

The following is adapted from: 'The Imp of the Mind: Exploring the Silent Epidemic of Obsessive Bad Thoughts' by Lee Baer

Facing Your Fears Head-on: Exposure Therapy

Many of my patients are shocked when I tell them that to overcome their bad thoughts they are going to have to face them head-on. "Isn't there an easier way?" they often ask, reminding me that they've done all they could for years to avoid thinking about these things. My answer is that we have yet to find a treatment that works as well and as rapidly as directly confronting or "exposing" yourself to the very thing that you fear. Indeed, extensive research around the world since the late 1960s on the use of this "exposure therapy" for OCD has confirmed that repeated exposures of one to two hours at a time are highly effective in reducing obsessions in most sufferers.

The principles of exposure therapy can be stated simply:

Expose yourself to the thing that most triggers your fear or discomfort for one to two hours at a time, without leaving the situation, or doing anything else to distract or comfort you.