

# Welcome to MCT-OCD

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METACOGNITIVE TRAINING FOR OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

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# What does "metacognition" mean?

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**Cognition** = derived from the Latin word for “**thinking**”

**Meta** = derived from the Greek word for “**about**”

**Metacognition** = thinking about thinking



# Metacognitive Training

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Human thinking is prone to thinking traps, which are found in many mental disorders:



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- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation



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- Cognitive biases contribute to the development and maintenance of mental disorders



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- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation
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- To a certain extent, these thinking styles can be helpful (e.g., setting a high standard for yourself to avoid making mistakes). However, when taken too far (i.e., perfectionism), they cause problems for yourself



# Metacognitive Training

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Human thinking is prone to thinking traps, which are found in many mental disorders:

- They are referred to as "**cognitive biases**" for the rest of the presentation
- Cognitive biases contribute to the development and maintenance of mental disorders
- To a certain extent, these thinking styles can be helpful (e.g., setting a high standard for yourself to avoid making mistakes). However, when taken too far (i.e., perfectionism), they cause problems for yourself
- The MCT-OCD addresses the cognitive biases that are relevant to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)

# Homework

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What homework  
did you do?

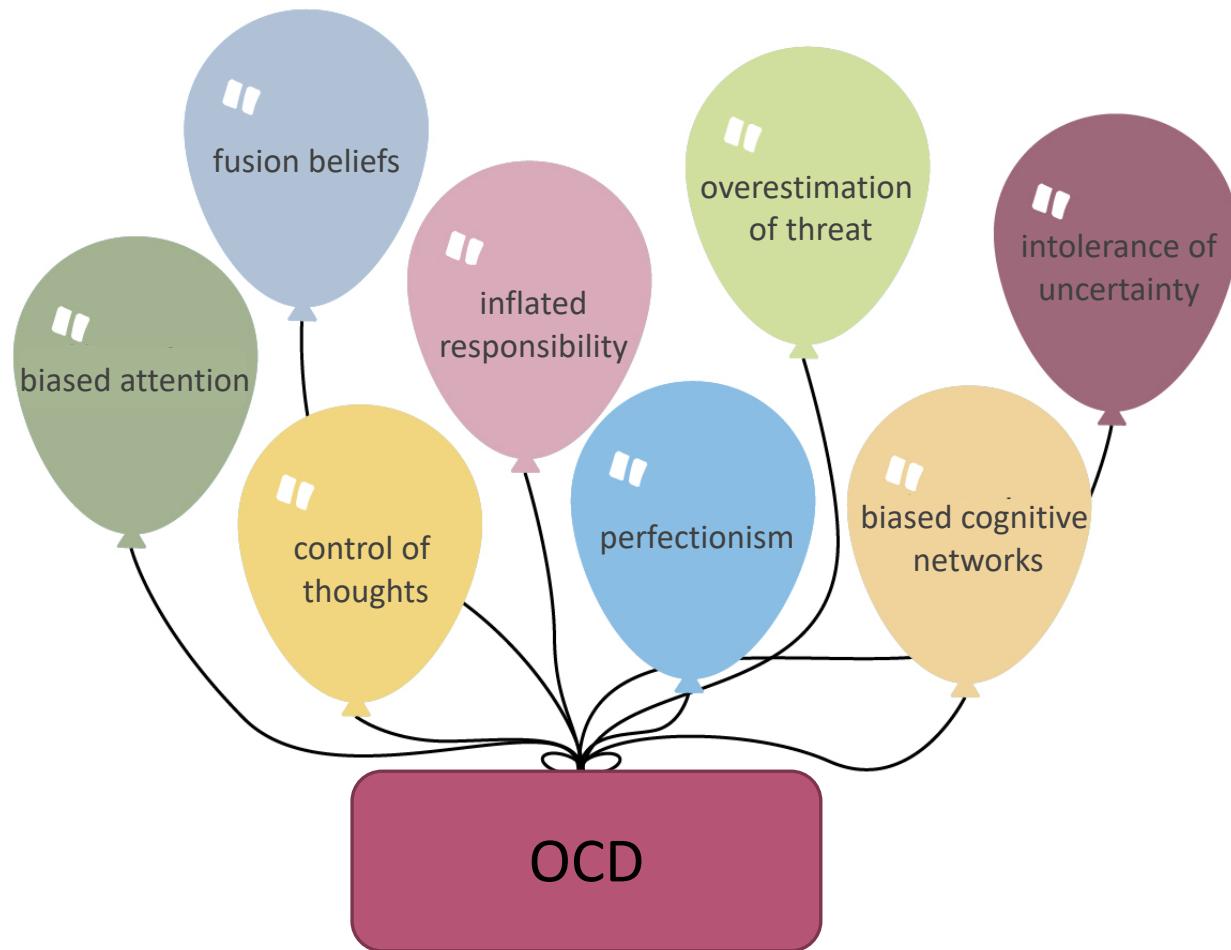
Where did  
problems occur?

