images, impulses, emotions and physical sensations they set off.
5. For exposure to succeed in erasing the fear, there are two necessary conditions. First, rituals, and any other means of dodging the exposure, must be prevented. The use of false fear blockers will be fully discussed in the next section. For now let's discuss the second of these conditions, the need for prolonged exposure. Exposure sessions must be long enough for you to

experience a noticeable decline in your distress during the exposure. This means your sessions could be for an hour or more. What people typically feel during their sessions is a gradual rise in distress, which levels off after several minutes. Then it starts to decline. It is during this phase that you're receiving the benefits of the exercise. Whatever the trigger, it's losing its power to provoke fear. With the next exposure session, and subsequent ones, you'll find that the fear at the beginning is lower and falls away faster, until eventually you'll feel little or no distress. You will have neutralized the trigger, and learned that exposure alone will free you from anxiety without resorting to the use of faulty fear blockers. Don't stop while anxiety is up. For both types of exposure exercises, it is of the utmost importance that you do not stop them while your anxiety is up. If you do, desensitization is prevented and you can even be further sensitized to the situation you're trying to neutralize. With this in mind, schedule your exposure sessions at times when you have enough time to complete them, and know that you will not be interrupted, or distracted. The best results are obtained when you practice every day, including weekends and holidays. A momentum develops that makes the practice easier with faster results. I also recommend that you do the exercises early in the day. This way you're less likely to put them off and the thought of doing them is not hanging over your head like the sword of Damocles for the bulk of the day. A false fear-blocker is any action or thought immediately following an obsession that reduces the fear. I use the term "false" because the reduced fear is only temporary and returns with the next obsession. Its greatest harm is blocking exposure, which prevents recovery. The most common false fear blockers are: physical and mental compulsions; distraction; avoidance; and reassurance seeking. Relabel Intrusive Thoughts: Make conscious recognition and mental registration of the obsessive or compulsive symptom. You should literally make mental notes, such as, 'This thought is an obsession; this urge is a compulsive urge.' Do this assertively. Don't try to make them go away or vanish. The Goal: Learn to resist them. The goal is to control your responses to the thoughts and urges, not to control the thoughts and urges themselves.

Lower Resistance and Win

When encountering a mountain lion on a hike, everything inside you urges you to run but knowing that will only encourage the lion to chase you, you logically decide against that response to stay alive. Clients can learn to use logic to respond to their OCD in a new way. The clients who improve are the ones who realize that the thoughts don't actually have to go away. With treatment, clients can expect to take their lives back from their OCD and start living again.

Accept Uncomfortable Thoughts (Mindfulness)

Learn to non-judgmentally accept uncomfortable psychological experiences. From a mindfulness perspective, much of our psychological distress is the result of trying to control and eliminate the discomfort of unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges. In other words, our discomfort is not the problem - our attempt to control and eliminate our discomfort is the problem. For an individual with Pure Obsessional OCD ("Pure O" or doing compulsions that the eye can't see such as thinking), the ultimate goal of mindfulness is to develop the ability to more willingly experience their uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges, without responding with avoidance behaviors, reassurance seeking, and/or mental rituals. Mindfulness is perhaps most easily understood as developing the skill of non-judgmental awareness and acceptance of present-moment experience, including all of the unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges that are at the heart of these conditions. What this means is that, from a mindfulness perspective, the individual's primary agenda ought not to be to change or eliminate their unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges, but rather to fully accept them. Note that this does not mean to suggest that one should or must learn to enjoy these emotionally painful experiences. Rather, the aim of mindfulness is to recognize and accept that these uncomfortable inner experiences are transitory and inevitable aspects of human life.

From a mindfulness perspective, not accepting these unwanted inner experiences is the source of much of our self-induced suffering. Furthermore, fully accepting the reality of their existence is more likely to lead to a reduction in our suffering than any attempts at resisting and controlling these experiences. There is also a behavioral therapy component to mindfulness, which can be simply described as this: when faced with unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges, it is best to make no effort whatsoever to avoid or control them. With mindfulness, the goal is to accept the presence of these unwanted experiences, and to act in a manner that is appropriate to the situation and in keeping with what we would actually like to do, rather than acting with the simple goal of short-term reduction of discomfort.

Central to this concept, which has been practiced by Buddhists for thousands of years through meditation, is the idea that all thoughts are simply arbitrary machinations of the brain. They are not necessarily representative of a reality. This is an incredibly powerful message for those with Pure-O, as we are so over-attached to our thoughts as truth. Practicing mindfulness can be achieved through meditation, yoga, and deep breathing.

Not all thoughts are Important

Just because we have a thought doesn't mean that the thought is particularly meaningful, or accurate, or indicative of something "real" or "important". On the contrary, much of what we think is inaccurate, mundane, benign, and/or simply unimportant. For example, if someone with OCD has an obsessive thought about contamination, that doesn't mean that the thought is

accurate or meaningful. It also doesn't mean that the thought merits a behavioral response. From a mindfulness perspective, unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges are neither good nor bad - they just are. From the perspective of third wave therapies, the goal is not to control or avoid these experiences, but to learn to peacefully co-exist with them. Put another way, the goal is to allow these unwanted personal experiences to exist, without behaviorally over-reacting to them.

Exercise: I don't feel the need to...

Make a list of thoughts regarding RJ. Train yourself to say and think: "I don't feel the need to.....:

Examples: quiz my wife about her past or try to solve it and label her one way or the other, try to determine a label for her one way or another, determine if she had sex with too many people, Ask for reassurance

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Don't try harder, try different; By Patrick McGrath

This is a great read:

<http://www.stlocd.org/handouts/Don%20t%20Try%20Harder,%20Try%20Different.pdf>

Now what?

Go buy your girlfriend a ton of flowers. Tell her you came to your ridiculous senses, and realize that you're acting like an insecure, jealous fool. Go tell her that you love and appreciate her for

what she stands for today, and tomorrow, and if her past made her what she is today, you are OK with that too.

Exercise: What would a normal reaction be?

