
ABSTRACT

Short-term exposure and response prevention for obsessive-compulsive disorder: A case report

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Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by obsessions, defined as repeated thoughts, urges, or mental images, and compulsions that are repetitive behaviors in response to an obsessive thought. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) by exposure and response prevention (ERP) is an empirically supported psychotherapy. However, implementation of the ERP requires skill and experience as a therapist: the more severe the symptoms, the more difficult the treatment. This case report details the author's experiences with a young woman whose OCD was treated successfully with CBT alone, without pharmaceutical treatment. The client was a 20-year-old woman who began exhibiting symptoms of OCD in June brought about by anxiety over having possibly run someone over while driving a car. Later, she began to worry about gas, electrical outlets, and keys. Her symptoms worsened; four months after onset, the author began providing CBT centered on ERP. Treatment ended successfully after only eight sessions. Using this case, the author examines the therapeutic strategies used in the ERP that enable new OCD clients to enjoy remission without any aggravation of their symptoms.

Key Words: obsessive-compulsive disorder, cognitive behavior therapy, exposure and response prevention, therapeutic contrivances
