Anxiety Disorders: OCD - Cognitive Theories & Treatment

**COGNITIVISTS BELIEVE THAT OCD IS THE RESULT OF FAULTY AND IRRATIONAL THINKING PROCESSES.**

**Why?**

**COGNITIVISTS BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE INFORMATION PROCESSORS, A BIT LIKE COMPUTERS. EMOTION AND BEHAVIOUR ARE THE RESULT OF HOW PEOPLE PROCESS INFORMATION IN THE MIND.**

**HOW?**

**TREATING OCD REQUIRES THE PATIENT TO ALTER THE THINKING PROCESSES THAT UNDERLIE THEIR SYMPTOMS.**

**OCD STARTS WITH ANXIETY-PROVOKING THOUGHTS. IN RESPONSE THE PERSON DOES THINGS TO REDUCE THEIR ANXIETY LEVELS.**

**OCD PATIENTS TEND TO BE PERFECTIONISTS. THE THOUGHT OF DOING SOMETHING 'BAD' TENDS TO MAKE THEM ANXIOUS.**

**PARADOXICALLY, THIS MAKES THE BAD THOUGHTS MORE LIKELY TO OCCUR, RESULTING IN THE OBSESSION.**

**TWO IMPORTANT PROCESSES**

**THEY TRY TO SUPPRESS THE BAD THOUGHTS BY DELIBERATELY NOT THINKING ABOUT THEM.**

**THEY DO THINGS THEY BELIEVE WILL REDUCE THEIR ANXIETY (E.G. WASHING THEIR HANDS IF THE THOUGHTS ARE ABOUT DIRT).**

**THE SHORT TERM REDUCTION IN ANXIETY MAKES THE COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOUR MORE LIKELY TO RECUR.**

**COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING INVOLVES QUESTIONING THE CLIENT TO HELP THEM UNCOVER THE HIDDEN ASSUMPTIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR ANXIETY.**

**IN HABITUATION TRAINING THE CLIENT DELIBERATELY THINKS OF THEIR OBSESSION TO HELP THEM LEARN TO STOP TRYING TO SUPPRESS IT.**

**IN REALITY TESTING THE CLIENT DELIBERATELY DOESN'T DO THEIR COMPULSION TO PROVE TO THEMSELVES THAT NOTHING BAD HAPPENS AS A RESULT.**