Make a list of your reactions you have had upon hearing about the sexual past of your partner. Then, next to each item, note what a “normal” reaction might be.

Example: My wife telling me about her history with other men. My reaction: Total devastation and thoughts of suicide. Non RJ: initial disappointment and rare reflection.

Example: Thinking about my wife being with other men: My reaction: Total devastation and nonstop thoughts, Non RJ: My wife only had sex with X men, when she probably could have had sex with XXX men. Awesome!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
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7. _____
8. _____
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10. _____

Exercise: What are you afraid of?

Examples: I’ll be cheated on, I’m not that special because of his/her past, I’ll feel like crap forever, I’m not as good sexually as others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Exercise: What do you need to learn from this experience of having OCD/RJ?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Exercise: Pure-O Mental Compulsions:

Again, Pure-O is when you do compulsions that the eye can't see such as thinking or ruminating in your mind. (For you purists, I understand it is a little different than that, but for simplicity's sake...) It helps to be aware of your mental compulsions, so that you can label them for what they really are. Make a list of your mental compulsions. Here was my list.

- Trying to "figure out" why you're having a certain thought.
- Trying to counteract, neutralize, or balance out negative thoughts with positive thoughts.
- Trying to forcefully control an obsessive thought.
- Avoiding certain situations, people, or activities so that you don't have an obsession.
- Reassuring yourself
- Postponing certain behaviors or thoughts until "the right time" or until "they feel right."
- Getting stuck in an OCD doubt/reassurance loop.
- Asking questions and seeking reassurance from others in my mind

What are yours?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. -

10. -

Compulsions only
make you feel better
because you believe
that they will.

Exercise: Make a list of your compulsions

Examples: Asking for reassurance, Quizzing my girlfriend about her past, Reviewing past conversations about my boyfriend's sexual partners, Researching about this topic on the internet, Googling what other people have done in my situation (they aren't you, and they're significant other isn't yours), checking girlfriends Facebook/email/cell phone, Trying to trick your girlfriend into telling you more, Asking side questions to learn more about sexual past...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Thinking you have a silver bullet

You don't have a silver bullet. You will have to do the hard work. No mega dose of reassurance or quizzing will help you long term. Tracking down past lovers and quizzing them won't help. Trust me, I unfortunately know this :) Thinking that you've thought of something that will prove her wrong and asking her about it is really asking for reassurance (crack cocaine). Remember, you don't care at all.

How to get over jealousy:

1. If your boyfriend (or girlfriend) is going to cheat on you, then s/he is going to cheat on you, and there will be nothing you can do, short of locking him or her in an inescapable cell; likewise, if your boyfriend (or girlfriend) is not someone who would cheat on you, then he or she is not going to cheat on you. The decision to cheat is his/her own to make, and you ultimately have no control over his or her actions.

2. Therefore, all you can do is be best person you can be, and when in doubt, remind yourself that s/he has chosen to be with you for a reason. Jealousy will only weaken those reasons. If s/he wasn't going to cheat on you in the first place, jealousy's only going push him or her away, and if he or she was going to cheat on you, jealousy's only going to hasten the process and lessen his or her sense of personal responsibility.

For some reason, those two points resonated with me – especially the first one. The idea that “If he's going to cheat, then he's going to cheat – and if he's not, then he's not” may seem like a painfully obvious point, but as soon as I read it, it was like a light bulb went off in my head: whatever my boyfriend chose to do was ultimately out of my control.

***Ask yourself, is she provoking jealous thoughts? No.

It seems like that should've been a frightening thought, but it wasn't. It was liberating. In fact, I think that's part of why jealousy can feel so terrible – it's the inability to accept how very little control you have over a situation you deeply cared about. So to be reminded that no matter what I did, what I said, or how I behaved, my boyfriend might still go and do whatever he wanted to do, and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it? The realization was freeing. Of course, I would still try to be as good a girlfriend as I could, but to worry and fret about anything beyond that was pointless. I couldn't control everything, nor should I try to.

And so with that, I relinquished jealousy that very moment, and traded in the pipe dream of certainty in a romantic relationship for trust instead. Because that's all I can really do – have faith in my boyfriend, and accept that the rest is out of my hands. And it's been working out great so far.

Source: Helen0912

Self-Hypnotherapy – This can help make progress

Self-hypnotherapy can be very helpful. Here are the steps.

Step One: Write down thought that you know you should have, but don't. Examples: "From now on I will forget about other men in her past.", "All that matters is that she is with me now", "She is telling the truth about her past", "She was not promiscuous, but rather had experiences that all women have."

- 1. Go to a quiet room and sit in any comfortable chair, couch, or bed.** Although some people prefer to lie down, you are more susceptible to sleep than when sitting up. Whether you sit or lie, ensure you do not cross your legs or any part of your body. You may be in this position for a while and this could end up being uncomfortable. **Make sure you are not going to be disturbed for at least half an hour.**
- 2. Close your eyes and work to rid your mind of any feelings of fear, stress, or anxiety.** When you begin, you might find it difficult not to think. You may find that thoughts keep intruding. When this happens, don't try to force the thoughts out. Observe them impartially, and then let them slip away.
- 3. Recognize the tension in your body.** Beginning with your toes, imagine the tension slowly falling away from your body and vanishing. Imagine it freeing each body part one at a time starting with your toes and working its way up your body. Visualize each part of your body becoming lighter and lighter as the tension is removed. Relax your toes, then your feet. Continue with your calves, thighs, hips, stomach and so on, until you've relaxed each portion, including your face and head. Using imagery techniques of something you find comforting or soothing, such as water (feel the water rushing over your feet and ankles, cleansing them of tension) can be effective as well.
- 4. Take slow, deep breaths.** When you exhale, see the tension and negativity leaving in a dark cloud. As you inhale, see the air returning as a bright force filled with life and energy.
- 5. Appreciate the fact that you are now extremely relaxed.** Imagine you are at the top of a flight of 10 stairs which at the fifth step start to submerge into water. Picture every detail of this scene from the top to the bottom. Tell yourself that you are going to descend the stairs, counting each step down, starting at 10. Picture each number in your mind. Imagine that each number you count is further down and one step closer to the bottom. After each number, you will feel yourself drifting further and further into deep relaxation. As you take each step, imagine the feel of the step under your feet. Once you are at the fifth step imagine and truly feel the refreshing coolness of the water and tell yourself that you are stepping into an oasis of purity and cleanliness. As you begin to descend the last five steps, start to feel the water getting higher and higher up your body. You should now start to feel somewhat numb and your heart will start to race a bit, but notice it and let any qualms about the situation just drift away into the water.
- 6. At this point at the bottom of the water you shouldn't really feel anything, just a floating sensation.** You may even feel like you're spinning. Once you have achieved this state you should proceed to address your problems and decide upon what it is you want from where you are. (Note:

