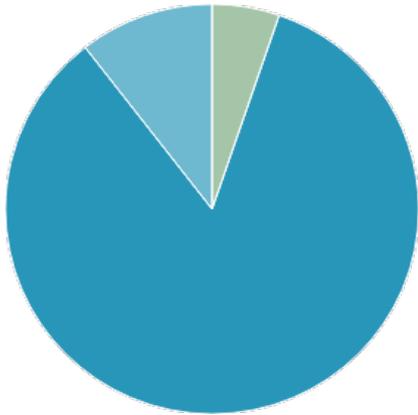


What is the Goal of Therapy for OCD?



PERCENT
OVERALL

■ Get rid of thoughts	0%
■ Get rid of anxiety	0%
■ Feel at peace	5.26%
■ Lessen the intensity and frequency of OCD	84.21%
■ See anxiety as a challenge	10.53%

For those of you who participated in this poll, if you said, "the goal of therapy is to see anxiety as a challenge," ...you were **right!**

But, you can see most people hope to "lessen the intensity and frequency of obsessions and compulsions." While relief is most always the byproduct of therapy it is **not** the actual goal.

If you are receiving evidence-based treatment for OCD, you'll be using Exposure & Response Prevention (ERP). Your therapist won't encourage you to "relax" or meditate the thoughts away. You won't be told to picture a stop sign. Your therapist will teach you how to embrace anxiety and stop self-loathing. It sounds like this: "Even though I have this anxiety, I deeply and completely love and accept myself." "Even though I have OCD, I deeply and completely love and accept myself."

No matter what kind of unwanted intrusive thoughts you're having, they're not the problem. It's how you react to those thoughts that will make or break you. The anxiety that accompanies the thought is a normal reaction to a weird thought. The anxiety isn't good or bad. Anxiety doesn't mean stop going on with normal life. "Even though I have weird thoughts and this anxiety, I deeply and completely commit to living a normal life." *Translation: No compulsions.*

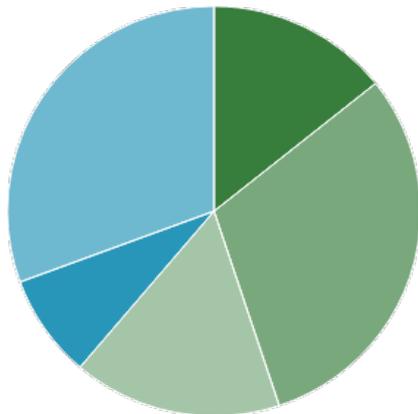
Think of OCD as a young version of you. This anxious part of you that is confused and inexperienced. Let another part of you be the team leader. OCD is much too young for this job. How about letting one of these parts of you lead the way: Determination, Spirituality, Playful, Loving, Creative... While these parts of you might be muted, they're there. Wake them up. Let them speak. Let them lead.

The goal is to see anxiety as a challenge. What is the challenge? To develop empathy this part of you that is confused and afraid. Don't disown OCD or wish it away. Instead accept the challenge to take it under your wing. Be firm but kind.

The challenge is to grow and not be stunted by OCD or anxiety. Even though you have weird thoughts and urges, grow as a person. A whole person. You are not made up of just one part. There are many parts that make you the person you are. OCD is only one part. Even though you have anxiety, go on and live a normal life.

Anxiety is only harmful when you don't embrace it. Only then can it hurt you.

What the Little Boy Needs to Do



PERCENT

OVERALL

■ Fall on the stage on purpose. Get up and clap for himself.	14.29%
■ Say Great! I'm anxious! Time to rock on!	30.61%
■ Deal with it, if it (the fall) happens.	16.33%
■ Walk slowly and mindfully. Pay attention.	8.16%
■ I'm so happy my knees are knockin! Bring it!	30.61%

OCD is a very young version of you. Just a child still in diapers who feels confused and lost. Worried about terrible things happening. No experience in life, yet made responsible for leading a team through some kind of obstacle course.

Who else is on the team? Let me introduce you to the other parts of you: Determined. Empathic and Compassionate. Goofy and Light-hearted. Clever and Bright. Spiritual and Hopeful. An out-of-the-box thinker. Super Hero. Creative.

