

Animated Minds: Obsessively Compulsive

Transcript

Whenever I thought of Saddam Hussein, I thought I could cause the conflict in the Gulf to increase and this could quite literally end up with World War Three, and then I'd have to blank the thought of Saddam Hussein out all the time.

Ordinary day to day simple tasks from picking something up, putting something down, I had to do it in the absence of an intrusive thought. If I couldn't do that, I'd have to repeat the behaviour over and over again.

A big problem I did have was walking from one side of a room to another in the absence of an intrusive thought. If an intrusive thought came through, I would have to retrace my steps back, a bit like asking someone to walk across a minefield really – very careful as to where I put my feet. If I sat down in a chair when an intrusive thought came through, I'd get out of the chair, and go through the action again.

From halfway through reading a particular sentence or paragraph, and an intrusive thought came through, I'd have to return to the section again and read it again and make sure that I blanked that intrusive thought out. If I breathed in while an intrusive thought came through, I thought 'well, I've put it in my lungs', I'd have to breathe out very sharply and breathe in again. I would regurgitate food after I'd swallowed it because an intrusive thought came in - again, the food, I'm contaminating my body. I would pick skin from the back of my hands and I'd have to do it in the absence of an intrusive thought. If I wasn't successful, I'd pick it again and again until there was just one big scab.

It's a bit like an itch – you want to scratch, and you don't want to because you might spread it and then there comes a time when you just can't take it any longer and you scratch it and scratch it and it gives you temporary relief, and then it just comes back.

The pictures of Saddam Hussein I put on every wall of every room of the house. I had to record in my own voice the name 'Saddam Hussein, Saddam Hussein' over and over again and after a period of time the length of time you're experiencing the anxiety becomes less and less and less, and then next day those things that were annoying you the day before aren't annoying you any more and you get another lot of symptoms coming.