if you do not feel as stated above, try again, slower with a will to grasp what is happening.) Now start to narrate what you are doing, speak in the present and future tense quietly to yourself, or as if you are reading it from a page. Start to picture three boxes under the water that you have to [swim](#) to get to. Once you have found the boxes open them slowly one at a time and narrate to yourself what is happening when you open the box. For example 'As I open the box I feel a radiant light engulf me, I feel it becoming a part of me, this light is my new found confidence that I can never lose as it is now a part of me' and then proceed on to the next box. You should avoid using statements with negative connotation such as "I don't want to be bugged by my boyfriend's sexual past." Instead, say, "I don't care about my boyfriend's sexual past."

- 7. Repeat your statement(s) to yourself as many times as you wish.**
- 8. Once you are satisfied with what you have done and embraced, swim back to the stairs and feel with each step you take the water becoming lower and lower until you have once again reached that fifth step.** Once you are out of the water and are on the sixth step you may start to feel heavy or as if there is a weight on your chest. Merely wait on the step until this passes, constantly repeating your aforementioned statements. Once it passes continue up the stairs visualizing each step by its number, feeling the steps underneath you, will yourself to carry on up the stairs.
- 9. Once you have ascended, give yourself a few moments before opening your eyes.** You may want to visualise yourself opening a door to the outside world, do this slowly and imagine the light that pours in through the door way, this should make your eyes open. Take your time getting up. Then out loud tell yourself "Wide awake, Wide awake" or something maybe that your mother used to say when she woke you up in the morning as a child. This will put your mind back in the conscious state.

(Source: Wikihow)

Exercise: Make an Agreement

Your significant other often participates in your quizzing and behavior. They do this because they see your suffering and pain, and they want to help you. They are actually hurting you. They can help you by ending your rituals, or at least not participating. How? Make a contract with your guy/gal that says that you have OCD or RJ and that you will never bring up their sexual past again. State in the contract that you give your partner the authority to not talk about it or answer further questions. State that you give up the right to be upset with them for not participating. This will be painful, but will be super beneficial. Typical agreements are signed after a mega dose reassurance session.

Not all thoughts are Important

Just because we have a thought doesn't mean that the thought is particularly meaningful, or accurate, or indicative of something "real" or "important". On the contrary, much of what we think is inaccurate, mundane, benign, and/or simply unimportant. For example, if someone with OCD has an obsessive thought about contamination, that doesn't mean that the thought is accurate or meaningful. It also doesn't mean that the thought merits a behavioral response. From a mindfulness perspective, unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges are neither good nor bad - they just are. From the perspective of third wave therapies, the goal is not to control or avoid these experiences, but to learn to peacefully co-exist with them. Put another way, the goal is to allow these unwanted personal experiences to exist, without behaviorally over-reacting to them.

A Word on Forgiveness – Helpful even for an antihist

This is not just a religious concept. It applies to every human heart. Resentment and bitterness, real and imagined, about what people did or said to you in the past are crippling to your body and injurious to your enjoyment of life. Let it go. Clear it out of your heart. Forgive them.

The Lord has offered a marvelous promise. Said He, "He who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more". Why should you?

Many people seem to think that it is a sign of weakness to ask for forgiveness. On the contrary, it is a sign of strength. It is so helpful in relationships, particularly when there is no shared responsibility or blame. All of us have done harmful and even reprehensible things to others for which there was no justification. Frequently, these are the occasions when it is hardest to summon up one's courage to ask for forgiveness.

Matthew 18:21-35

²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

²³ Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

²⁴ And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

²⁵ But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

To be blessed with forgetting, the number one thing is that you must give up the right to punish that person, whether it is bringing it up during a fight, or just letting bitterness fester, wanting them to feel pain, or know how you are affected.

²⁶ The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

²⁷ Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

²⁹ And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

³⁰ And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

³¹ So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

³² Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

³³ Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

³⁴ And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

³⁵ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

How does the following story compare to how you have been “wronged”?

Column from the *Deseret Morning News*, written by Jay Evensen. “How would you feel toward a teenager who decided to toss a 20-pound frozen turkey from a speeding car headlong into the windshield of the car you were driving? How would you feel after enduring six hours of surgery using metal plates and other hardware to piece your face together, and after learning you still face years of therapy before returning to normal—and that you ought to feel lucky you didn’t die or suffer permanent brain damage? And how would you feel after learning that your assailant and his buddies had the turkey in the first place because they had stolen a credit card and gone on a senseless shopping spree, just for kicks? ... This is the kind of hideous crime that propels politicians to office on promises of getting tough on crime. It’s the kind of thing that prompts legislators to climb all over each other in a struggle to be the first to introduce a bill that would add enhanced penalties for the use of frozen fowl in the commission of a crime. The New York Times quoted the district attorney as saying this is the sort of crime for which victims feel no punishment is harsh enough. ‘Death doesn’t even satisfy them,’ he said. Which is what makes what really happened so unusual. The victim, Victoria Ruvolo, a 44-year-old former

manager of a collections agency, was more interested in salvaging the life of her 19-year-old assailant, Ryan Cushing, than in exacting any sort of revenge. She pestered prosecutors for information about him, his life, how he was raised, etc. Then she insisted on offering him a plea deal. Cushing could serve six months in the county jail and be on probation for 5 years if he pleaded guilty to second-degree assault. Had he been convicted of first-degree assault—the charge most fitting for the crime—he could have served 25 years in prison, finally thrown back into society as a middle-aged man with no skills or prospects. But this is only half the story. The rest of it, what happened the day this all played out in court, is the truly remarkable part. According to an account in the New York Post, Cushing carefully and tentatively made his way to where Ruvolo sat in the courtroom and tearfully whispered an apology. ‘I’m so sorry for what I did to you.’ Ruvolo then stood, and the victim and her assailant embraced, weeping. She stroked his head and patted his back as he sobbed, and witnesses, including a Times reporter, heard her say, ‘It’s OK. I just want you to make your life the best it can be.’ According to accounts, hardened prosecutors, and even reporters, were choking back tears” (“Forgiveness Has Power to Change Future,” Deseret Morning News, Aug. 21, 2005, p. AA3).

