

## Life... OCD – Did I lock the computer lab?

### **Situation:**

I was driving home this evening, unwinding by listening to some smooth music, when I suddenly had the thought, “ Did I locked the door of the computer lab?”

### **Symptoms:**

Immediately my thoughts started speeding around inside my head. “ I’m sure I locked it, in fact I checked it again on my way out. I’m almost certain I did. Of course I locked it. But what if I didn’t? We’ve got a lot of new, expensive equipment in there and all those software CD’s. What if somebody gets in and rips it off? Then I’ll be in big trouble.

I’m halfway home now. I’d be wasting my time going back if it was already locked. Larry and Chris are working late, they would notice if the door was open. They’ll lock it if I didn’t. I KNOW I locked it. But, what if I didn’t?

Something’s telling me I should go back and I know that “ something” is my obsessive thinking. My thoughts were really starting to distract me to the point that my body started feeling uptight and anxious.

### **Solution:**

I know the first thing I need to do when I get this way is to make a firm decision. In this case it was whether or not to give into impulse to drive back to work. At that point I really didn’t know. So, I started talking to myself out loud. “ I’ve been through these compulsive episodes before. They are harmless. Harmless! Distressing and uncomfortable? Yes. Dangerous? No! My racing, flip-flop thoughts are a symptom, only a symptom of my OCD. I am working at first recognizing them, then changing them. I can work through this! I can!

It’s my thoughts that are feeding the impulse that I “ have” to go back or something bad is going to happen.

Those secure thoughts helped me calm down a little and I was able to think more clearly. I forced myself to think back. “OK, when left the lab to go to my cubical, I tripped the lock on the inside before I closed the door. When I got to my desk, I shut down my PC, grabbed my jacket and walked past the lab again and turned the door handle to see if it was locked.

Although I still had a smidgen of doubt, I wasn’t 100% sure, at that point – I was about 95% sure the door was secure. Now 95% is good enough. I made the decision to continue driving toward my house. And if I started questioning whether that lab door was locked again, I would just have to talk myself through it, just like I did now.



***In the past:***

I've had a lot of treatment for my condition before, but no one explained about controlling my impulses by listening to and changing thoughts and commanding my muscles not to do something. In fact, no one ever told me that impulses could be controlled. It's a relatively simple method, not necessarily easy to do, but step by step, episode by episode, I'm gaining a lot of control – self-control.

I would have gone back to work because I had to be 100% sure. I couldn't live with any hint of doubt.



---

LSS314

© 2001 Rose VanSickle

PLJ Unlimited, Inc.

[www.pljunlimited.com](http://www.pljunlimited.com)