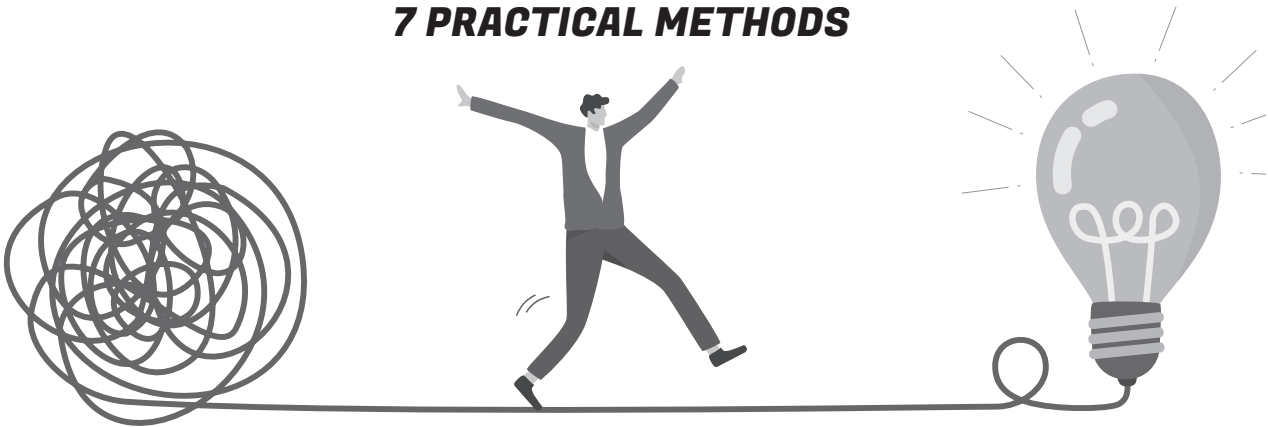


## ***Managing the Chaos of Scrupulosity***

### **7 PRACTICAL METHODS**



FR. PAUL J. COURY, CSSR

**W**e who have scrupulosity have experienced the disorder's terrible attack. Many times, it sneaks up on us and overwhelms us at the most unusual times and when we don't expect it.

What to do when scrupulosity hits you and begins to drag you down? Hopefully you are working hard to manage the disorder in the areas of **medication, psychological services, and a knowledgeable spiritual director**. This month's reflection, with seven tips, focuses on medicine and psychology.

Most people who suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and scrupulosity are taking medication, which is good and should continue. Of course, you have to be on the lookout constantly for how the medication is affecting you and keep working with your doctor to adjust it, as needed, to find the "sweet spot," where the

medicine eases your anxiety but does not overly "zunk you out."

**Medicine:** Remember to be in contact with your doctor fairly often to adjust your medication, as needed, so it works best for you. Also remember that new medications for the disorder get approved, and the medical companies might encourage your doctor to try the latest brand on you. Don't necessarily go for that. Sometimes the medications you are accustomed to might be the best. It is your body, mind, and spirit, so stay aware and in charge of what goes into your body and how it affects you! Do not give that power over to anyone else, including physicians. Your ongoing dialogues with doctors, friends, and trusted others are essential.

**Psychological services:** It is important that you are in dialogue with a psychologist on a regular

***Fill your mind with whatever is happening around you at the present moment.  
Do not give your anxieties an inch to sneak in.***

basis. Your task is to find practical methods of living that will help you let go of obsessive anxieties and not engage in compulsions. The first line of defense that the psychologist will offer you is to help you become aware of the anxieties. He or she will then help you build up your willpower so you do not engage in the compulsions that the anxieties trigger. Separating the obsessions from the compulsions is a difficult, painful step. But the more you do it, the better you will become at managing your scrupulosity.

Also, there are other things you might engage in that may help ease the anxiety/scrupulosity attack. Here are some methods that people have tried that seem to work.