Again, forgiveness entails giving up your right to punish your spouse – whether through direct retaliation or just letting bitterness

How to react if someone asks for forgiveness?

If someone wrongs you, there are many ways you can react:

If you and I were playing ball and broke a window, went to the owner and he charged us \$20 for the damage, it would be justice. If we were playing ball and broke a window, went to the owner and he informed us it was \$20, but then said, “Don’t worry about it; I’ll take care of it”, that would be mercy because we didn’t have to pay for what we had done. However, if we were playing ball and broke a window and the owner said the cost was \$20, but then said not to worry about it, he’d take care of it and then he said, “Would you guys like some ice cream?” That is grace because I get ice cream for breaking the window. Grace is getting what you don’t deserve.

How do I reach a state of forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a commitment to a process of change. To begin, you might:

1. Consider the value of forgiveness and its importance in your life at a given time
2. Reflect on the facts of the situation, how you've reacted, and how this combination has affected your life, health and well-being
3. When you're ready, MAKE THE DECISION to forgive the person who's offended you
4. Move away from your role as victim and release the control and power the offending person and situation have had in your life

All along this process, we should pray for strength to forgive those who have wronged us, and we should abandon feelings of anger, bitterness, or revenge. We should also look for the good in others rather than focusing on their faults and magnifying their weaknesses.

As you let go of grudges, you'll no longer define your life by how you've been hurt. You might even find compassion and understanding.

Why is it so easy to hold a grudge?

When you're hurt by someone you love and trust, you might become angry, sad or confused. If you dwell on hurtful events or situations, grudges filled with resentment, vengeance and hostility can take root. If you allow negative feelings to crowd out positive feelings, you might find yourself swallowed up by your own bitterness or sense of injustice.

What are the effects of holding a grudge?

If you're unforgiving, you might pay the price repeatedly by bringing anger and bitterness into every relationship and new experience. Your life might become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present. You might become depressed or anxious. You might feel that your life lacks meaning or purpose, or that you're at odds with your spiritual beliefs. You might lose valuable and enriching connectedness with others.

What to do when you feel the tornado inside of you

Don't wrestle with your feelings or thoughts in any way. If your brain is sending signals to search for the obsession, and you really don't care – you are winning. When your brain is sending signals that make you upset and anxious in rumination, you need to essentially fight it by not fighting it. Let the thought be there and don't wrestle with it in any way. Let the feeling sit there, and don't try and get rid of it, just let it be there. Try and act how you would as if you weren't feeling these things, and then your OCD will tire and lose a bit of its grip on you. When I start to compulsive, realize that your best option is to accept ambiguity. No effort should be expended in compulsions or directly answering the question in an effort to find resolution. The therapeutic response does not seek to answer the question but to accept the uncertainty of the unsolved dilemma. Be comfortable with the unknown.

Exercise: What would it be like tomorrow if I didn't have RJ/OCD?

What would it be like if I woke up tomorrow and didn't have OCD? I would have a huge weight lifted off of my shoulders. My relationship with my wife would be better and I wouldn't be wasting this amazing blessing that she is in my life. Wife would be happier. I would be a better dad. I would be better at business. I would be healthier.

Getting reassurance, either through quizzing your partner or any other way, is like shooting heroine. It feels amazing, but soon it will lose its magic, and you will be worse off. So why is reassurance such a big deal? To put it in clinical terms, when an individual seeks reassurance, they reinforce that they are unable to tolerate the discomfort of the uncertainty they are experiencing. At the same time, they reinforce that the best way to alleviate the discomfort of that uncertainty is to compulsively seek reassurance. Concurrently, reassurance as a behavior sends the message to the brain that whatever unwanted thought set these events into motion must be terribly significant. "If he goes through all of this just to know for sure, then this thought must be really important!" Finally, reassurance is addictive. If reassurance were a substance, it would be considered right up there with crack cocaine. Once is never enough, a few makes you want more, tolerance is constantly on the rise, and withdrawal hurts. In other words, people with OCD and related conditions who compulsively seek reassurance get a quick fix, but actually worsen their discomfort in the long term.

Think of reassurance for OCD as taking the wrong medicine for an infection. Sure, Tylenol will make you feel better in the moment, but it's not going to treat the infection. You need antibiotics for that. And without antibiotics, your infection will continue to worsen.

Reassurance will only prolong the intensity or length of your rumination, as the neuropath ways of the OCD brain will predictably come up with creative ways to "trick" you out of reassurance, negating any temporary relief and perpetuating the cycle of obsessing.

Three Types of Reassurance

For those with OCD reassurance seeking comes in three forms:

- Self-reassurance. For individuals with OCD, the most obvious form of self-reassurance is an overt checking compulsion, such as checking a door to ensure that it is locked. Other less noticeable forms of self-reassurance might include mentally reviewing an event or doing "mental compulsions".
- Reassurance seeking from others. Those with OCD and related conditions often ask others if things are OK, or manipulate others into telling them that things are OK.
- Research reassurance. Individuals with OCD and related conditions frequently look for evidence online or elsewhere in an effort to prove to themselves that things are OK.

