Theory A and Theory B in OCD

Worksheet

A practical CBT worksheet to help you notice OCD doubts, identify the different explanations, and choose a more helpful response.

What Is Theory A and Theory B?

A CBT exercise that helps you compare two possible explanations for an intrusive thought, so you can see when OCD may be driving a demand for certainty.

Theory A (The OCD Trap)

- Treats the thought as a real threat
- Feels like it must be solved
- Leads to checking, reviewing or reassurance
- Aims for certainty and to reduce anxiety

Theory B (A Different Perspective)

- Considers that this may be an OCD-related doubt
- Recognises the urge to check or analyse as part of OCD
- Allows for uncertainty
- Focuses on a different, values-based response

Intrusive Thought / Doubt Write the thought, fear or "what if?" that has come up.	**Theory A** (Threat) How might I interpret this if I treat it as a real problem?	**Compulsions / Urges** What do I feel urged to do? (e.g. check, review, seek reassurance, avoid, analyse feelings)	**Theory B** (Alternative) A different explanation (e.g. this may be an OCD-related doubt and a demand for certainty).	**A Different Response** (Practice) What could I do instead that aligns with Theory B? (e.g. allow uncertainty, reduce checking, refocus on values)

Questions to Reflect On

- What is the doubt or intrusive thought?
- Am I responding as if Theory A is definitely true?
- How might this be part of the OCD cycle?
- What would a more flexible, Theory B response look like?

Key Reminders

- ✓ The aim isn't to prove the thought is definitely not true.
- ✓ You don't need to be 100% certain which theory is correct.
- ✓ Notice when the urge to analyse, check or seek reassurance shows up.
- ✓ Practise allowing some uncertainty and gently return to what matters to you.