

# Fear and Flexibility: ERP 101

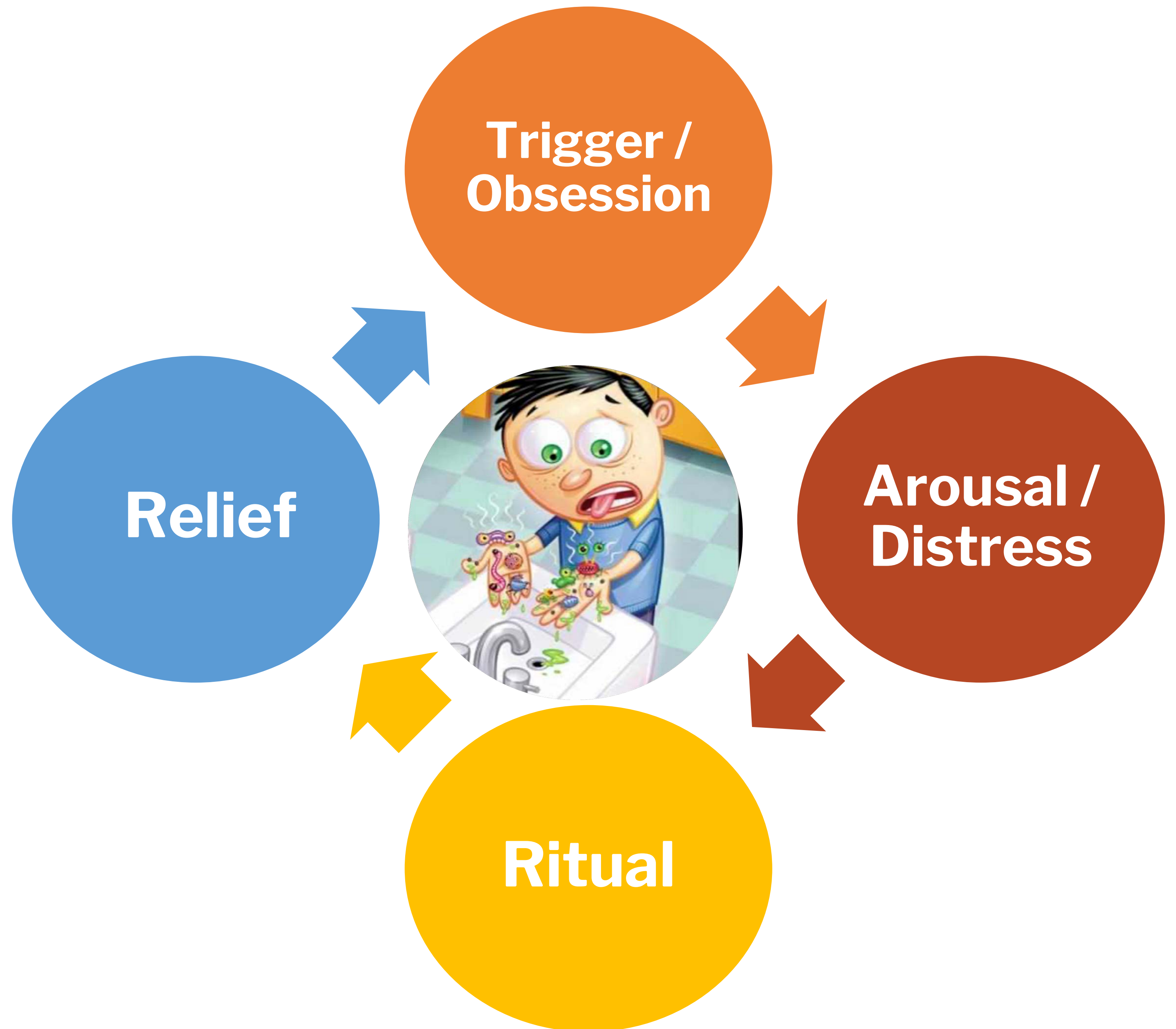
A photograph of two young children, likely of South Asian descent, laughing heartily on a sandy beach. The child on the left is wearing a red and white striped shirt with ruffled sleeves and a necklace with a small pendant. The child on the right is wearing a red and white striped tank top. The background is a soft-focus view of the ocean and sky.

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(she/they)

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(she/her)



How people  
get stuck (the  
OCD cycle)



# Gold- Standard Treatment

Exposure with Response  
Prevention (ERP)

Medication (serotonin reuptake  
inhibitors; SSRIs)

Adjuncts and other treatments  
e.g., ACT, SPACE, CBIT, HRT... etc.

