**OCD OF BEING SINNER**

A form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) called scrupulosity OCD is characterized by moral or religious obsessions. Individuals who suffer from scrupulosity OCD find it difficult to accept even the smallest ambiguity or question about their beliefs and behaviors because they are excessively worried that their ideas and deeds could be sins or other transgressions of moral or religious principles.

Many people strive to be as "good" as they can because they are devoted to their moral, religious, or ethical standards. Sometimes people don't genuinely have OCD; they are just harsh on themselves, always expecting more moral or religious purity in their daily lives. In contrast, people who have scrupulosity have uncontrollable, undesired thoughts and beliefs—obsessions—about not being morally or religiously inclined enough, despite the lack of evidence to back up their worries. They firmly believe that they will disappoint God, have sinned in the past, will offend again, or will suffer punishment if they are not "good enough."

People try to lessen the tension brought on by their worries by engaging in compulsions, or rituals, in response to these obsessions. Repeated prayers, reciting religious verses, pleading for forgiveness, or even phoning a religious figure for consolation are examples of rituals.

It is noteworthy that irrational moral obsessions and the accompanying compulsions, or rituals, can also be a part of scrupulosity. People who struggle with moral concerns may worry that they will be penalized for committing a mistake that hasn't happened or is unlikely to happen. As a result, a student taking an exam at school could tear up the paper out of concern that he has somehow cheated. Alternatively, a businessman submitting a vacation voucher might be afraid that there was a small error in his report, so he requests a copy of it and spends hours double-checking it.

**OBSESSIONS**

* Fears or thoughts of having sinned, not being deserving of salvation, going to hell, or being especially wicked;
* occasionally includes worries that the afflicted person has previously sold their soul to the devil;
* worries that sections of prayers have been omitted or uttered wrongly;
* Feelings that something has been done wrong, that God is angry with you, and that you need to make amends;
* apprehensions that one has disobeyed a religious prohibition concerning speech, attire, food preparation, modesty, etc.;
* fear of losing one's connection to God or one's beliefs;
* the conviction that one must practice their faith more thoroughly or more intensely in order for it to "count";
* Fears of uttering anything disrespectful during prayer, meditation, or other religious observances (all of which "contaminate," and so negate, the value of these practices);
* Recurrent irreligious ideas or images;
* intrusive ideas about God or religious figures, especially ones that are sexual; additionally;
* Fears of the devil or evil spirits possessing oneself or another;
* repeated convictions that one has sinned;
* excessive worry about upsetting God;
* excessive emphasis on moral, ethical, or religious excellence;
* excessive anxiety about not being devoted to God in the right way;
* recurring worries of going to hell or being damned forever;
* Fear that their actions will condemn a loved one to hell;
* unwanted sexual ideas about God, Jesus, or a clergyman;
* unwanted mental pictures of devil, hell, having sex with God;
* excessive fear of acting against one's own ethics, morality, or values etc

**COMPULSIONS**

* long-term religious practice, such as praying or ritualistic performance (may need to ensure that rites are completed "perfectly" or enough);
* persistently pleading with God for forgiveness; frequently admitting one's perceived wrongdoing either to God or to a religious authority;
* Contemplating over one's words or deeds all the time, questioning whether they were wicked or carried double meanings that were disrespectful or sinful;
* attempting to "make up for" negative ideas by thinking an equal amount of positive ones;
* trying to neutralise "bad" thoughts with "good" thoughts or more religious thoughts;
* Saying the prayers a certain number of times (which could be a magical number or a multiple of a magical number) or, in some faiths, the number of times one makes the sign of the cross before to, during, or following prayer;
* Seeking confirmation about whether specific words or actions are sinful;
* asking religious leaders or authorities the same questions about religious practices over and over again to make sure you understand the answers completely;
* avoiding specific people, places, events, or objects that may set off obsessions and compulsions related to scrupulosity (e.g., avoiding a statue of a religious icon that triggered sexual thoughts about the religious figure);
* ritualized and frequent confession (either to friends and relatives or to religious authorities like priests or church elders);
* Seeking reassurance on actions and ideas about morals, ethics, religion, or values;
* reciting certain paragraphs from religious literature aloud or silently;
* mentally going over one's previous deeds and/or thoughts to try and convince oneself that one hasn't sinned or behaved in a way that goes against one's morals, ethics, or beliefs;
* ritualized "undoing" actions in response to perceived misdeeds and sins;
* Overindulgent self-sacrifice (i.e., donating a substantial sum of money or material belongings);
* Steer clear of situations (i.e., church, temple, mosque, prayers, devil-themed films, dating) when one worries the emergence of obsessions relating to matters of faith;
* avoiding certain things that are connected to immorality or sin (e.g., specific clothing, specific numbers);
* Making agreements with God to save oneself from eternal damnation (or just to ease one's present suffering and distress);

**EXAMPLES**

A person suffering from religious or scrupulosity OCD may perform compulsive acts in an effort to cope with their obsessive thoughts. Here are a few illustrations of how that could appear:

**Over-prayer:** In order to ensure that their prayers have been answered exactly, people with religious OCD may pray more frequently than is customary for their particular faith, sometimes hundreds of times a day. The person may say the prayer again until they are certain that there is no error or hesitation.

