

**A GUIDE  
TO FIGHTING  
THE HELLISH  
BASTARDS THAT ARE  
INTRUSIVE  
THOUGHTS**

*so none of us ever  
forget again (though  
we probably  
definitely still will)*

## WTF DO I DO ABOUT INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

Literally same. But we're going to try and help, because it's all about **mutual aid**.

About a year ago, a Brown University Peer Mental Health Advocate (PMHA) asked our community:

*Hey does anyone have experience coping with intrusive thoughts? I don't really know what to do with them besides being confused and waiting for them to chill.*

*tumblr gave me this advice though, could read like a slam poem:*

*Pretend ur invasive self hating thoughts r being said to u by a 13 y/o boy on xbox live trying to get a rise out of you like*

*"Your girlfriend dumped you because you're ugly"*

**that's nice tim isn't it past ur bedtime**

*pretend they're being said to u by an annoying backseat driver*

*"drive into that pole"*

**thanks karen or i could not do that**

## WTF DO I DO ABOUT INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

**Well, the responses flocked in.** And a year later, another PMHA asked for help with intrusive thoughts. And because we're a mentally ill/neurodivergent community, and all of us forget our coping skills (because executive function is just ... well, rough) – we decided to put this guide together so none of us ever forget again (though we probably definitely still will)

*I second naming them as a way to help! If that doesn't work, **I've had good luck with squeezing an ice cube to give your head something else to focus on.** Sometimes just having someone to talk to is the most helpful thing for me.*

## WTF DO I DO ABOUT INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

I third naming, **it saved me!** But also distraction such as dog, shower & workout help

trying to get over skin picking as a terrible way to cope and my peer actually showed me about this **OCD toy** -- it's really helped with intrusive thoughts and combatting compulsions



**fun fact:** fidget spinners are often seen as either a fun toy for neurotypical kids or a "distraction" when used by disabled folks!

## SKILL: OWNING YOUR THOUGHTS

Making it external and naming it is helpful for me sometimes, but also sometimes not so much (i.e. – saying 'that's my OCD and not me' can be like, **what? What's me? What's my OCD?**). So first, owning your thoughts – which doesn't mean that they are a reflection on your identity, or that you wanted to have them. Perhaps not helpful for everyone, but a little more about that:

*“Owning your thoughts simply means accepting that these are the thoughts going on in your head. Perhaps you process these thoughts in an “OCD way” (i.e. you take them too seriously and assume they deserve urgent responses) and in that case, it's fine to say that it's your OCD that's upsetting you. But the thought itself is not an “OCD thought.” **The thought itself is simply a thought.** If your first response to any thought is to disown it (i.e. “that's not my thought”), then you are starting off by framing your thought as a threat and this is what kicks off the obsessive–compulsive loop. There is nothing to disown. It's just what you happened to notice going on in the mind. If you want thoughts to stop being intrusive, **you have to stop treating them like they are intruders.** If you want them to come and go with ease, you have to allow them free passage.”*





## SKILL: CONTENT & PROCESS

"Content refers to the words and images that make up your thoughts. If you could print the thought out and look at it as a series of words, **what would those words be?** The content of the thought is merely what the thought is comprised of, like ingredients are the content of a soup.

**Process, on the other hand, refers to how we taste, experience, and think about the soup and the chef who made it.** One person may say the soup is delicious and applaud the chef and another may say the soup is disgusting and admonish the chef, but this is independent from the veracity of whether the soup contains carrots.

**People with OCD may be predisposed to perceive certain thoughts as threats, mandates to do compulsions, or evidence that they have done something wrong.** Someone without OCD might take the same thought content and process it as meaningless background chatter or junk mail. In other words, OCD sufferers process their experiences in an OCD way, but the content itself is not unique to the disorder."

## SKILL: CONTENT & PROCESS

**Example:** Picture yourself standing on a train platform. In front of you is a child and you think, **"I'd enjoy pushing that child off the platform and watching it get hit by a train."**

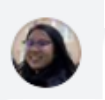
Now, presuming you don't have an illustrious history of murdering people, you might find this thought pretty disturbing. It represents pretty much the opposite of your identity.