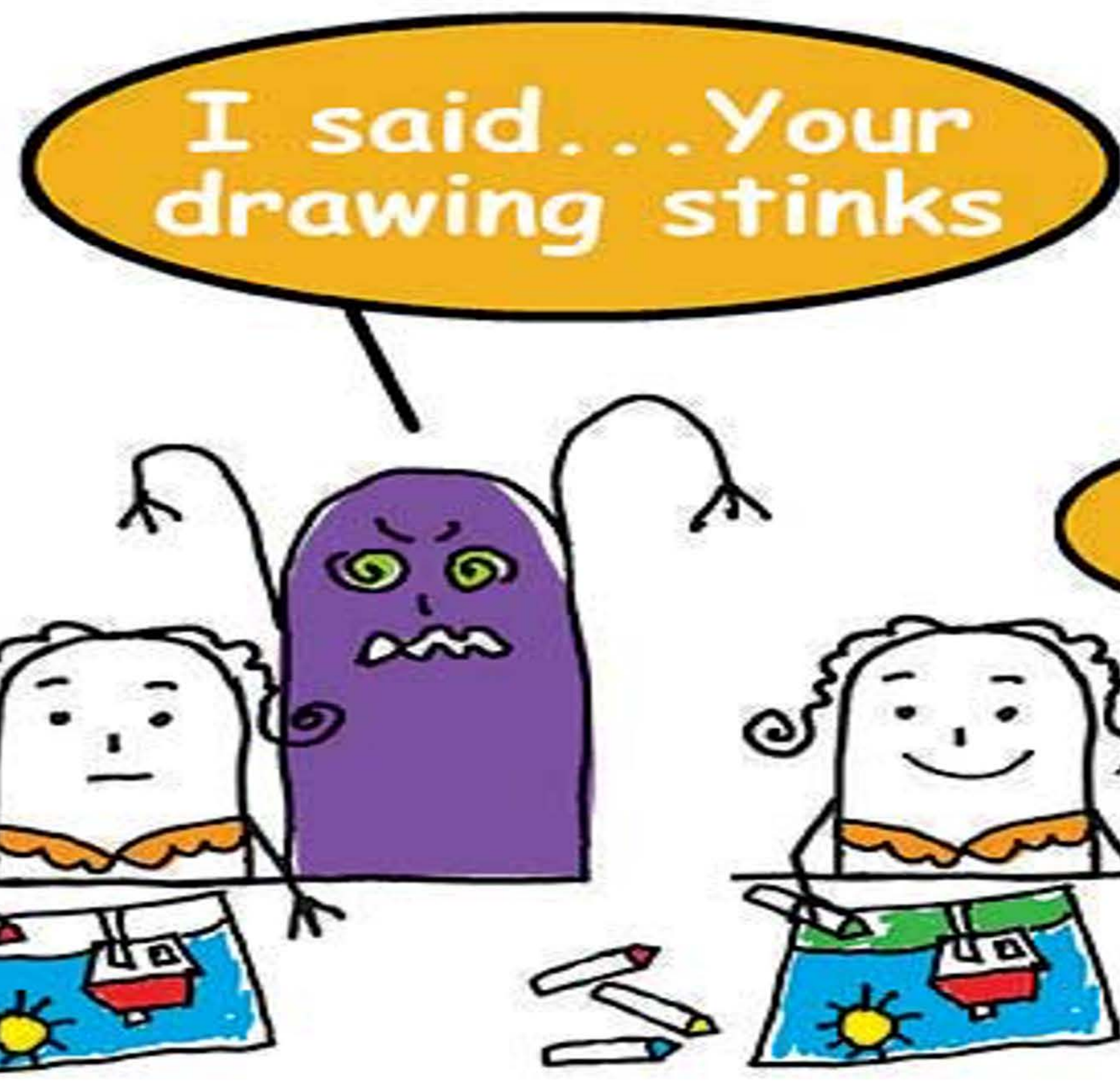




# ERP: Fear + Flexibility

1. **Exposure** - exposing yourself to triggers - “facing your fears”
2. **Response Prevention** - resisting or choosing not to avoid or do compulsions
3. **Learning to thrive** - responding in new ways to OCD (**flexibility**)







# How do I do ERP?

- ERP is not “one-size-fit-all”
- ERP Flavors:
  - Exposure Hierarchy (traditional CBT flavor)
  - Exposure Menu (inhibitory learning flavor)
  - Live Your Life Approach (ACT flavor)
- Most important things:
  - Start somewhere
  - Start trying to DO some things differently!



