How OCD twists thinking

The beliefs about thoughts that keep OCD going.

OCD is kept going by a handful of beliefs about thoughts themselves. Tick the ones you recognise.

Inflated responsibility
"If there is any chance I could prevent harm, I must. If I do not, it is as bad as causing it."

Thoughts are as bad as actions
"Having this thought is as bad as doing it." Or: "Thinking it makes it more likely to happen."

Overimportance of thoughts
"If I am thinking it, it must mean something."

Need to control thoughts
"I should be able to control what comes into my mind. If I cannot, something is wrong with me."

Overestimating danger
"If it could happen, it probably will, and it will be terrible."

Need for certainty
"I have to be completely sure. Any doubt is unbearable."

Perfectionism
"There is a right way, and it must feel exactly right before I can stop."

Feelings as proof
"I feel anxious, so there must be danger. I feel guilty, so I must have done something."

A fairer view

- Responsibility is shared. You are one factor among many, and failing to prevent every possible harm is not the same as causing it.
- Thoughts are mental events. They do not change the world and they do not reveal hidden wishes.
- Nobody controls what pops into their head.
- Certainty is not available to anyone, about anything. People without OCD live with exactly the same doubts. They just do not notice them.

The belief that has the tightest grip on me

What would I say to someone else who believed this?

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