What worked  
very well?



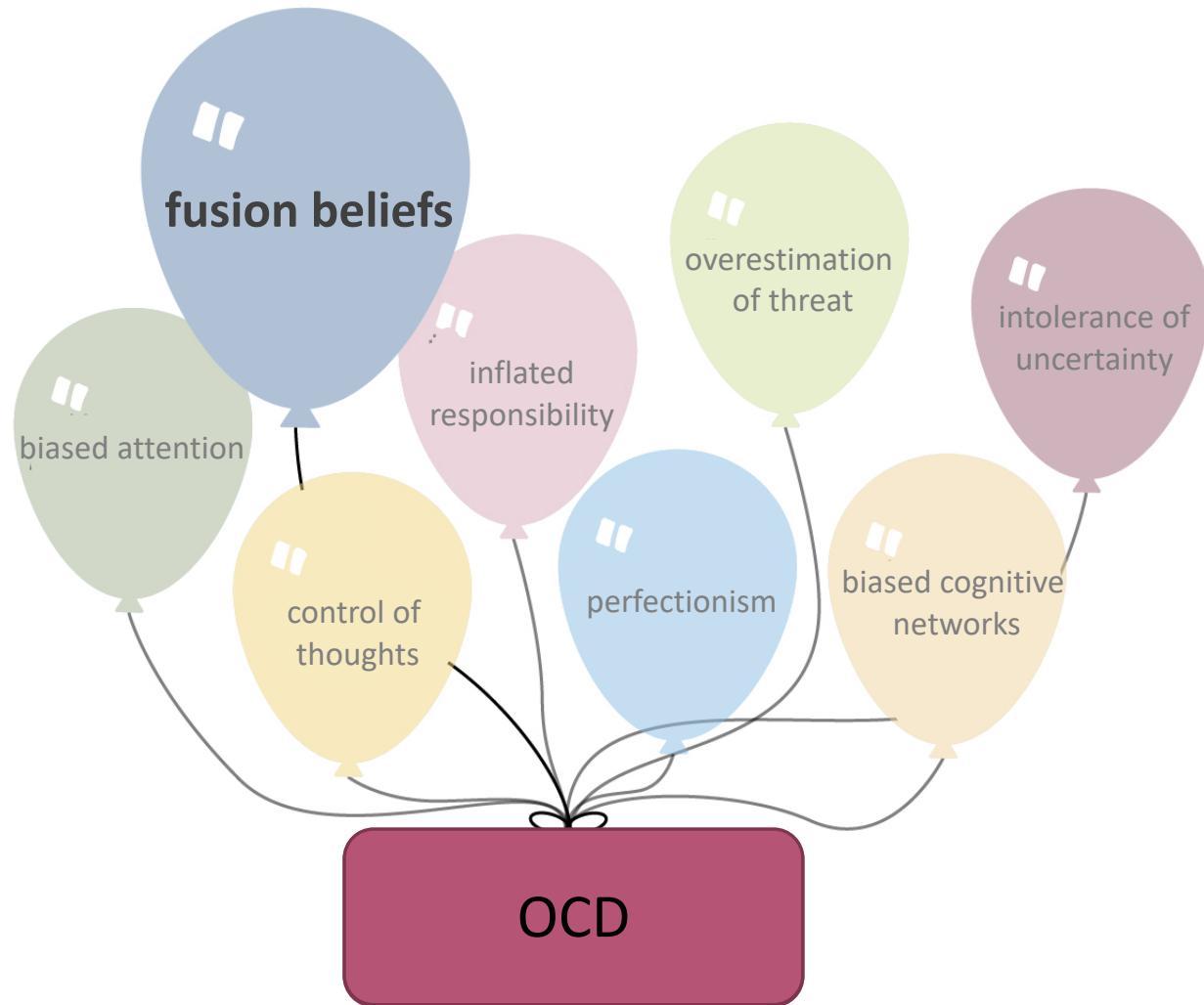
# Cognitive biases in OCD

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# Module 4: Fusion beliefs

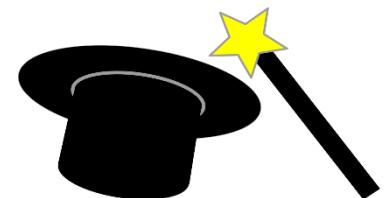
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# Fusion beliefs

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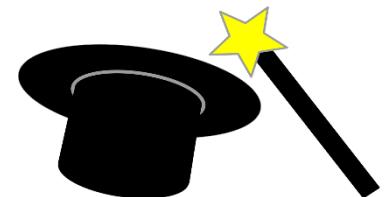
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# Fusion beliefs

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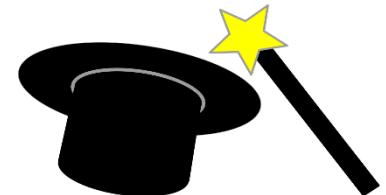
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# Fusion beliefs

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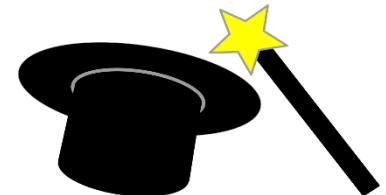
- Play a major role in OCD
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  - ...they think certain thoughts



# Fusion beliefs

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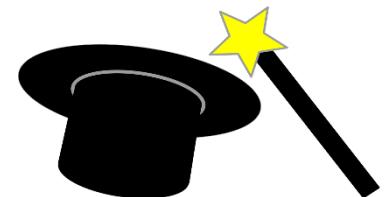
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- Those affected are afraid that something bad might happen if...
  - ...they think certain thoughts
  - ...they fail to complete certain actions
- Thus, they link thoughts or actions with the occurrence of an event at another location

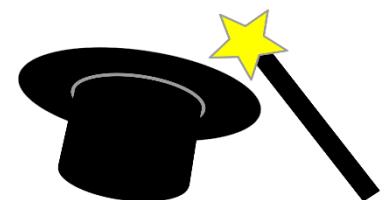


# Fusion beliefs

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- Play a major role in OCD
- Those affected are afraid that something bad might happen if...
