

Therapeutic aspects *Ricky and the Spider*

The core elements of cognitive behavior therapy for patients with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) consist of psycho-education, externalizing techniques and exposure with response prevention. These elements are integrated in *Ricky and the Spider* in the following ways:

Level 1 - the subtle beginnings of the disorder:

Ricky and Lisa tell about the subtle beginnings of their disorder and how they follow orders because of the fear that the Spider generates. Ricky realizes that he is being pulled further and further into the Spider's web of OCD and decides to ask Dr. Owl for help.

Level 2 - the concept of a thought filter:

The Spider wields such power over the insects because she successfully frightens them. In accordance with Salkovskis' (1999) cognitive model of OCD, Dr. Owl compares our stream of thoughts to a brook. Things that don't belong in the water are filtered out thanks to a grate. In our stream of thoughts, there is a thought filter that prevents absurd thoughts from passing through. Unfortunately, the Spider has damaged Ricky's and Lisa's thought filters and they are aware of every absurd thought, while others can ignore them.

Level 3 - tools that help fight OCD, externalizing strategies:

In their fight against the Spider, Ricky and Lisa need four things: to be kind to themselves, the courage to change, patience and a helper. A four-leaf clover represents these four strategies and returns in later levels, where the child has to find out which help strategy is best suited. As an externalizing technique, Dr. Owl encourages the friends to come up with silly nicknames for the Spider.

Level 4 - creating the compulsion map:

Ricky and Lisa need to gather all of the different things that the Spider forces them to do and rate the difficulty of not obeying the Spider's orders (1= very easy, 10 = very difficult). Because they need courage to confront the Spider, these exercises on the compulsion map are called 'courage tasks'. The child also needs to make a compulsion map with courage tasks to complete.

Level 5 - first exposure task:

After having helped the two friends to simplify some of their courage tasks, Dr. Owl instructs them to carry out the easiest of the tasks. Lisa is eager to be the first to try and Ricky follows her for better or worse... Dr. Owl encourages the child to practice his or her easiest courage task several times a day.

Level 6 - further exposure tasks:

Lisa receives additional courage tasks and is encouraged by Ricky and the child to not give up in their fight against the Spider. Dr. Owl warns that the friends should not rush ahead to the next courage task before completely having mastered the previous task.

Level 7 - further exposure tasks:

Ricky receives additional courage tasks. As he hesitates and tries to put them off, Lisa and the child help motivate him to continue by using the four-leaf clover as support.

Level 8 - presentation of the certificate:

To congratulate Ricky and Lisa for their hard work, Dr. Owl presents them with a certificate. This certificate describes everything that they have learned. The child also receives a certificate that states that he or she may ask for help at any time, when needed.

The keywords

At the end of levels I, II and III the notebook will blink in the menu; by clicking on the notebook the interactive worksheet appears. If the child completes the worksheet with only one mistake he or she has successfully completed the level and Dr. Owl will provide the keyword for the next level.

As of level V, only the therapist, in cooperation with the parents, can determine if the child has completed the therapeutic homework satisfactorily. The keyword is necessary in order to advance in the game and appears at the beginning of levels V, VI, VII and VIII. If the therapist is of the opinion that the child has successfully completed the assignments, he or she may click on "Yes" and Dr. Owl will provide the keyword.

Level 2	GRASSHOPPER	Level 3	THOUGHT FILTER
Level 4	SPIDER WEB	Level 5	COMPULSION MAP
Level 6	COURAGE TASK	Level 7	SPIDERWEBLAND
Level 8	ENDURANCE		

Therapeutic Materials to download

In order to facilitate bridging the gap between the game and the child's daily life with obsessive-compulsive disorder, there are supplementary therapeutic materials at your disposal under downloads on the website www.rickyandthespider.uzh.ch. Worksheets one to three are similar to the computerized ones; however, the answers can be formulated as desired. Worksheet number four consists of creating the compulsion map. Worksheets five to seven are to help with the exposure tasks. To help the child grow accustomed to completing the therapeutic homework on a regular basis, we recommend giving the homework for levels one to seven after each of the completed therapy sessions.

Ricky and the Spider is a therapeutic tool, but does not replace the therapist. Only the therapist can decide if the child is ready to move on to the next level. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a chronic disorder and often persistent and stubborn. It will not be possible with every child, to diminish the symptoms of the disorder, in such a way, as to be able to print out the certificate after seven to eight therapy sessions. We suggest repeating levels V, VI and VII, alternating, until the child has successfully completed enough courage tasks. At the same time, the fears, doubts and lack of motivation that both Ricky and Lisa themselves experience, may serve to encourage the child to pull through.