

An Eight-Hour Study of an OCD Individual:

Entrance to the thoughts and observation of Daemon's everyday behavior

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EIGHT-HOUR STUDY OF AN OCD INDIVIDUAL

Abstract

This term paper is about the Volunteer Buddy Assignment for Mr. Michael Foy's Introduction to Psychology class in Social Sciences. The author of this journal pairs up with his classmate in this volunteering assignment. For confidentiality purposes, the author will call his friend 'Basile.' The author of this journal is assigned to an OCD individual for the length of the volunteering. For confidentiality purposes, the author will call the individual 'Daemon (male).' This paper follows Daemon as he does his everyday activities at John Abbott College in order to document his unique behaviors towards other people and objects. Finally, this paper aims to bring about another close view of an OCD person.

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Activities and Client Behavior

Entry February 20th

This is the author's first encounter and first week on the assignment. The author and Basile were introduced to Daemon in Boris the manager's office. Their first task was to remove expired posters off from the bulletin boards around the whole school, which means walking around all the way from Casgrain to Stewart Hall, looking for ingeniously placed bulletin boards on different floors. The author was discouraged at first, since he is extremely slothful, especially around the time of his afternoon nap. Nevertheless, the author gave the task the benefit of the doubt, so as to know more about Daemon and how Daemon normally behaves in the hallway.

The author's first impression of Daemon was that he talks very fast at a comparatively incomprehensible pace. For someone who was not used to listening to him, Daemon presented an initial challenge to comprehend. While the three were walking down the hall to find the bulletin boards, Daemon tried to pick up anything that he deemed trash/garbage from the ground and put them in trash bins. Even though the author and Basile tried to stop him, using words or force, there was no way to do it. Moreover, maybe it is because of his OCD condition, he can detect trash and garbage lying around with the attentiveness of a highly sensitive metal detector.

Endnote: Daemon likes gum, always asks for gum from Boris after he has done something; Daemon holds his hands up to the level of his face and does a fluttering action with his fingers.

We'll call the hand action "flutteration" to avoid further confusions.

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Entry February 27th

The author was eating so he in came a bit late to the office. Basile and Daemon had already left the office for Daemon's gym work-out. The author arrived at the gym when Daemon had been doing the cycling workout for a while. After a while without any problems, Daemon began to become distracted and inattentive at the workout routine. He began to put his hands and do the flutteration. This time, he shrieked out and freaked out. Daemon, at this point, had already gone into a 'road rage', if one would to describe. The author and Basile were also freaked out. The former repeatedly tried to calm Daemon down while the latter ran to Boris the Manager for assistance. Meanwhile, Daemon ran around the gym room and shrieked at the highest frequency, loudest decibel he could manage. He then hid himself in the gym bathroom stall and continued to shriek. Apparently, the author's calm and condescending voice could not ease the man's frustration. Few moments later, Boris the Manager arrived at the scene and he managed to tune the situation down by calming Boris with some, the author dare to say, predesignated "keywords." Later that afternoon, Boris told the author and Basile what to do in such dire situation. The method is to try to stop the initiation of the distressed behavior by telling Daemon to put his hands down right before the flutteration begins. Doing this effectively stop the incentive to continue with the flutteration and ultimately the distressing behavior with the yelling-shrieking combo.

Entry March 13th

After the school Spring break, the author and Basile met up again with Boris to have Daemon out for work. This time, we were assigned a poster job again. However, to our combined astonishment, this time, Daemon behaved more rationalized. His behaviors were completely in contrast with what we had borne witness to in the last 3 sessions. When Daemon

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saw trash lying on the ground, he asked us for permission to pick it up and when we said ‘no’, he simply complied. For the rest of the day, the session went by without any significant event. It seemed that music helps him focus, especially songs by his favorite artists: Drake and Chris Brown. We could see that it makes him focus on the task while keeping him from going into the distress behavior patterns.

Entry March 20th

Today, the author and Basile’s assignment was to watch over Daemon while he was doing his gym routine. We had hoped that this time would not turn out to be like the other day. In addition, our hope was answered by Daemon, figuratively. The gym session went by without any concerns although it may seem that Daemon was easily distracted if he were to be put under pressure, in particular, exhaustion from the gym session. Daemon showed a little bit of the onset of the distressing behavior pattern but nothing of a higher degree than that. Daemon likes girls and he was not afraid to show his affections. To our knowledge, this was partly due to his inability to fully control and suppress his own emotions.

Entry March 27th

Today, Daemon was sent to the Stewart Hall basement for some readings. Boris instructed us to have him read books for 45 minutes and then come back to the office. Daemon was not on a good mood and we could observe that he felt anxious at the time when the author and Basile met him. Therefore, we decided to tread lightly, so as not to escalate the already heated situation. Obviously, Daemon was mad because of the dried scratch marks on his face, which, according to Boris, caused him pain, elevating his anxiety. Daemon burst through the door of the office, onto the hall, and to our surprise, he did not pick up any trash lying around.

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Our inference was that his frustration and anxiety from the scratch marks actually distracted him from picking up stuff. When Daemon was reading, we noticed that he tended to be unable to focus on the reading, even though the reading was at elementary level with pictures and few, uncomplicated wordings. However, he managed to read the whole book without letting out a rage. In the end, he requested us to play some of his favorite music, i.e. Chris Brown and Drake. Daemon seemed to have calmed down after the book reading and the music. The author, at this point, dared to infer that reading book helped slow down Daemon's pace, from a high level of energy to a more comfortable level. He projects that music acted as a "depressant" to Daemon's highly anxious state to ultimately help make the client feel happier.