**What is the content?** The content is the idea of pushing a child to their death. Who thought it? You did (literally, you the reader just thought it too). Now, **what is the process?** Well, you could process the thought in an OCD way and say something like, *"I shouldn't have had that thought. Only horrible people think that way. I have to back away from the child because I must be some kind of a murderer and it would be immoral to ignore this horrible thought."* Or you could process it in a healthy way, as in, **"Well, that's creative."**

*other human response: "thanks for saying this I had a really difficult time w the "that thought isn't me" mentality it didn't help very much"*



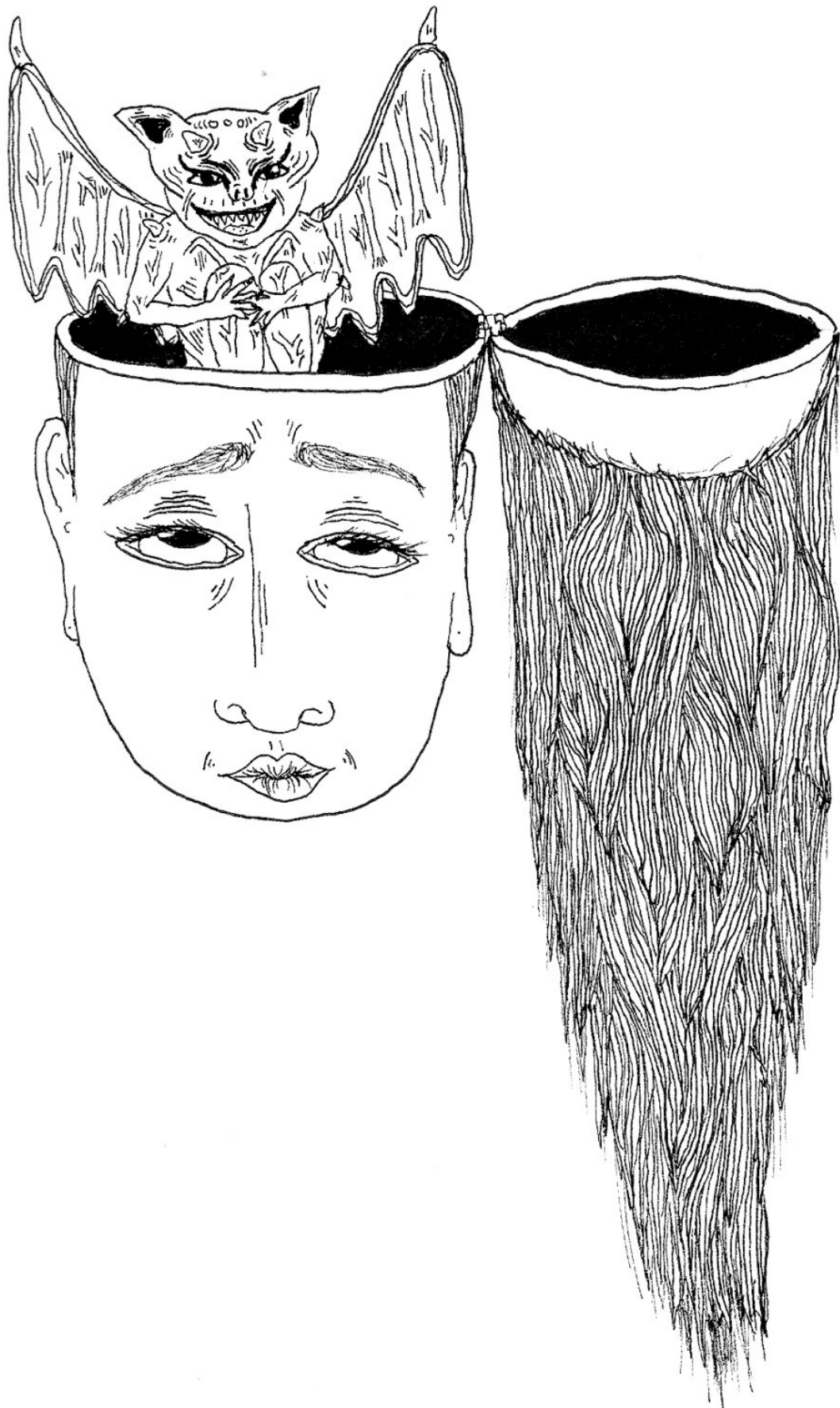
# WTF DO I DO ABOUT INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?