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- Thus, they link thoughts or actions with the occurrence of an event at another location

**Are you familiar with this?**



# Examples

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*If I have a "bad" thought while stepping through a doorway, something bad will happen to my mother.*

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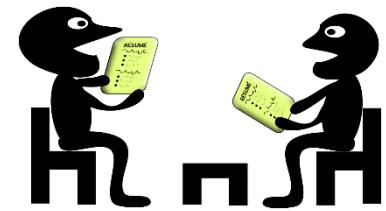
*If I have "bad" thoughts while my husband is at the doctor's, he will be diagnosed with a severe illness.*

*If I don't clear my desk, I will fail my exam.*

# Survey

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We asked 100 people without a mental disorder about fusion beliefs

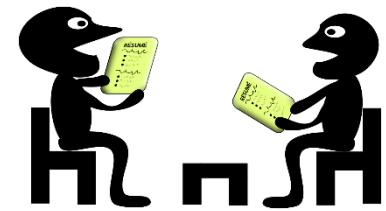


# Survey

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We asked 100 people without a mental disorder about fusion beliefs

**What do you think...**



# Survey

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How many people agree with these statements?

## Percent

? In order to find an inner peace, I perform certain rituals

? When I walk on a paved path, I avoid stepping on the cracks

? Sometimes I have the feeling that my favorite team would have won if I had watched the game in person

# Survey

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How many people agree with these statements?