Entry April 4th, 2017

Today marked the last day of our Volunteering program. Boris gave an "overwatch" assignment, following Daemon with his 30-minute gym session. Daemon was a little bit jumpy from the start which kind of gave us the chills down our spines in regards to last time. But, it all went well and nothing in significant happened to be further reported.

End of Weekly Entries

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Client's Psychological Disorder

Brief Description

The psychological disorder of the client (Daemon) is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or more commonly known as OCD. Boris the Manager introduces the author to this behavior by describing that Daemon would pick up anything lying on the ground and put them into garbage bins. It is seemingly quite a *green* psychological disorder, but this OCD would create disadvantages Daemon's everyday activities. Another condition regarding to his OCD, as described by Boris, is that Daemon can neither express nor suppress his emotions normally. For example, Daemon cannot deal with stress very easily and he cannot hold back his excitement when he sees girls that he deems pretty from his perspective.

As Boris explains further, Daemon also has an autistic disorder, which makes "his mental age comparable to that of a five-year-old", and a linguistic/intelligent disability that only allows him to grasp very basic sentence and shallow depth of meaning. Loosely based on the APA¹'s *DSM-5*², the author knows that the client's linguistic severity is between Moderate and Severe (Table 1, 36).

Definition

As described on the U.S. National Library of Medicine: "Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a mental disorder in which people have unwanted and repeated thoughts, feelings, ideas, sensations (obsessions), and behaviors that drive them to do something over and over

¹ American Psychiatric Association

² American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. Arling, VA, American Psychiatric Association, 2013.

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(compulsions).³ In Daemon's case, his repeated thoughts and sensations are picking up random things on the ground (not particularly trash) and he puts the items into the bins (obsession). Daemon cannot be stopped once he has gone into the trance of picking up the items (compulsion).

Prevalence

The statistics from the DSM-5 says that, "The 12-month prevalence of OCD in the United States is 1.2%, with a similar prevalence internationally (1.1%-1.8%). Females are affected at a slightly higher rate than males in adulthood, although the males are more commonly affected in childhood" (DSM-5, p. 239)

Prognosis and Treatment

OCD is a disorder that manifests itself in forms of repetitive behaviors and mental acts throughout the patient's lifespan, such as hand washing, ordering, checking or praying, counting, repeating words silently (DSM-5, p. 237). And according to the Stanford School of Medicine:

OCD appears to be a chronic condition... The prognosis of children and adolescents who present for treatment appears to be good for half or more. Leonard et al. reported in 1993, that a little more than half of 54 children and adolescents were only mildly affected when evaluated two- to seven- years after vigorous treatment with medications, and less often with behavior therapy. (Course and Prognosis, ocd.stanford.edu/about)

³ U.S. National Library of Medicine. *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder*, Medical Encyclopedia. 2/2/2016. Accessed on 3/26/2017. Web. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000929.htm>

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The Author's Own Evaluations Based on the Information Given

The author believes that Daemon's inability to efficiently communicate with people surrounding him poses the greatest obstacle in his daily social life. It is not because Daemon cannot speak; it is not because Daemon cannot use hand signs; it is because that Daemon lacks the ability to decrypt deeper meanings in conversations and the common knowledge amongst people of his age group (30s). Daemon's situation is analogical to that of deaf patients who have had cochlea implants. Even though they are able to comprehend word-by-word meaning, they cannot understand the beauty of music with all the semantic specificities. However, the difference in Daemon's case is that his mental age is just five (according to Boris), so he cannot understand sentence complexity.

Based on his experience with Daemon, the author suggests that Daemon's learning process can be described this way. Daemon wants gum and always asks for gum from Boris. But, Boris uses this desire from Daemon to have him behave. Whenever Daemon behaves badly, he would not get gum and vice versa. So Boris is able to bring Daemon under control and solve the flutteration situations by using this technique. In the end, Daemon associates his considered-as-bad behaviors (picking up trash, invading people's personal space, etc.) with not getting gum, his favorite, from Boris.

Another conclusion that the author draws from his hours of observing Daemon is that Daemon behaves generally nice and condescending towards individuals of the opposite sex. It is highly due to his affection towards girls, especially ones that are pretty in his opinions, that overcomes his frustration.

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The Author's Thoughts about the Volunteering Program

I think to have Psychology students introduced to this program is a great way to help interest them further into the field of Psychology. I am able to realize more about the importance of Psychology in studying human behaviors, as it shows me that not everyone thinks alike and some have their own unique thought processes that are incomprehensible. By engaging in the volunteering, I can develop sympathies towards those are intellectually handicapped because their thoughts are often come by as ‘weird’ by the general population who are apathetic to the patients’ situations. Some think that Psychology is a field of study that comprises of multitude of knowledge. True. But at the same time, the knowledge learnt can be applied directly in real life as well. It is not incredibly abstract as Math or Physics as they are mostly invisible to human’s sight. While we are surrounded by people, we might as well try to understand them even just a little bit more instead of always shooting for the Moon and becoming a “lunatic” (pun-intended).

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