

Misplaced Loyalty

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Let us get the truth right out there. No fancy introductions. Here it is, unvarnished: although your OCD/scrupulosity demands absolute loyalty from you, it has not and will not return that loyalty. It has no loyalty. In other words, you will be faithfully engaged in your obsessions and your compulsive behavior, laboring under the false belief that this activity will bring you lasting peace and clarity. But the minute you might feel any relief, your disorder will change the content and focus. OCD has no loyalty to the content of your thoughts, feelings, or worries. It only cares about the anxiety that is animated by guilt and shame. If you get even a little close to some sort of clarity, your OCD will change the content.

That is the primary reason why your doubts and questions make no sense. You believe if you can just get a clear answer to whatever you may be focused on, you will enjoy peace. Your OCD/scrupulosity does not care and will not let you find peace. With this disorder, you will always have something to obsess about.

This is so difficult to accept and understand because the intensity of the feelings associated with the content seems to be real. You think, *Certainly, if I feel this terrible about this thought, that must mean there is at least a kernel of truth in it, right?* No. There is no truth or authenticity. You most certainly feel what you feel, but the interpretation of what the content suggests is

false. The disorder uses the content to generate the feeling and confuse you, setting you on a hopeless spiral down a “rabbit hole,” each step increasing the anxiety.

The obsessions and compulsions generated in response to the false interpretation of what you are feeling become stronger. They never reset to zero. You never start from scratch. You begin where you left off, and with each compulsion and obsession acted on, the feeling increases.



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***You are the only one who can say,
“Enough is enough. I will manage
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these fears.”***

That's yet another lie from the disorder! If you get temporary relief, you believe you must be on the right path. Another lie! The path merely is slowing the growth of the feelings and the accompanying hopelessness associated with the fear.

The worst outcome of this constant back and forth is real suffering, confusion, and a sense of helplessness. Feelings associated with content, generated with just enough hope to make you believe that it demands a response, all the while lead you further down a path that goes nowhere.

Is this a description of ultimate frustration? Does this mean you are doomed to a life of suffering with the disorder? No, but it does mean you have to be willing to abandon the content that disturbs you as easily as the OCD will abandon it. You cannot be more loyal to the disorder than the disorder is loyal to the content. You are the only one who can say, "Enough is enough. I will manage these feelings and not respond to these fears." It can be accomplished, not by paying attention to the details of the content but by feeling the feelings generated and learning that your feelings will not harm you.

Feeling bad does not mean that something bad has happened or will happen. Feeling lucky does not mean that luck is guaranteed. Feeling surprised means you are surprised. Feeling angry means something has made you angry. All of this is perfectly normal. It does not mean you sinned. It means you are alive. Unfortunately, with OCD/scrupulosity, through no fault of your own, you are fundamentally disconnected from the true meaning of your feelings. Your default perception is some kind of catastrophe, the worst possible outcome. This interpretation is generated by the content that your discovery is using to make you feel anxious. Do not default to the disorder's perception. Interpret what is happening. This means feeling the feeling and moving on.

If you desire to manage your OCD/scrupulosity and not be tossed about from one obsession or

compulsion to another, the way is not through the content you are paying attention to. The only way to heal is through your feelings, as frightening as they may be. Feel the feelings. Acknowledge you are feeling what you are feeling, but the interpretation of what the feeling means is not real. Your disorder has robbed you of the ability to trust your first impulse, your first interpretation of what might be going on. The more distraught you feel, the more hopeless you might perceive yourself to be, the more catastrophic you assume is the result of what is going on. It is all a lie. The disorder makes a straight path crooked. The path is not sinful, no matter what you feel and no matter how you may have parsed the definition of sin so that it somehow applies to the content that is generating your feeling.

One of the first steps on the pathway to managing the disorder is to deprive it of any new content or examination of the content already engaged. That means stop researching. Stop asking questions. Refrain from the impulse to seek reassurance. You cannot simply reduce the content or try and manage it. You must stop collecting new content. There is no such thing as "just a little bit more, just one more question." You already have more than enough information. More information is only going to make you more confused, more anxious, and less peaceful.