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42 %      In order to find an inner peace, I perform certain rituals

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# Survey

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How many people agree with these statements?

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42 %      In order to find an inner peace, I perform certain rituals

29 %      When I walk on a paved path, I avoid stepping on the cracks

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# Survey

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How many people agree with these statements?

## Percent

42 %      In order to find an inner peace, I perform certain rituals

29 %      When I walk on a paved path, I avoid stepping on the cracks

15 %      Sometimes I have the feeling that my favorite team would have won if I had watched the game in person

# What is normal anyway?

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What is the difference between fusion beliefs

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What is the difference between fusion beliefs

- **of a person with OCD**



# What is normal anyway?

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What is the difference between fusion beliefs

- **of a person with OCD**  
and fusion beliefs



# What is normal anyway?

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What is the difference between fusion beliefs

- **of a person with OCD**  
and fusion beliefs
- **of a person without any mental disorder?**



# Fusion beliefs in people without OCD

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- Less attention to feared triggers

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  - E.g. not every black cat or every crack in the paved path is registered

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# Fusion beliefs in people without OCD

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- Less attention to feared triggers
  - E.g. not every black cat or every crack in the paved path is registered
- No strong linkage with anxiety
- No urge to act even with intrusive thoughts
- Thoughts are not "sticky" and can be moved on from quickly



# Fusion beliefs and emotions

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Fusion beliefs are often related to feelings of fear or guilt

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**Are you familiar with this?**

**But are our feelings always reliable?**



# Feelings are not always reliable!

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- Fear does not always indicate the presence of danger

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  - E.g. watching a scary movie



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**Can fusion beliefs or superstition be a good guide?**



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**Can fusion beliefs or superstition be a good guide?**

Let's try ...



# Thought exercise

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Imagine the following problem:

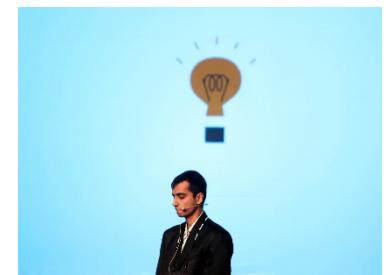


# Thought exercise

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Imagine the following problem:

You are in big financial trouble and ask two friends for advice



# Thought exercise

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*"If you want to ask a bank for a loan, I can help you to gather as much information as possible beforehand in order to make the right choice. I'm happy to vouch for you."*



Pragmatic  
realist



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*"If you want to ask a bank for a loan, you should definitely take a lucky charm with you. Also, I'll place my right hand on a 100-dollar bill five times and think of you. That should work."*



Fusion  
believer



# Thought exercise

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**Who would you rely on?**



# Thought exercise

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*"If you want to ask a bank for a loan, I can help you to gather as much information as possible beforehand in order to make the right choice. I'm happy to vouch for you."*

*"If you want to ask a bank for a loan, you should definitely take a lucky charm with you. Also, I'll place my right hand on a 100-dollar bill five times and think of you. That should work."*

**Who would you rely on?**

**What does this mean for fusion beliefs?**



# Can thoughts make things move?

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Fusion beliefs can also manifest themselves as follows:

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The mistaken belief that you can influence people or events by thinking about them is also characterized as fusion belief



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**Are you familiar with this?**



# A distinction is made between

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**Thought-Action-Fusion:** Thoughts influence actions or are equated with them.

- *If I think I could do harm to my children, I will! Thinking about harming someone is the same as harming them!*

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**Thought-Object-Fusion:** Thoughts can change objects.

- *If I have an offensive thought in worship, I am desecrating the church!*

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**Thought-Object-Fusion:** Thoughts can change objects.

- *If I have an offensive thought in worship, I am desecrating the church!*

**Thought-Event-Fusion:** Thoughts influence events.

- *If I have a bad thought, I can cause an accident.*

# A distinction is made between

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**Thought-Action-Fusion:** Thoughts influence actions or are equated with them.

- *If I think I could be harming someone, I will!*

*Thinking about them!*

**Thought-Object:**

- *If I have an angry thought about the church! I will do something destructive to it.*

*Projects.*

*Like desecrating the*

But is that even  
possible?

Let's give it a try!