- **Be mindful.** The mind cannot hold two powerful, overwhelming entities at the same time. I am sure you have experienced an overwhelmingly anxious moment, and then something happens. It could be an accident in front of you, a piece of music that fills you with a memory, a phone call from a friend...suddenly, the anxiety is gone and your mind is filled with the present moment. You can do this intentionally. If you are caught in obsessions and anxieties, flood your mind on purpose with a memory that is more powerful than the obsession. You could also have a piece of music ready that will pull up a powerful memory. Put that music on a loudspeaker and dance or walk to it. If you play a musical instrument, play your favorite piece of music and/or sing along with it. Replace dark anxieties with joy-filled emotions.
- **Watch your favorite movie.** Scrupulosity cannot compete with the emotional energy of a movie you love. Sink into a couch, have some popcorn, and let the movie's sound and visuals fill your mind and take you on a journey. It will be difficult for your anxious/scrupulous side to sneak back in.
- **Look through your favorite photo album.** Flip the pages slowly, remembering in detail all the events that surrounded each picture. It is even better if you have someone else on hand to share the memories with and who can add to the memories.
- **Get involved with projects with a group where you can push love outside of yourself.** Volunteer at a food bank, join a group that builds beds for poor families, get involved in a parish activity, or join a book club. The key to lessening any obsession is to be around people, especially those who are joined in a common project.
- **Do the opposite.** When anxiety attacks you and you begin to move into your compulsions to try to lessen the situation, instead do the exact opposite of what your compulsions suggest. If your scrupulosity demands that you say a certain number of prayers, just say one prayer, then say: "I trust in you, Lord," and trust God to handle the rest. If your scrupulosity demands that you do not receive holy Communion, instead receive holy Communion with full attention and devotion, saying, "Lord, I place this moment into your hands!"
- **Be kinder to yourself.** Scrupulosity attacks never praise or help you. OCD and scrupulosity are not your friends. They accuse you, as if you are always on trial. Staying in the obsessive "worry room" too long can be exhausting and debilitating. Remember that God's whole task is to love you, and your task is to be absolutely kind to yourself. Pass on the love of God to yourself.



Most people who suffer from scrupulosity are very demanding of themselves and think that God is very demanding of them. If God showed up in their lives, God would tell them something like: "Lighten up, take it easy, be of kindness and joy! After all, I created you, and I do love you, always, everywhere and forever." ✨

**Fr. Paul J. Coury, CSsR**, a priest since his ordination in 1972, is one of the spiritual directors on [ManagingScrupulosity.com](http://ManagingScrupulosity.com). Fr. Paul began serving as a guest contributor to *Scrupulous Anonamous* in 2024. He has ministered as a teacher, retreat director, formation director, and as a theological editor at Liguori Publications.

## *Do You Have a Mission?*

FR. MARK HAYDU, LC

***Before birth the Lord called me, from my mother's womb he gave me my name.***

ISAIAH 49:1

**W**hen an artist begins a painting, usually she or he has the end result in mind. The final product, the inspiration, is what sets the artist in motion.

Aristotle called this ideal the "final cause" because it was the first thing in mind (the inspiration) and the last to be realized (the final product). When God gives life to a human at the moment of conception, he does so with a final mission in mind for that child. He gives life freely, but not without a plan.

You and I are not the result of a coincidence or a chain of chemical reactions. We began at the heart of a loving, purposeful God. God willed you and wants you! You are who you are because of God's infinite love. He created you as a unique and divinely designed human being. His purposeful hand reached out and lifted you into existence just the way you are.

Yet your creation is not merely in the past but a reality that touches you now. God holds you and keeps you in every moment of your life. With every breath and movement, God is sustaining you. Your life is a loving project of God today.

Like St. John the Baptist, who was created and called to be Jesus' cousin and prepare the way for him, so you have a call to prepare the way for Jesus to enter your world. How you do that in your lifetime as well as how you do that today is something unique to you.

Your life has a mission! What is it? ✨

### **Reflect**

*Do I have a strong sense of God's mission for my life?*

*What might be some of the elements?*

*How have I benefited from other people who have been generous with their own mission?*

**Fr. Mark Haydu, LC**, has written reflections for *Our Parish Community Sunday* bulletins (Liguori Publications). He is the author of *Meditations on Vatican Art* and *Meditations on Vatican Art: Angels*, both published by Liguori Publications. Fr. Mark is the national chaplain of the Lumen Institute.

# Mailbox

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**Q.** *Father, you often refer to the need for “context” when you are providing help and direction. What exactly do you mean when you talk about context?*

**A.** I believe context provides the necessary tools we need to more fully understand an experience. It helps us determine how we might choose what our next step might be, what should be avoided, and what should be considered in the decision-making process. Context widens our perspective, admits what is not easily understood, and acknowledges that all of us do not completely understand without real effort and discipline.

**Q.** *Is it permissible for individuals to “dispense themselves” from an obligation? Are dispensations limited to priests and bishops, those with the “power to bind and to lose”?*

**A.** Yes and no, not exactly the kind of answer that a person with scrupulosity likes to hear. All Catholics can dispense themselves, for a good reason, from general obligations. In fact, such dispensational authority is often referenced in the obligation itself, for example the eucharistic fast. On the other hand, there are serious obligations that can only be dispensed by the proper authorities. For example, permission for a Catholic to get married in a location other than a Catholic church is usually decided only by the bishop of the person’s diocese.

—FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

## Additional Resources Online for Those Who Are Seeking Help

Resources online that people with scrupulosity have found very helpful have been produced by Liguori Publications. For helpful videos, please visit [YouTube/Catholic OCD](#).

For pastoral care and spiritual direction opportunities, please visit [managingscrupulosity.com](#).

For direct support and to access new helpful videos, please visit [Patreon.com/CatholicOCD](#). Patreon also offers a direct mail feature that can be used to answer your personal questions and concerns.

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