There are so many parts that make you a whole. Do you remember these parts? They're not gone. They're there. It's just that OCD is a loud mouth. These other parts of you have been muted. Let them speak! Practice by role-playing. What does goofy say to OCD? What does determined say to anxiety?

I'm very fond of using humor against OCD. I think it works so well because OCD is really just a toddler. Children love to laugh and be silly. We've all stopped screaming, crying babies by being goofy. If you can find your funny bone, OCD doesn't have a prayer.

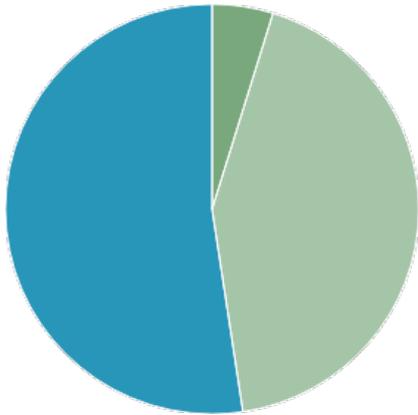
So my favorite answer, and what I would tell the child who is afraid of falling on the stage is to, "Go ahead and gladly fall." Laugh, clap and say, "I did it! I did it!" It's hard to be afraid when you're laughing and clapping.

Looking at the poll results, "Walk slowly and pay attention" makes it sound like the kid should be able to control what happens. I don't like teaching anybody that the answer to uncertainty is control. I've worked with too many people who think moving slowly will prevent anything bad from happening. Slowness has become their compulsion.

If you can't find your funny bone then the best way to respond to OCD is to embrace the doubt and anxiety. Say, "Great! I'm anxious! Time to rock on." or "I'm so happy my knees are knockin'. Bring it!" And last but not least is the response:

"Deal with it, if it (the fall) happens." While a firm voice is needed to talk to this in-the-terrible-two's toddler, compassion is also needed. "Deal with it" is a little too firm. It sounds like, "Shut up." or "Knock it off." Be firm talking to OCD, but show empathy. "I know this is scary but whatever happens, we've got a whole team to deal with it."

What to Say to a Worrying Child



	PERCENT
	OVERALL
■ If you fall that will be great!	0%
■ Knock it off.	4.76%
■ You're not going to fall.	42.86%
■ You might fall. If you do I'll be right here.	52.38%
■ You don't have to do this. Let's go get ice-cream.	0%

Thank goodness "knock it off" wasn't very popular in this poll. OCD is a worrying child. Telling OCD to "knock it off" does nothing but create self-loathing. What's wrong with you that you can't just stop? Ugh! Not effective! All this does is solidify the pathway to self-loathing.

In this poll, nobody chose the path of avoidance. "You don't have to do this. Let's go get ice cream." This is actually one of my favorite approaches. I play the role of OCD. When I suggest an exposure exercise and the client says, "No way. You can't make me do this." I reply, "I can't and won't make you do anything!!! It's your choice. I've offered a challenge to you. If you choose to decline that is your choice. You may feel relieved but what are some of the other feelings you might have?" Inevitably, the client says, "I'll be disappointed. Mad at myself." I ask, "If you don't do an exposure exercise, how will OCD feel?" The client says, "Stronger." And most of the time upon realizing the cost of walking away from a challenge, the client says, "Never mind. I'll do it. I want to face this."

0% thought this answer to be correct: "If you fall, that will be great." Out of all the people who took this poll, NO ONE thought it was the correct answer? It's not the fall that counts!!! It's the getting up that matters! I'd say to this child, "Who cares if you fall. How will you get up?" That is the lesson for this child. If this child can be taught how to get up... laughing, clapping... what then is the problem with falling?

Almost 43% reassured the child in this poll, "You're not going to fall." If you tell this little boy he's not going to fall you are LYING to him. You have no idea if he's going to fall. Reassurance might make him feel better ... but what has it done to help him grow? This boy is strong, funny and curious. It'd be better to withhold reassurance and cultivate these other parts.

"You might fall, if you do I'll be right here." This answer received almost 53% of the votes. This answer is firm, but kind. This is what you say to your OCD. "Yes, that could happen. If it does, we've got a strong team to deal with anything."