



# Cognitive Therapy for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: A Guide for Professionals

By Sabine Wilhelm PhD, Gail Steketee PhD



## Cognitive Therapy for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: A Guide for Professionals By Sabine Wilhelm PhD, Gail Steketee PhD

### A Cognitive Approach to Treating Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Based on research funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, this manual presents for the first time a purely cognitive approach to treating obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). This approach avoids the highly distressing exposure component of exposure and response prevention therapy (ERP) that is commonly used to treat the symptoms of OCD. Not only does this cognitive therapy (CT) approach open up the option of psychotherapy to those OCD sufferers who resist exposure-based therapy, it also holds great promise for treating OCD sufferers with mental rituals as well as those who struggle concurrently with depression, anxiety, and other symptoms.

The strategies described in this book focus intensively on the intrusive thoughts that can trigger negative beliefs and drive compulsive behaviors. The manual begins with a brief review of current facts about OCD. Then it describes how cognitive therapy can be applied to OCD. The several treatment modules that follow outline a brief three-to-four session approach therapists can use to help clients make real progress on their OCD beliefs and behavioral symptoms. Each module is complemented by a series of client worksheets and handouts.

This purely cognitive approach to OCD offers a number of benefits including:

- CT avoids the discomfort of prolonged exposure and response prevention (ERP)
- The therapy can be conducted entirely in the therapist's office
- CT is especially useful for patients with mental rituals and neutralizing strategies
- The treatment is based on NIMH-funded research and is empirically supported

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Wilhelm and Steketee have produced a step-by-step manual that is eminently practical and well grounded in theory and research. This book provides an evidence-based alternative to traditional behavioral treatments for OCD. It will be required reading for all of my students who treat OCD, and it should be read by anyone who works with this complex problem. It will certainly influence the way I approach OCD in my own practice.

—Martin M. Antony, Ph.D., ABPP, director of the Anxiety Treatment and Research Centre at St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, ON, and author of **When Perfect Isn't Good Enough** and several other books

#### From the Publisher

Two noted psychologists offer therapists the first purely cognitive treatment method for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which has been proven effective for people with pure obsessions, harming, religious, and sexual obsessions, as well as checking and mental rituals.

#### About the Author

Sabine Wilhelm, PhD, is associate professor of psychology at the Harvard Medical School and director of the Cognitive Behavior Therapy Program and clinical director of the Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Clinic, at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Gail Steketee, PhD, is a professor and co-chair in the department of clinical practice at the School of Social Work at Boston University. She is coauthor of *Buried in Treasures*.

**Aaron T. Beck, MD**, created and refined cognitive therapy over the course of his research and clinical career. He has published more than 600 scholarly articles and twenty-five books, and has developed widely used assessment scales. Beck has received many prestigious awards, including the 2006 Albert Lasker Clinical Medical Research Award for developing cognitive therapy. In 2013, he became the first recipient of the Kennedy Community Health Award from The Kennedy Forum. Beck has been listed as one of the ten “individuals who shaped the face of American psychiatry” and one of the five most influential psychotherapists of all time. He is emeritus professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, and director of the Aaron T. Beck Psychopathology Research Center. His current research focuses on cognitive therapy for schizophrenia, cognitive therapy for suicide prevention, and dissemination of cognitive therapy into community settings.

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