Twitter Thread by Omar Bazza



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[THREAD] In our last thread, we talked about the physical symptoms of mental health. Let's focus this one on the psychological symptoms, mainly intrusive and racing thoughts. Why do they happen? What are the solutions for them?

While physical symptoms can be very hard to deal with, psychological ones are not easy. Intrusive thoughts are some of the most troubling to deal with. It is important to note that every single person on this planet gets intrusive thoughts. No exceptions!

Why do they seem to impact some more than others? That's because in someone who does not have anxiety, they will simply overlook these thoughts. They know they are thoughts that they won't act on. However, in someone who is suffering from anxiety, those thoughts will stick.

That's because the intrusive thought(s) will induce a lot of anxiety, and the more emotion we attach to a thought, the more likely it is to be saved in our memory and come back often. Therefore, a thought that should have left right away stays for a long time.

The reason why intrusive thoughts are scary to begin with is because they are often of sexual, violent, and dark thoughts. Therefore, we get scared that we may lose control and act on these thoughts or turn into a bad person. However, the fact that they are scary means a lot.

It means that we cannot act on them because just the idea of them is enough to send us in a panic attack. There is absolutely no risk that these thoughts will turn us into another person or that they will make us lose our mind no matter what our panic induced state tells us.

We also place too much emphasis on thoughts. I remember hearing often when I grew up that "thinking about stealing is already half the act of stealing". Guess what happened? I started having thoughts of stealing and feeling guilty about them.

The truth is intrusive thoughts cannot lead to unwanted actions on our part. Racing thoughts serve a slightly different function. When we are anxious, we are in that state of fight-or-flight, which means that our thoughts are racing to find a solution to the potential danger.

Therefore, it may seem that our thoughts are all over the place and may not make sense. It tends to reinforce our anxiety that something bad may be happening or that we are losing our minds, making it more likely to suffer further panic attacks.

While these psychological symptoms are slightly different, their solution (in theory) is potentially the same because they rely on the same source of nourishment, namely our fear. The fear is what sustains them and makes them more likely to come back.

When we realize that racing and intrusive thoughts cannot harm us, they start to lose their power and when they do, they disappear. We cannot fight them or try to force them to go away. That doesn't work well at all. Therefore, we are going to do the complete opposite.

We will allow them to stay as long as they want. That's right. We will welcome them and tell them that they can stay as long as they want because we know they can't harm us. When we accept them unconditionally and allow them to stay, they start to go away.

It may seem counterintuitive but it really works well. Next time you get racing or intrusive thoughts, just let them be. Give them the space, knowing that they can't harm you, can't do anything besides that anxiety. When that fear starts to slowly go away, so will the thoughts.

This may sound easy in theory, but it takes time and a lot of practice until we get to the end poin. Please be patient with yourself even if it is not very successful at first and consider having a therapist that will help guide you through the process.