**Thought-Evening:**

- *If I have a bad thought, I will feel bad about myself.*

*Events.*

*Accidents.*

# Exercise

---

1. Please think of a movement that you would like one of the other group members to perform

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**Did it work?**

# Aggressive obsessions

---

**Do you know of any examples of aggressive obsessions?**

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- *"I could stab my partner with a kitchen knife"*

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# Aggressive obsessions

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**Do you know of any examples of aggressive obsessions?**

- "*I could stab my partner with a kitchen knife*"
- "*I could push someone onto the road*"
- "*I could touch a child inappropriately*"
- "*I could run someone over with my car!*"

# Thoughts = Actions?

---

Do aggressive obsessions lead to aggressive actions?

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No! Aggressive actions do not necessarily follow aggressive obsessions!

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*"If I steer into oncoming traffic right now, I would create a bad accident."*



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*"If I steer into oncoming traffic right now, I would create a bad accident."*
- Very few put this into action
- The media frequently confronts us with disturbing pictures
  - Mental images or thoughts do not necessarily signal true intent ↔ It only reflects their processing



# Thoughts = Actions?

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- Some authors create brutal scenes in their minds and write them down in their novels



# Thoughts = Actions?

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**Do they commit murders more often than other people because of it?**



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**So why do we have mental images and thoughts that we don't want to have? Why do images flare up in our minds that we don't want to have?**



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**So why do we have mental images and thoughts that we don't want to have? Why do images flare up in our minds that we don't want to have?**

- Fully controlling one's thoughts is not possible and suppression of thoughts intensifies the suppressed thought (see module 5)



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**So why do we have mental images and thoughts that we don't want to have? Why do images flare up in our minds that we don't want to have?**

- Fully controlling one's thoughts is not possible and suppression of thoughts intensifies the suppressed thought (see module 5)
- Our cognitions (thoughts) are associatively linked together, so that having one thought may activate other related thoughts (see module 8)

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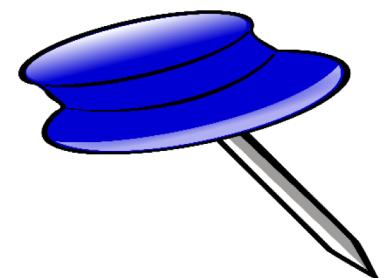
→ No!



# What can you do?

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It is important to remember:

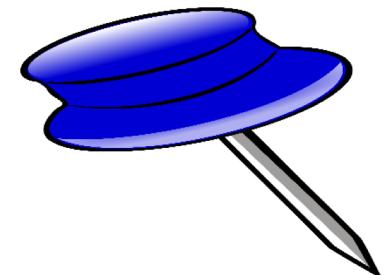


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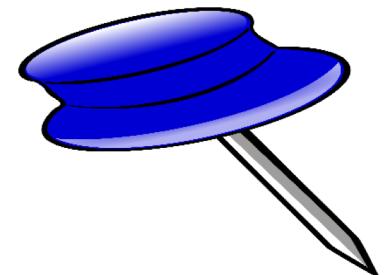


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It is important to remember:

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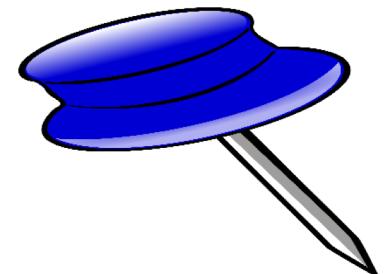


# What can you do?

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It is important to remember:

- There is **no** connection between my thoughts and unrelated events
- "*I know that these are fusion beliefs: it's a symptom of OCD!*"
- "*As hard as I try, I **cannot** completely influence **unrelated situations** through my thoughts and actions.*"



# ...Disenchanting thoughts

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- Many people with OCD actually know that their obsessions and compulsions cannot have a magical influence on external events

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- But often a certain doubt remains

# ...Disenchanting thoughts

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- Many people with OCD actually know that their obsessions and compulsions cannot have a magical influence on external events
- But often a certain doubt remains
- OCD is sometimes a master of illusion, but not a fortune teller!



# Distancing strategy

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What can you do as soon as a fusion belief or an "aggressive" obsession arises?