Managing the Urge to Seek Reassurance

Consider your intent when asking for reassurance. Is your goal to remind yourself of what you already know? Is your goal to reduce your anxiety about something? If the answer to either of these

You don't need new information to beat OCD.

questions is “yes”, then it’s best to resist asking for reassurance and to instead practice tolerating the discomfort. Furthermore, be on the lookout for your own crafty manipulations.

Computer or Internet Reassurance

Finally, when it comes to resisting the wealth of information (and misinformation) available from the web and other sources, it’s best to turn the computer off altogether when you find yourself just wanting to know something “for sure.” In fact, there’s no time like the present...so let’s see if you can move on from this blog without knowing for sure if you fully understood it.

Exercise: Reassurance Seeking

What is he/she reassuring? Why does it feel so good? Why do I feel 100% normal afterwards? Has it helped me? Why is it hurting me in the long run?

Cognitive Conceptualization

Cognitive conceptualization also involves empowering clients by helping them discover their ability to make their own choices. In general, the greater our perceived sense of control over pain is, the more we are able to tolerate discomfort. Undoubtedly, it is important for people to understand that they can have a significant impact on the psychological outcome. This cognitive aspect is critical in treatment and will probably command an entire future article devoted to this premise.

Extinction

The principles of extinction and habituation are the basic foundation of cognitive management for OCD. Extinction is the process whereby variables that reinforce the repetition of a behavior are removed. In English this means that events tend to stop occurring when we take away the

rewards for their ongoing nature. Behaviors and/or thoughts, which are not reinforced, will tend to decrease in frequency.

Obsessive Thoughts vs. Compulsions

Don't confuse obsessive thoughts with compulsive thoughts. Pure O isn't pure. I discovered with the help of my ERP therapist, that I have mental compulsions for trying to "undo" my intrusive obsessive thoughts, like freezing (and doing nothing until I solve the issue), retracing my thoughts or actions, analyzing, figuring out, avoiding all reminders of the thought, or researching. Stop Disputing the thoughts ad infinitum. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the larger category that ERP belongs to, but CBT applied to mental obsessions without an understanding of the nature of intrusive thoughts, perfectionism and "just right" feeling can turn dysfunctional thought analysis into compulsions. I would get sidetracked into figuring out whether I'd done a thought record thoroughly enough, and even if I disputed all the errors in my thinking, it didn't seem to stick.

Exercise: Journal of successes

Example: I was able to label a compulsion and tell myself, "I don't have a true need to check an email or text that my wife loves me, I'm having a compulsive urge to do so." I'm right and it felt good.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Goal: Habituation

The purpose of exposure therapy should never be reassurance or safety but to become accustomed to moving forward in life in the face of inevitable uncertainty (Grayson). The goal of ERP is to consistently increase anxiety levels and attempt to keep them high, eventually failing because of the habituation process. The natural by-product of exposure is habituation. An individual will eventually decondition the anxiety that has been paired to his obsessions. When thoughts do arise, the relationship with them is one of openness and acceptance. Intrusive thoughts may even come less frequently after one has learned to live with them.

The principles of extinction and habituation are the basic foundation of cognitive management for OCD. Extinction is the process whereby variables that reinforce the repetition of a behavior are removed. In English this means that events tend to stop occurring when we take away the rewards for their ongoing nature. Behaviors and/or thoughts, which are not reinforced, will tend to decrease in frequency.

Do you really need the certainty?

I need to walk away from my identity as a fearing husband that doesn't know the truth about my wife's past. Don't be glued to the hip with that identity. There is no magic conversation or silver bullet. Obsessing over it and performing compulsions to try and relieve the anxiety - will only act as reinforcement for having similar reactions in the future. Not only that, but the next response will fire back with even greater force, and it will take more energy to try and defeat it. So don't be tricked into trying to gain relief by finding the form of an answer. The first and only step to overcoming the dysfunction of OCD is accepting that the quest for certainty will only strengthen the hysteria and the need to KNOW. If you are giving any credibility to these alarm bells, you are inviting the dictator in for dinner. Why try and make peace with something irrational? You have to literally accept that the answer-seeking and compulsions are going to be your old way of life, and your new best friend and ONLY answer will be accepting the uncertainty. So the good news is this: Just as the brain is receptive to patterns of thoughts, it's just as receptive to CHANGES in patterns of thought.

A thought on ERP for Pure-O

Not surprisingly, treatment for Pure-O OCD often fails. However, treatment failure occurs not because the patient is an ERP non-responder, but rather because the most important part of treatment (i.e., response prevention) was unknowingly omitted. Sadly, many individuals with OCD wrongly get labeled as being treatment refractory (treatment resistant), even though they have never undergone a single course of response prevention that appropriately targets their very real mental compulsions. Remember, not every ritual consists of an observable behavior. Learn to more effectively fight your OCD and become a mental ritual detective by considering a few of the following "hidden" rituals.

Exposure and response prevention (ERP) of the "Pure-O" is theoretically based on the principles of classical conditioning and extinction. The spike often presents itself as a paramount question or disastrous scenario. A response that answers the spike in a way that leaves ambiguity is sometimes warranted. "If I don't remember what I had for breakfast yesterday my mother will die of cancer!" Using the antidote procedure, a cognitive response would be one in which the subject accepts this possibility and is willing to take the risk of his mother dying of cancer or the question recurring for eternity. No

effort is expended in directly answering the question in an effort to find resolution. In another example, the spike would be, "Maybe I said something offensive to my boss yesterday." A recommended response would be, "Maybe I did. I'll live with the possibility and take the risk he'll fire me tomorrow." Using this procedure, it is imperative that the distinction be made between the therapeutic response and rumination. The therapeutic response does not seek to answer the question but to accept the uncertainty of the unsolved dilemma.

