

Case A: Walter

Walter is a 44 years old man, divorced since 6 years and father of an 8 years old girl. He is off work since a year and a half ago because of his psychological difficulties. He could no longer run his business or even consider continuing to run it as he had to check his accounts several times, review the work organisation, and plan everything by fear that a problem might occur. Currently, he looks after his daughter every Wednesday and every other week-end. He rarely goes out and does have a lot of friends and hobbies. His flat is scarcely furnished for two (e.g., two plates) and with very little comfort.

During the first appointment, he complained of being afraid of everything, especially for his daughter. He is afraid of getting lost (when going from one place to another), of losing his relatives (especially his daughter), of losing his belongings (his bag, keys, credit card are always put at the same place and are checked several times). He continuously mentally rehearses his credit card code for fear of forgetting it or visualizes repeatedly the way to go to an appointment.

At home, he's afraid of not having switched off the gas, locked the door, or put out a cigarette ...so he checks. Before every action, he imagines all the possible scenarios. As he does not feel capable of doing something (e.g., preparing a meal - even though he has a cook's diploma-, doing his shopping, looking after his daughter), he follows strict routines. Everything is in its own place, he does his shopping in the same shop, and purchases the same prepared meals every week for example. He says that being in a routine is reassuring.

He has a negative image of himself. When looking back, he believes he's done nothing good. He always sees the worst-case scenario. He has no right to live as everybody else: he must fight all the time. He has no right to commit a mistake and, if anything happens, he feels responsible. He has looked after his sisters and his parents since he was relatively young and feels responsible for their wellbeing. Unfortunately, now, he can only give limited help and needs to look after himself, which is difficult for him.

Behavioral chain (adapted from Davidson & Clark, 2014)

What are the target behaviors?

A) Checking: gas, cigarettes, entrance door, windows...

Repeatedly recalls the Personal Identification Number (PIN) of his bank card for fear of forgetting it.

Checks that he has taken money before going out (in 3 different times)

B) Worries: about his daughter (8 years old): he fears that she may have an accident, a health problem.

Before any action, he anticipates everything, does not bear the idea that something unexpected could happen.

He is concerned about his immediate family (health, money).

What are the consequences of the behavior?

He has been off work for a year.

Never leaves home (he is always afraid to get lost even if he knows the route).

Follows routines at home (order of the objects) and in daily life (for example, he always eats the same things) and outings (always uses the same itineraries).

What is the potential precipitating factor of the problem behavior?

A home fire at his family's house (when he was 6-7 years old). He thinks it's his fault and feels guilty. He forgot to turn off the switch of the heater in the bathroom and the fire started. He feels responsible for the event and accountable for his family.

What are the perpetuating factors (thoughts, emotions, behaviors, feelings)?

High **intolerance to uncertainty**.

Anxiety (++++) before doing anything ("I won't make it").

Associated with feelings of worthlessness and sadness.

He feels incapable of doing anything (looking after his daughter, cooking, shopping, working, taking care of the house).

He has no right to make mistakes; everything he does well is "normal".

When he thinks of his past, he says he has done nothing good.

What are the internal or external factors that increase vulnerability to engage in the problem behavior?

The others always come before him and the others are always better than he is.

He has always been the one who was in charge of the family (especially his parents).

Does the patient have an idea on how different choices could have been made and would have changed the situation?

No