# Distancing strategy

---

What can you do as soon as a fusion belief or an "aggressive" obsession arises?

- Recognize the thought and label it as a thought (vs. reality or truth)

# Supplement: Self-worth

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# Self-worth: What is it?

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- The value that a person attaches to themselves

# Self-worth: What is it?

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- The value that a person attaches to themselves
- Subjective appraisal of one's self

# Self-worth: What is it?

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- The value that a person attaches to themselves
- Subjective appraisal of one's self
- It is not about how others think of you; rather, it is about how you think of yourself

# Consequences of low self-worth

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- People with OCD often suffer from low self-worth because they often think that "something is wrong" with them, they are "going crazy", which leads to self-stigmatization

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  - Depressive symptoms

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- Low self-worth can lead to psychological problems such as:
  - Insecurity, being overly inhibited
  - Anxiety
  - Depressive symptoms
  - Loneliness

# Sources of self-worth

---

- Self-worth is not constant, rather it can vary across different activities (see picture of shelf below)



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- The crucial point is whether we pay attention to only our weaknesses ("empty shelves") or also our strengths and abilities ("full shelves")



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**What shelf have you not looked in for a long time?**

**What hidden treasures can you discover there?**



# Remembering your strengths

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**What do you like about yourself?**

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**What do you like about yourself?**

**What are you good at?**

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**What do you like about yourself?**

**What are you good at?**

Think of a strength!

# Learning Objectives

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- You cannot influence unrelated situations or objects with your thoughts or actions. Try it out!

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- Identify fusion beliefs as an OCD symptom!
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---

- Identify fusion beliefs as an OCD symptom!
- You cannot influence unrelated situations or objects with your thoughts or actions. Try it out!
- Aggressive obsessions do not necessarily lead to aggressive actions
- To boost your self-worth, it helps to focus on your strengths – the fuller parts on the shelf

# Learning Objectives

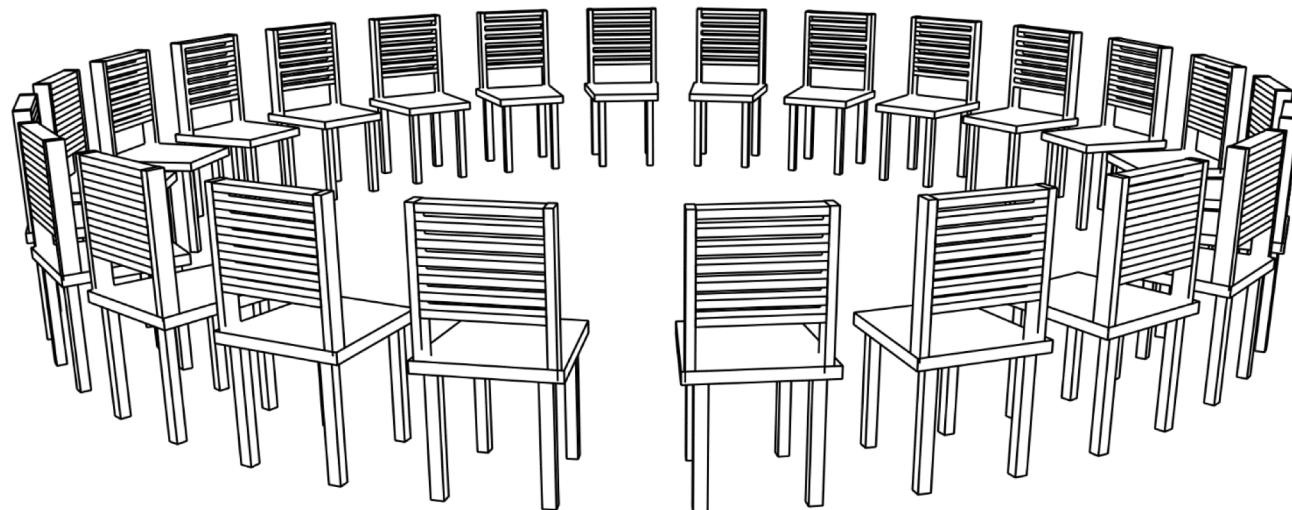
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- Identify fusion beliefs as an OCD symptom!
- You cannot influence unrelated situations or objects with your thoughts or actions. Try it out!
- Aggressive obsessions do not necessarily lead to aggressive actions
- To boost your self-worth, it helps to focus on your strengths – the fuller parts on the shelf
  - For example, ask your friends or family what your strengths are and what they appreciate you for