Summary of Helpful Thoughts and Principles

- Doubt is a core component of OCD. OCD makes people crave certainty.
- Try putting less pressure on yourself and let the thoughts come and go, don't wrestle with them, and even though it's hard to start with, I promise in time they will lose their grip on you. Your brain is caught in a destructive way of thinking right now but it THINKS it's helping you - you just need to make it realize you don't need its help!
- The only completely and perfectly right answer to the question is that there is no complete answer. Accepting this premise on faith is a powerful guideline that helps people realize that they have the ability to resist performing the rituals. Take the risk. What is the risk? Is there really any consequence? Focusing on the awareness that there is doubt (i.e., "Am I really in danger?"), then making the determination to accept the risk (i.e., "Maybe I am in danger, but I'm going to accept the risk and not undo the danger."), will eliminate a tremendous amount of problem solving. It's not to say that your question isn't legitimate, just risk it
- We can never have complete certainty. We can never erase all traces of doubt. We don't live in a world where that is possible. But that's okay. We can learn to live with doubt. Coexistence is possible, and it's probably happening right now. You just haven't realized it.
- A question such as, "What if I don't have OCD and this really is a huge problem?" is not valid and it is a question that is unanswerable.
- Why do I discount positive information and over-weighting negative information?
- If you all of the sudden realize that you aren't compulsing and your mind immediately starts searching for your obsession and/or a compulsion, that is a signal that you are making progress.
- Accept the uncertainty. Reassurance is a compulsion and will only make things worse.
- You have a disorder that isn't your fault in any way, shape, or form.
- Those with Pure-O do mental compulsions in the form of checking their thoughts over and analyzing them in detail, trying to work them out (and a thought cannot be worked out) thus creating further anxiety, or wrestling with it mentally.
- Mental compulsions can include rationalizing self-talk, reassuring oneself, special words or phrases repeated mentally (e.g. "I'm okay, I'm okay"), mental reviewing (of conversations, events, etc. to ensure nothing "bad" happened), and mental counting (counting to prevent something bad from happening).
- You're not crazy, you have a disorder that isn't your fault in any way shape or form.
- There is no such thing as pure O. If there were no compulsions, then the O is dead. Everything you think in your mind and associate with Pure O is actually a compulsion.
- Writing down your obsessive thoughts can help you realize that they are just thoughts and not facts.

- Jeffrey Schwartz' Four Steps - Originally developed as a treatment for OCD, Schwartz' Four Step method, as described in his book Brain Lock, focuses on learning to non-judgmentally observe unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges from the position of an "impartial spectator".
- When faced with unwanted thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges, it is best to make no effort whatsoever to avoid or control them.
- Choosing to expose oneself to the feared item without the escape response is the most critical component of the therapy.
- Learn to acknowledge and accept thoughts and feelings without evaluating them or acting on them.
- When thoughts are treated as if they are valuable and therefore become stronger.
- Don't even tell myself that the bad thoughts aren't true.
- You won't be able to eliminate the spike but rather manage the spike.
- Unhelpful Strategies: Thought Stopping, Freezing, Figuring it out, Avoidance, Retracing,
- Helpful: Make an audio recording of things that are triggers and listen to it.
- When I am afraid of something, I take that as a signal not to run but to deliberately approach it, because I've learned my obsessions and anxieties almost always point me in the wrong direction.
- "It is not me, it is my OCD" Perhaps it is better to suggest to oneself that since this thought fits into the theme of the OCD, "I'll take the risk and accept the ambiguity of its legitimacy." Accepting the possibility that there may be a legitimate risk that something might be wrong can facilitate the overall benefit of the therapy.
- Most clients enter treatment with the goal of stopping their obsessions. However, their attempt to get rid of unwanted thoughts is the problem. A more reasonable goal is to change the individual's relationship with and reaction to intrusive thoughts.
- Humor counts! The more you laugh at the OCD, the more disrespect you give it. Hence, the less power it has.
- Merely utilizing cognitive responses such as, "I'll take the risk and accept the possibility that the danger may be real," without embracing a genuine acceptance of that risk, is a rote exercise and therapeutically useless.
- View your obsessions as "normal" and not something that needs to be "fixed" or "made right". Would "normal" people have these obsessions? Uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, images, urges, and sensations are all part of the human experience. If we view them as problems, they become problematic.
- Rather than just saying "NO! I won't give in," it is advisable to allow for the possibility that there is an actual risk.
- 15 minute rule: Never perform a compulsion without some time delay.
- The Lord can work a miracle for me. Ask him to. He can change how I feel about everything.
- Because it's not rational, 'thinking your way out of it' is not possible. All the thinking does is feed the OCD, it is counter-productive. Each thought just triggers more obsessive visualization, and more jealousy.
- Attempts at reassurance inspire the brain to automatically scan for any possible exceptions.
- Think, "I just noticed that I am having a bad thought" or "I just noticed that I thought ...", instead of thinking OMG I want to kill myself. This allows you to occupy the same space with their thoughts but from a different vantage point. Instead of being crunched in a small closet with their thoughts, they are now in a gymnasium with them.

Sources: Me and a bunch of other people that I've come across.

Cognitive Conceptualization

Cognitive conceptualization also involves empowering clients by helping them discover their ability to make their own choices. In general, the greater our perceived sense of control over pain is, the more we are able to tolerate discomfort. Undoubtedly, it is important for people to understand that they can have a significant impact on the psychological outcome. This cognitive aspect is critical in treatment and will probably command an entire future article devoted to this premise.

Obsessive Thoughts vs. Compulsions

Stop confusing obsessive thoughts with compulsive thoughts. Pure O isn't pure. I discovered with the help of my ERP therapist, that I have mental compulsions for trying to "undo" my intrusive obsessive thoughts, like freezing (and doing nothing until I solve the issue), retracing my thoughts or actions, analyzing, figuring out, avoiding all reminders of the thought, or researching. Stop Disputing the thoughts ad infinitum. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is the larger category that ERP belongs to, but CBT applied to mental obsessions without an understanding of the nature of intrusive thoughts, perfectionism and "just right" feeling can turn dysfunctional thought analysis into compulsions. I would get sidetracked into figuring out whether I'd done a thought record thoroughly enough, and even if I disputed all the errors in my thinking, it didn't seem to stick.

The obsessions will disappear once the compulsions stop. There are no exceptions, even when you think you may have the silver bullet or be able to find the silver bullet, or you have stumbled onto something new. You never have. Anything to do with these compulsions will not provide a solution. Don't be tricked into trying to gain relief by finding the form of an answer.