# Option #1: Exposure Hierarchy ERP

<b>SUDS (0-100)</b>	<b>Situation</b>
100	Sit next to your therapist holding a knife next to their wrist
90	Sit next to your therapist holding open scissors in your lap
80	Walk around your house holding scissors while your children are home playing
70	Prepare dinner at home for your family (using sharp knives)
60	Walk around the clinic holding scissors
50	Prepare lunch in the clinic using knives (with a coach present)
60	Write a script about how you accidentally lost control and stabbed someone while you were cooking
50	Say aloud “I could stab someone and kill them”
40	Sit with a dull knife (butter knife) next to you during a conversation with coach





## Option #2: Exposure Menu ERP

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- For each exposure exercise, choose one of the following:
  - Walk around the clinic holding scissors
  - Work on sending emails without re-typing the sentence multiple times
  - Say aloud “I could stab someone and kill them”
  - Prepare a meal with raw meat, sticking to agreed upon hand washing
  - Prepare a meal that involves using knives
- Notes:
  - Order doesn't matter in exposure menu, mix it up!
  - Okay to combine multiple different types of OCD symptoms



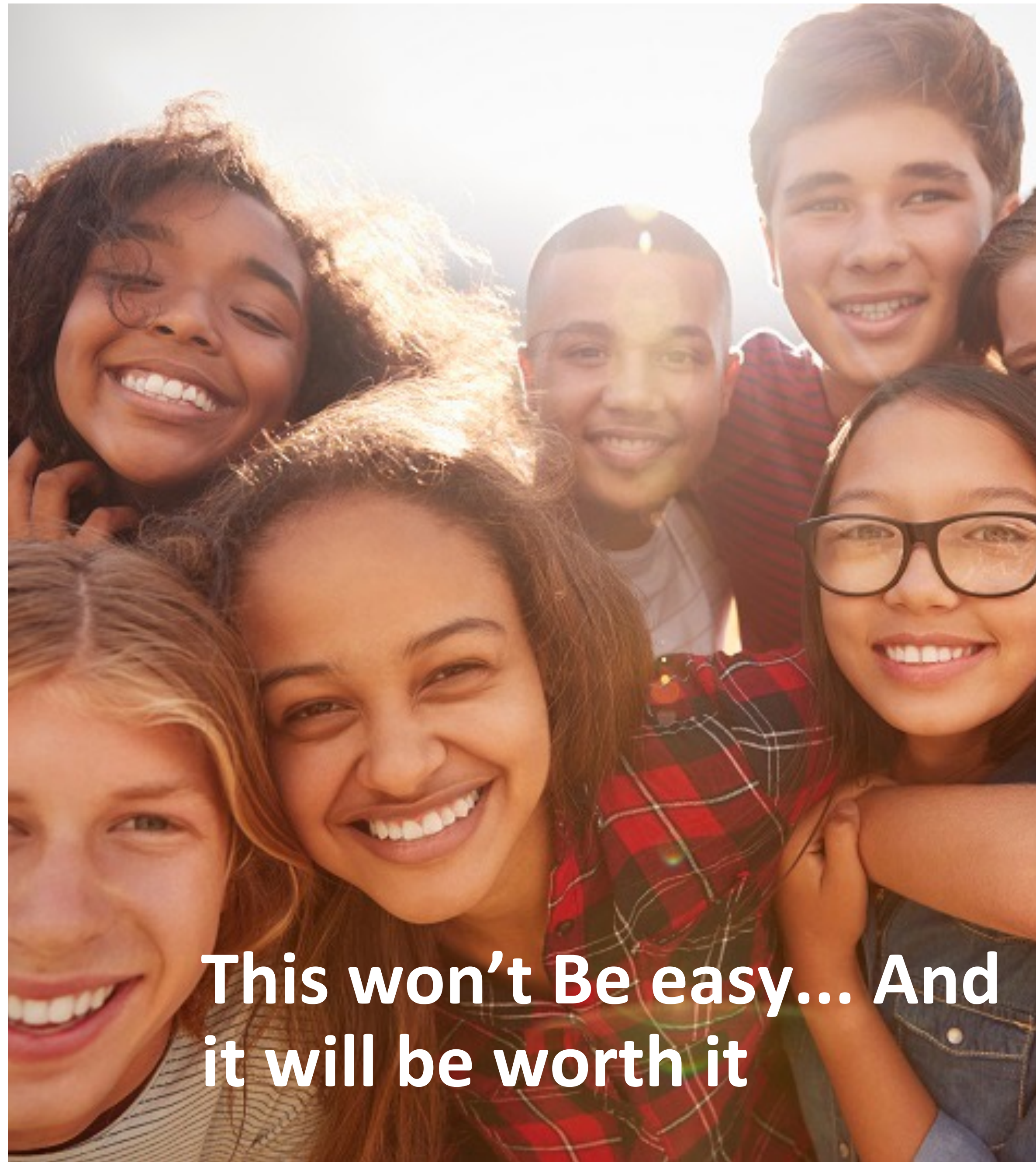


## Option #3: Living Your Life ERP

**Are you living your life? Let's start doing things that are important to you that OCD has taken away**

- Getting a job
- Reading a book
- Finding a new video game
- Dating
- Being the type of family member you want to be
- Watching interesting shows
- Cooking and cleaning