Loyalty is a wonderful virtue. It is good to have good and loyal relationships. It is good to remain loyal to family and friends and to be as supportive as possible. Misplaced loyalty, on the other hand, is not a virtue. Remaining loyal to the content that is generating fear, shame, and guilt in support of your OCD/scrupulosity is not a virtue. You cannot and must not be more loyal to the content of your suffering than the disorder is. Don't fall for what is not true or helpful. Trust your feelings, yes, but only after you discern if the feelings are authentic and true, not just generated by the content that your OCD is using to make you suffer. ✨

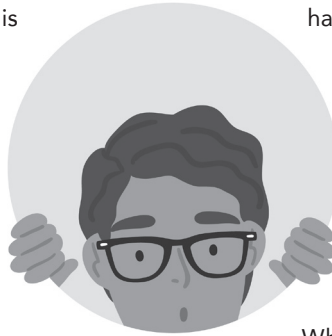
***A step on the way to managing
OCD/scrupulosity is
to deprive it of new content.***

Anxiously Seeking Jesus

“Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” Luke 2:48

People who are anxious all share a common bond. They know that worrying is painful, and they want to eliminate it from their lives. Between medication, self-help books, and spiritual programs, people spend millions of dollars trying to rid themselves of anxiety. Therefore, one should be able to state with confidence that anxiety is always a bad thing, correct? Yes and no. When we refer to the anxiety that causes us to worry unceasingly, we can say it is not good for us and eliminating it is a worthwhile pursuit. There’s another form of anxiety, however, that is a positive emotion and can be motivational in nature. In addition to being used negatively, the anxiety can also be used in a positive sense. It can imply that one has a sense of urgency or anticipation. For example, young children anxiously await the arrival of Christmas or their birthday. They can’t wait until the day arrives. When Mary told Jesus that she and Joseph were looking for him with “great anxiety,” she was not implying they were sitting around worrying. Instead, they were doing something productive: They were searching for him. Of course, they were nervous. That’s totally understandable, given that their Son was missing. As devout servants of God, they had every reason to feel anxious. But they didn’t just sit around and worry. They did something about it. They searched and finally found Jesus.

Let’s examine our own lives. The fact of the matter is that we can become separated from Jesus. Sadly, many people have little or no contact with him because “they’re too busy.”



There’s no doubt the world is a hectic place. It’s very easy to lose touch with the Lord. We are constantly surrounded by noise, and it’s sometimes hard to find quiet time for prayer. As a result, our relationship with Jesus suffers. What’s sad is that we often don’t care. As long as we’re entertaining ourselves, we’re happy, or at least we think we are. For years, my relationship with the Lord consisted of my presence at Mass once each week, plus maybe a prayer or two when I was desperate. I had lots of excuses and reasons why I didn’t have time to pray. Unfortunately, there was something missing in my life: a relationship with the Lord.

What’s even sadder is that I didn’t realize it at the time. I just thought this was the way life was supposed to be. It wasn’t until I finally began to make time for God that I understood how empty my life had become.

Our Lady is ready to welcome us back after we’ve gone astray. She will lead us to the loving arms of her Son so we can experience that same joyful reunion with Jesus that she and Joseph had in the Temple.

Recall situations in which you’ve felt separated from Jesus. How did it feel? Think of people you know who have left the Catholic Church or who have lost their zeal for the faith. What steps can you take to help them return? ✨



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Q. *I do not intend to be rude, but your answers to questions seem to be quite different than what I read in other sources. Sometimes they even contradict what others write. I am a little concerned that perhaps you are providing the wrong direction.*

A. That is completely understandable and not at all a bad insight. My answers to those who suffer with the scrupulous disorder are specific to the pastoral application of moral theology and the teaching tradition of the Church. I am focused only on providing pastoral help that makes a difference. Thank you for noticing.

Q. *When visiting a foreign country, am I required to follow its Catholic holy days of obligation? I will be visiting a country for a couple of weeks, and I noticed that they have a holy day that we do not celebrate in the United States. What is my obligation in this matter?*

A. You have no obligation. You are, of course, invited to celebrate a day with them that is holy in their tradition, but you do not have to do so. Personally, I would choose to celebrate with the local population because I might learn something new.

The answers in this newsletter may differ from those found in other sources that are designed to help people with scrupulosity. Our focus is to give pastoral help.



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