Sometimes, you have to accept a bad feeling, like not wanting to go into work but going anyway, so that you can get what ultimately desire.

If you start to feel better about something, don't question it. Be thankful, and move on. To review and get upset again, is to throw a precious gift in the dirt. Instead, build on it.

The truth is that everyone is going to hurt you; the challenge is finding the ones worth being hurt for.

The agony of attempting to arrive at certainty leads to an intense and endless cycle of anxiety because it is impossible to arrive at a definite answer.

Wise Internet Man Post – Thank You!

I'm writing this as someone who has experienced crippling retroactive jealousy at one stage of my life, and over time overcome it. Noting that having done so, it's not a permanent guarantee of being free of it, but rather a place where some ongoing effort is required not to fall back. But I am thankfully free of the obsession, the jealousy, and the agony. It was the most painful experience of my life, and coming through it changed my personality and identity deeply. I also post frequently here about it, and have read countless accounts, as well as had direct correspondence with numerous men who are suffering from this. I'll state my overall feelings on this surprisingly common and often horribly crippling and painful condition. In other words, this post is a statement of opinion only, without focussing much on the justification: - This is different for men and women. Mostly due to the different nature of male and female jealousy, but also for other reasons. This makes empathy about it, and communication about it

particularly difficult between the sexes. Neither is 'right', but we are different, and that creates misunderstanding. This misunderstanding can quickly destroy relationships, as well as leading to nasty arguments between men and women on the subject in places such as this site. It also means the majority of women "don't get it" when it comes to understanding why men get so extremely tortured by this. No one's fault, that's just how it is. Men also suffer from this much more than women. - It's not about how many past partners someone had, or what they did. I've seen this caused by a single kiss. And frequently men in their thirties are in agony over their wives having had perhaps one or two partners before them, which by almost any standard is very few. - I believe this condition is essentially a form of obsessive compulsive disorder. The victim becomes compulsively obsessed with visualising their partners past sexual activities. These visualised images trigger jealousy and all the standard attendant jealous behaviours: intrusive questioning, distrust, paranoia, imagining things that didn't happen, and discounting positive information whilst over-weighting negative information. As well as mental anguish. The OCD keeps the condition continuous, triggering the jealous emotions and behaviour over and over in a vicious circle. It can also make it very hard to communicate to someone about, as when they are in their obsessive jealous state they are not generally open to much meaningful input; instead being caught up in their own inner turmoil. - It happens mostly in loving relationships. Jealousy is shadow of love: the more we love, the more powerful the jealousy. It is often triggered at a point when a relationship becomes more committed. This makes the condition particularly tragic: since it is usually damaging what are loving and intimate relationships. ie, the good ones. - It's not rational. The most common mistake is to blame the person experiencing this. We must understand it's not a choice on the part of the victim, and that the OCD and jealousy lead to the rationalising of the situation. The person experiencing this is not choosing to have these feelings and thoughts, no more than the schizophrenic is choosing to become insane, or the narcissist is choosing their delusions. Blame is often flung at the retroactively jealous person, which is the wrong thing to do. Because it's not rational, 'thinking your way out of it' is not possible. All the thinking does is feed the OCD, it is counter-productive. Each thought just triggers more obsessive visualisation, and more jealousy. This makes talking about it dangerous, since conversation requires thought, and those thoughts can trigger another attack. - It's nothing to do with morality. As part of an attempt to grapple with their emotions, men frequently resort to 'moral judgements' and labels. Whore, slut, impure, etc. These are an attempt to make sense of their feelings, and to justify the illusions their jealousy is creating. Clutching at straws. But morality is essentially a complex set of rational rules, and as I have said, retroactive jealousy has nothing to do with rationality. Personally I try to be highly sympathetic when helping men with this condition, but when it comes to moral judgements I will be very direct and intolerant of this specific part of their behaviour. Why? Because at the core of all morality, no matter its particular flavour, lies empathy, compassion, forgiveness, and a letting go of judgment. Truly seeing the others point of view. Walking in their shoes. It's

essential that anyone suffering from this condition understands this, and does not use morality as a weapon to judge, belittle and hurt, which is sadly usually the case. - As a fusion of OCD and jealousy, this condition is biological in its root causes, not cultural. Discussions about this often get caught up in cultural trends, double standards, modern society, feminism, etc. These are all dead ends. In terms of practical advice, I generally believe these things: - It's best not to go there. Don't ask questions, don't dig into the past. The more that is known, the more mental material there is to obsess over. Each additional piece of information is another log on the fire of the obsessive jealousy. However there are some exceptions: I do believe understanding someone's emotional history is valuable in overcoming this, but this precludes the type of factual interrogation that retroactive jealousy seems to almost always lead to. - Breaking up generally doesn't help. It may stop the immediate pain, but the condition is an inner one, and will return in future relationships, unless that person finds someone they consider 'pure'. Which admittedly does happen sometimes. For this reason I usually try to coach the victim to try to overcome it: it's a life condition and they may as well deal with it right away. On top of that, they're usually in love with the person they're jealous of, and love is precious, rare and worth saving. - As for the solution, most helpful is activity that teaches us to let go of obsessive thoughts and free our minds. Personally I found tai chi extremely valuable, but similar things like meditation and yoga etc are also very worth considering. There are many other tips and tricks that can help in this vein, such as mantras, visualisations and personal rituals. The aim is to refocus the mind away from the obsessive loop it is trapped in, and onto another path. Since this is essentially a form of OCD, the standard treatments for OCD are also worth considering. This can include use of anti-depressants. The problem with the standard treatments for OCD is that, like regular treating OCD, they are often not particularly effective. OCD is a powerful disability, and required deep therapy to really beat. It takes time, a great therapist, and great determination. Unfortunately a relationship can often be irreversibly damaged in the mean time. This is why I believe approaches in the category of meditation and tai chi are better: they can have a more immediate effect which can be felt relatively quickly and bring optimism and hope instead of the state of despair sufferers are usually in. But also this kind of approach is good for another reason: I believe that in the end, to beat retroactive jealousy, it is necessary to change oneself a deep level. To let go of the embedded beliefs that are fuelling the obsession and jealousy. The (usually childhood-based) baggage that gives us the insecurities and patterns that make us vulnerable to retroactive jealousy. But to literally change who we are is possibly the most scary thing any of us ever have to undertake in our lives. We cling to our identity as the one true constant in our lives. When we realise that we must change, our lives become a sea of confusion and disorientation. We pull back from that cliff and retreat to our comfortable pattern: in this case retroactive jealousy. This is something therapists often talk about: that the true barrier to being 'cured' is our own desire not to change. We cling to ourselves. This is why meditation, tai chi, yoga, and the like can be effective. Because at their core they focus on the