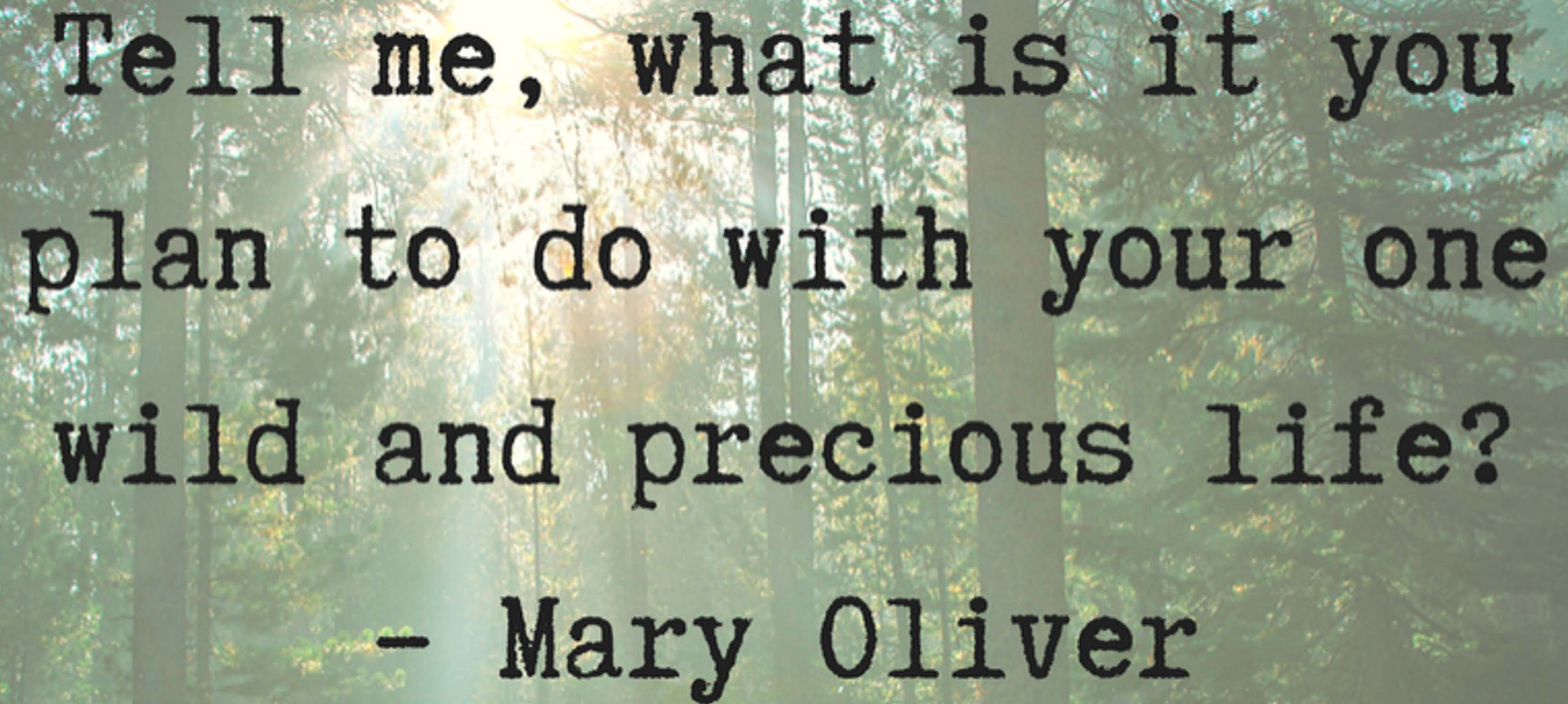




**This won't Be easy... And  
it will be worth it**

- **You are bigger than your OCD; you matter!**
- The treatment works; **trust the process**
- **Get uncomfortable;** you will never feel 'ready' to do hard things
- **Willingness is with your feet,** not your head! (values are not lived from a still position)
- You will **grow your comfort zone** every time you go outside it
- **Finding your way back** is the goal (not staying on track)
- **"When there are no lemons to make lemonade,** we still try to move forward"  
(Evie's client)





Tell me, what is it you  
plan to do with your one  
wild and precious life?  
— Mary Oliver

**THANK YOU**

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Learn more:

International OCD Foundation