# Closing round

---

**What have I learned today?**

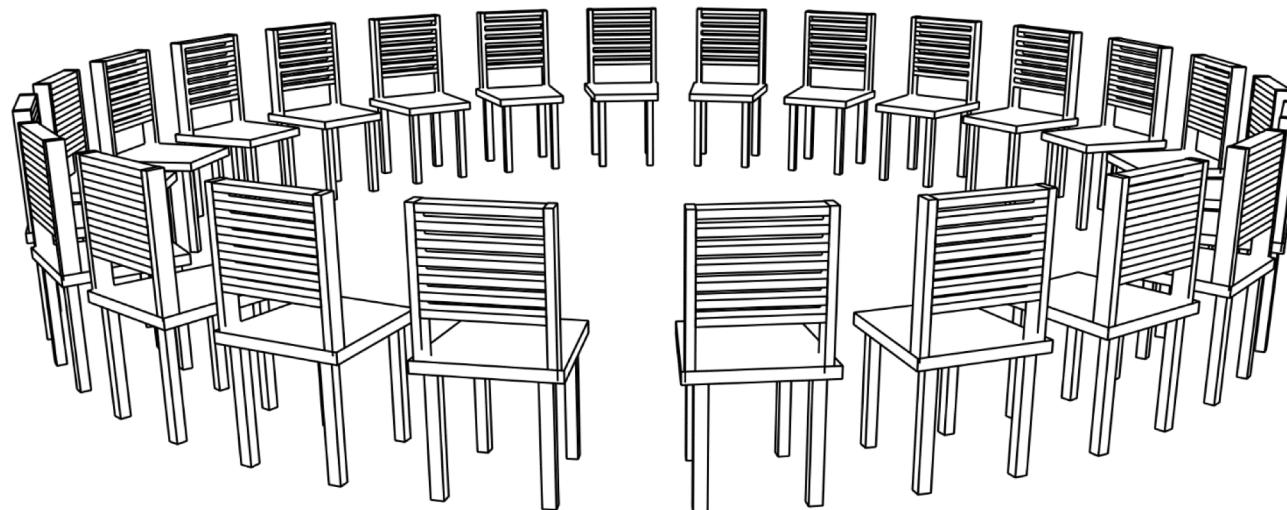


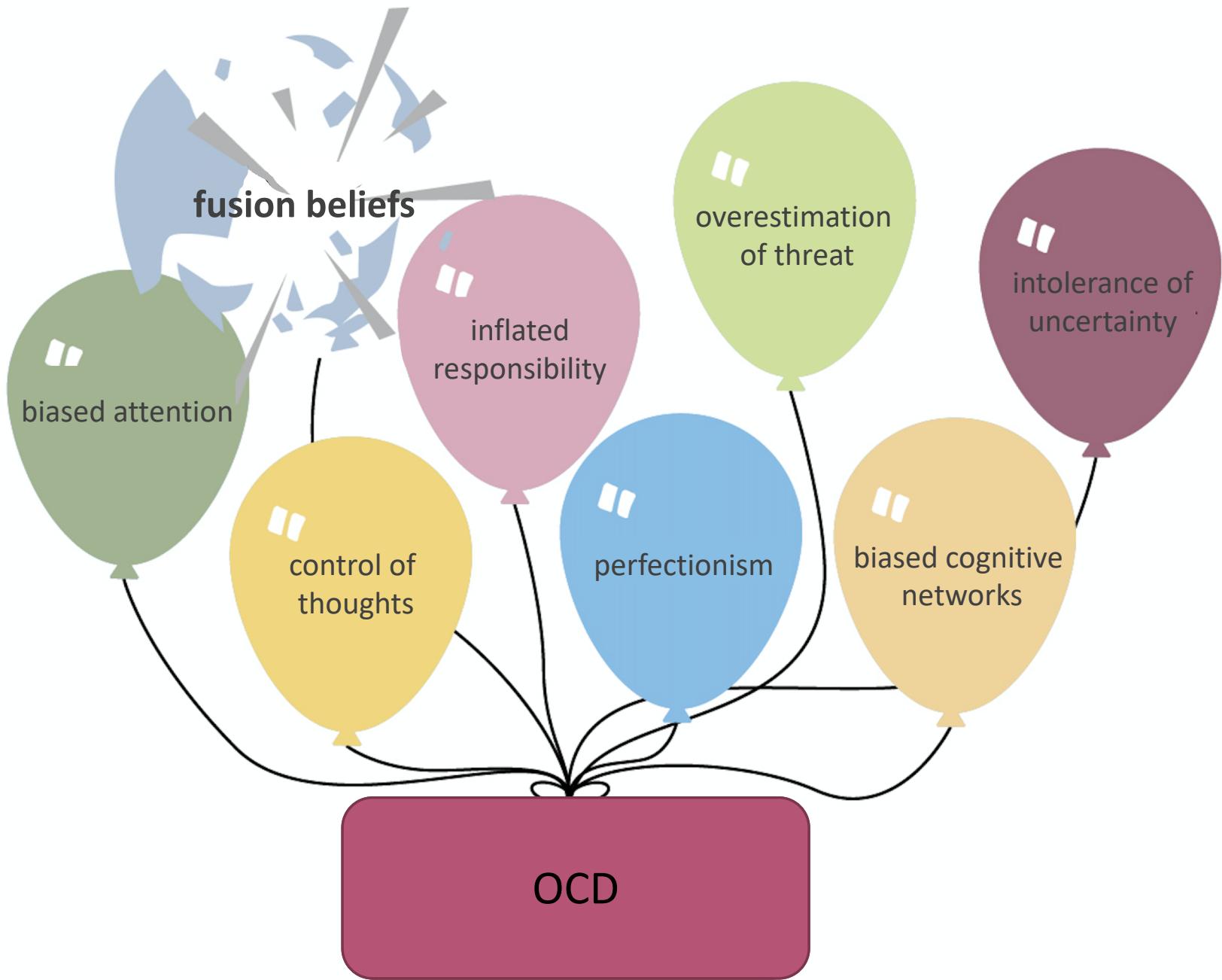
# Closing round

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**What have I learned today?**

**Which of the presented strategies do I want to practice this week?**





Thank you very much, that's it for today.

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MODULE 4: FUSION BELIEFS

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Virtual EyeSee	flickr	Circular Maze	PP	Labyrinth 2
openDemocracy	flickr	headache	PP	Denken/ Kopfschmerz
Marina del Castell	flickr	Victorious	PP	Jubel

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ptitnauge	Openclipa rt	Magic wand and hat – chapeau et baguette magique	CC	Zauberhut
mazeo	Openclipa rt	Job Interview	CC	Unterhaltung
benoit Petit	Openclipa rt	Brain activity - Métacognition	CC	Kopf

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isahia658	Openclipart	QuestionMark Icon	CC	Fragezeichen
Fitz Crittle Photography	Flickr	the sunrise drew them in	PP	Balloons
Arvin61r58	Openclipart	Frown Smiley	CC	Trauriger Smiley
Bodle Strain	flickr	-	PP	Mann am Zaun

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ImagineCup	flickr	Imagine Cup 2012 - Day 4 Finalist Presentations	PP	Denken
Dominiquechappard	openclipart	AI Happy	CC	Strichmännchen 1
Images Money	flickr	Pile of Euro Notes	PP	Euronoten
nicubunu	openclipart	Stick figure : male	CC	Strichmännchen 2

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j4p4n	openclipart	Headache Lady	CC	Kopfschmerz/ Konzentration
netalljoy	openclipart	classic car	CC	Auto
Lousie McLaren	flickr	Currently reading...	PP	Bücher
nicubunu	openclipart	pin	CC	Pin

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Marco Verch	flickr	Crystal Ball and hand	PP	Glaskugel
photofree.ga	openclipart	Circle of Chairs 2 <sup>nd</sup> perspective	CC	Stuhlkreis
Steve Wilson	flickr	Neues Regal	CC	Bücherregal