

Unhelpful Interpretations of Obsessions

- **Thought-action fusion.** People with this kind of interpretation think that their unwanted or “bad” thoughts:
 - Increase the likelihood of the “bad thought” (for example, a loved one being in a plane crash) actually happening.
 - Are just as wrong as “bad” deeds. For example, having a thought about beating up your friendly elderly neighbour for no reason is just as bad as actually committing the act.
- **Inflated responsibility.** This obsession involves overestimating or exaggerating the amount of responsibility you have over the outcome of an event. For example, “If I do not wash my hands frequently and carefully, it will be entirely my fault if anyone in my family gets a cold or becomes sick.”
- **Overestimation of threat.** People with this interpretation believe that their worst fears are extremely likely to happen. For example, “If I don’t wash my hands after touching this door knob, I will end up with AIDS and die.”
- **Mental control failure.** Many people with OCD also believe that they should be able to control their thoughts at all times, and that not being able to completely control their thoughts will lead to terrible consequences. For example, “If I don’t control all the thoughts in my head, I will go crazy or have a nervous breakdown”. Some people with this interpretation think, “If I can’t control my thoughts, then...”:
 - The thought must be meaningful (e.g., “Why else do I keep on having them?”)
 - The thought shows a flaw in my character (e.g., “I must be weak; otherwise I would be able to control my thoughts”).
 - I will also lose control over my behaviour. For example, “If I don’t stop having the thought of stabbing my partner, I will end up doing it and killing him.”
- **Perfectionism.** This obsession is the belief that there is one “perfect” way to do everything and that anything less than perfect is totally unacceptable. See the [How to Overcome Perfectionism](#) section for more information about perfectionism and how to be more flexible with your standards.
- **Intolerance of uncertainty.** This obsession involves the belief that you need 100% certainty that something bad has not or will not happen in order to feel “safe” or continue with your daily activities. See the [How to Tolerate Uncertainty](#) section for more information about how to increase your comfort with uncertainty.