**Overconfession:** Individuals with OCD who are religious may frequently approach their religious leader or authority figure to inquire about or confess transgressions they fear they may have committed. Smaller queries like, "Is it wrong for me to find an attractive woman even though I'm married?" could be asked. The individual may come back to confess about the same incident more than once out of concern that they may still be guilty if they haven't accurately conveyed the sin.

**Excessive rituals:** In an attempt to quiet their obsessive thoughts, people with religious OCD may create excessive rituals. This could be as simple as setting aside a specific amount of time to pray, pleading with God for forgiveness a predetermined number of times, or carrying out predetermined religious rites a predetermined number of times.

**Reassurance seeking:** Individuals who suffer from religious and scrupulous OCD may frequently seek comfort from the people in their lives. They could inquire with friends or family to find out if they have ever had similar thoughts and whether or not they are sinful. They might also linger for hours on internet forums, asking random people if anything they've done qualifies as a sin. Even if the teacher has already made it clear that helping a buddy with schoolwork is OK, someone with scrupulous OCD can still inquire. They could check with a friend to see whether they think this is cheating.

**Mental checking:** Individuals may mentally go over their prior experiences and attempt to determine if their actions were morally or sinfully wrong. A person who is worried that they upset their friend may keep watching the expression he made and recall prior occasions when he has done it. Is this the expression he makes when he gets upset?

**Avoidance:** A person with OCD who is religious could stay away from their house of worship out of concern that they will act immorally. People who make them think about things they've decided are wrong or immoral may be avoided.

**TREATMENT**

Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, is used to treat scrupulosity; occasionally, it is combined with medication. Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) and Cognitive Therapy (CT) are the two main components of CBT. With ERP, the person tries to avoid the routines while progressively facing their obsessions. By doing this, the OCD sufferer retrains themselves to not respond with compulsive behavior, gradually increasing their tolerance to the ideas and the accompanying worry.

The second CBT strategy, cognitive therapy, assists a person in recognizing and changing thought patterns that result in worry, distress, or undesirable behavior. Put differently, CT aids patients in realizing that their brains are generating "error" signals. The patient gains the ability to identify these mistakes and challenge the obsessions by coming up with fresh responses through Cognitive Therapy. A person who thinks that thinking about praying to the devil is the same as doing so may therefore find it difficult to see the notion for what it is: a thought. Positive self-statements like "Just because I'm thinking something doesn't mean I'm doing it" could also be encouraged for the person.

**SOCIAL SUPPORT**

Having social support is crucial for OCD sufferers. People with OCD are more prone to have poor self-perceptions without enough social support, which might feed their compulsive behaviors and obsessive thoughts. You can find people who understand what it's like to live with scrupulosity by joining one of six OCD support groups.

**How to Support Friends and Family**

A person who suffers from religious scrupulosity frequently involves friends and family in great detail in their rituals. They might start a ritual by, say, escorting their loved one to confession every day at the church. Or they could assist in steering clear of things, people, or locations that set off religious obsessions (e.g., take a different route to the store instead of going past a specific church). Family members may feel helpless to maintain harmony in the home and think they are doing their loved one a favor by supporting or accommodating OCD. Sadly, when people put up with OCD, they encourage the disorder's behavior, which makes it easier for OCD to become stronger and hold onto a loved one.

**What people can do themselves**

* **Determine that scrupulosity is the battle.**

It's critical to recognize the battle against intrusive thoughts as one against scrupulosity. People are not particularly horrible sinners or unforgivably hardened. They have a condition that tries to make them believe that everything they do is wrong and that they are a sinner. Gaining the ability to distinguish between genuine conviction and self-condemnation requires strengthening your extremely sensitive conscience.

* **Declare what you know to be true.**

Admitting mistakes is a positive thing. Talk about the things you don't doubt, don't have to second guess, and don't hesitate to ask about. You may have OCD if you find yourself asking questions like "maybe" or "what if" a lot.

* **If you're unsure, ask others.**

We can still ask others for their opinions because they frequently see things that we do not, but we don't want this to turn into a compulsion in and of itself as we keep coming to them for comfort on the same problems. Furthermore, it is beneficial to have an unbiased viewpoint distinct from your self-deprecating one. One should follow in the footsteps of others. If the majority of the people in our life who love God and strive to follow him believe that a certain fixation is not a sin, you can believe them. Although they may not always be entirely correct, they do possess the Spirit, and putting our trust in them is one way we can rely on the body of God.

Maybe you find it difficult to admit to others. They might have observed your sensitivity to confession, or you might find that when you confess to people, they frequently don't understand what you're talking about. While it's acceptable to be sensitive and we all have different thresholds for acknowledging the damage we may have caused to others, you might think about asking the people in your life whether they feel that your confession to them was too much. You may find this to be a useful reorientation.

* **Entrust ultimate accountability to the Lord.**

Because we are limited in nature, God must reveal our sins to us. In His mercy, he normally does so gradually so as to avoid overwhelming us with information while always emphasizing our need for him. If God is benevolent and merciful, then why does he demand a thorough confession from limited human beings, whose sins exceed our expression and surpass our comprehension? We shouldn't have to mentally prepare ourselves for every transgression we've done, surely. He surely does not expect flawless confession