realisation that there is no 'I'. That our identities are an illusion and that by letting go of that illusion we can set ourselves free. We can free ourselves from the painful cycles of life, from 'samsara' as the Buddhists call it, and become at peace with ourselves. This is the prime objective of meditation. The way out of retroactive jealousy requires a conscious choice: to choose to become someone who does not care about our partners past. But to make that choice means that we must become a different person: namely the person we would be if we did not care. It's that fear of change that is the true barrier.

Words of Wisdom from someone who overcame

1. Everything will be ok, don't panic. If you're truly in love with her, you will not lose her because of this.
2. Don't not feel like you are bad or special (egocentric) or immature--you are experiencing something that effects many, many men and it is like a psychological disorder, like a panic attack. It is basically a type of OCD, so learn some OCD coping methods and gain better focus of your thoughts. It is unnecessary for you to obsess about this. OCD/Anxiety are very good at convincing you that their irrationality is actually rational.
3. Try not to talk to her too much about this issue, but let her know you're having issues you will work out. I made the mistake of bring out things in my woman's past she didn't want to revisit and had no reason to revisit--it was unnecessarily painful for her. Don't let this make you feel bad, though, if you slip on this--just look forward.
4. Deal with your own past disappointments (if you've experienced them) and realize you are YOUR present. Understand that you are truly in control and you can be objective and trust yourself to know who people are.
5. Deal with your philosophical contradictions and conflicts. If she has a view of sex the same as you as of now, and her behavior represents that view, then her past is irrelevant, her number is irrelevant. If you focus on that number, then it is YOU, and not her, who is now making sex less meaningful. The meaning of love and sex is based on who people truly are--not a number.
6. The love is bigger than this, you're bigger than this.

It is a sickening time, you will feel physically ill while you wrestle with this, and you might feel differently about her when you don't want to--that's all part of the experience. But you'll get out of it, just be persistent. Good luck!

Words of wisdom from someone who overcame

I am writing this now because I feel I have solved it and want to share some thoughts that might help others.

A couple things to begin: Don't panic. You will not lose her because of this--she has not changed. You are NOT bad for thinking these things--as you will see, thinking that you are irrational or bad or wrong for feeling this way will make it worse.

There is a basic profile for guys like us: We are young responsible males, we are in love, we have had disappointments in our past with women, we are prone to anxiety or OCD and have some self-sabotaging behaviors, we contradict ourselves when it comes to philosophical attitudes about sex. Each of these contribute, so I'll address each one.

As young responsible males, we need to feel powerful and in control when around our woman--we are their protectors and we see them as very special in our world. When we hear that she has had a dark past it hurts--worse because we have no control over that. If we had been there then, she wouldn't have had to deal with that stuff. No matter how powerful we are, we can never control things that have happened and are now in the past.

MOST OF what we are experiencing is just OCD/anxiety.

When we feel a loss of control we immediately go into OCD-mode and count numbers (her past sexual partners) and feel revulsion. This is actually a common variant of a type of OCD--sexual revulsion; except we internalize our woman's views of her sexual past and then add in the worst possible ideas we have about them to create a huge monster in our minds that can torture us when thinking about them. We just have to think about it for half a second and then a few hours later, you're still staring off into space feeling terrible.

In our past we might have had disappointments in women--we meet them and get to know them and start to have feelings only to learn of some massive character flaw or dishonesty. This then lead to feelings of loss and pain because this woman we think we have known and started to like has never existed. We get fooled. And it isn't always our fault, and sometimes it is. But we have the memory of that pain and possibly guilt for having been fooled.

As a result we engage further in our obsessive thoughts--this monster will torture us for any guilt and it will also seek for the character flaw we feel has to be there. If there isn't a flaw, it will make one up--her number of past partners is an easy target. Sexual revulsion is an easy route for obsession as well.

You are not special.

Because you've had fewer sexual partners and have grand views of sex and have had a disappointing history you might feel special, but you are not. Your obsession and your revulsion with the woman you love happen because of fear--but not because there is anything truly wrong or exceptional about you. So, do not beat yourself up for being irrational or special or bad.

There is a contradiction your philosophical attitudes about sex. You want to have sex with someone you love, as a profound experience. Your partner, let's say, has the same attitude. You then obsess about her number of previous partners and feel she is different because sex must mean less to her now (wrong) and then you feel pain because of your past and continue to obsess. You isolate and remove all context, all reality from her except for this number in the process.

You are now the one who is making sex less profound and meaningful.

The value of sex is not based on a number. As you panic that it is less valuable because of a high number of previous partners you are then basing the value of sex on a number. The contradiction you are making is in saying that you believe the value of sex is based on the profound nature of the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual connection you can have with another person. You can have one or the other, but not both.

If you continue to base sex and love on the standard of a number, then logically you ought to find a virgin regardless of who she is; rather than a woman who is not a virgin, but simply one of the best people you've ever known.

This is why you need to focus on who she is NOW--not for the sake of it, but because you need to uphold the idea that sex is meaningful because of WHO she is in the present.

Finally, you love her, she is amazing now. She has no flaws in her character that would make you love her less, she is just such a wonderful thing to have in your life. It isn't too good to be true--if she is honest, if she is the person you are in love with and you're only problem is with her past, when she did things less consistent than what she would do now if she could do things over, then you are obsessing because you've found the last thing possible that you could use to ruin it because you haven't found anything else to ruin it.