**Judith Lao** oh OH that makes a lot of sense, like it's just a thought and it doesn't mean anything, people have thousands of thoughts and a neurotypical brain will let most of them go because brains are supposed to filter out what isn't important but my brain's like "wait what does this mean? it means something, and it means the worst

Like to imagine stirring them around in a big pot, like a nasty soup. You have to smell it, but you don't have to eat it! **A little weird, but works for me.**

According to **[intrusivethoughts.org](https://www.intrusivethoughts.org)** --  
*"These thoughts repeat over and over, **faster** and **faster**, making the fear we might act more real. For us, anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts are a constant struggle. To cope, we might form weird habits, withdraw from friends or avoid certain situations."*



## JUST SO YOU KNOW

"Everyone gets intrusive thoughts, but having them doesn't mean you have OCD. For people who do have OCD, these thoughts can be debilitating, causing extreme anxiety and discomfort. No matter how hard you try to get rid of them, they won't go away."

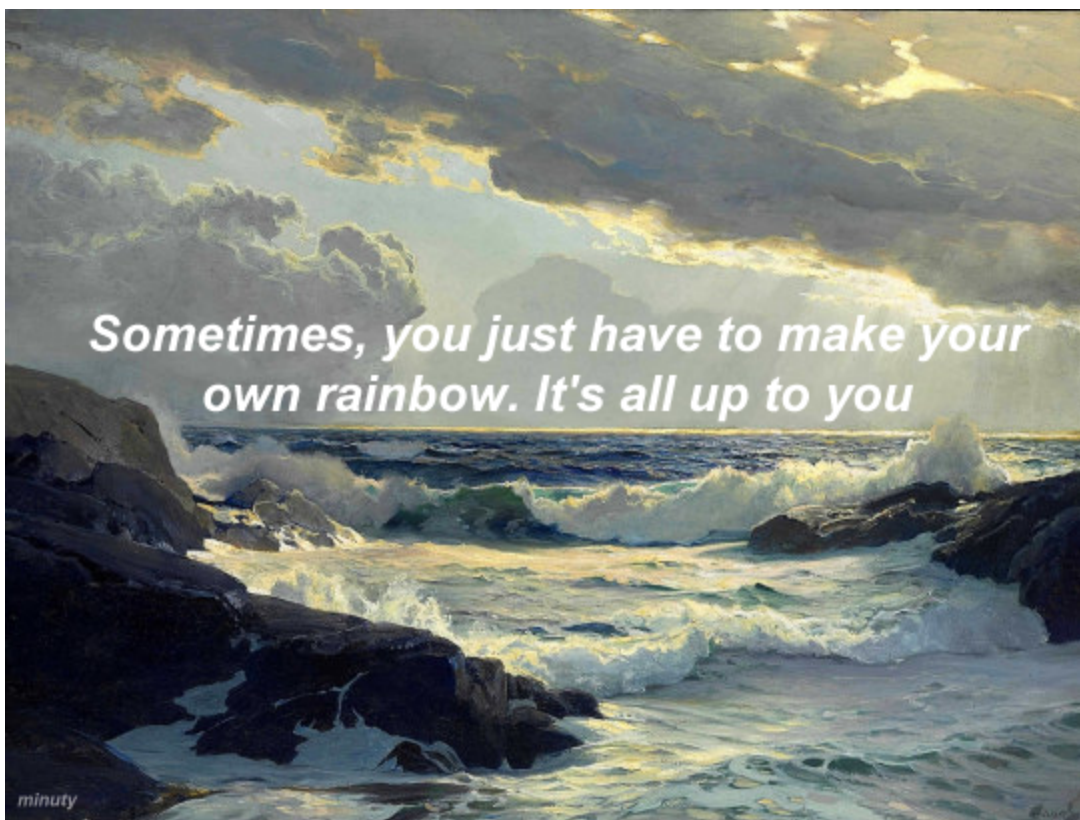
- [intrusivethoughts.org](https://intrusivethoughts.org)

**Having intrusive thoughts does not make you a bad person. They are a misfiring in the brain, not a reflection of your character.**



## \* TUMBLR: HEADS UP \*

If you search "**intrusive thoughts**" on Tumblr you may get this -



**But** you also might find this adorable little ghost image. which is objectively pretty freaking cute.





# TUMBLR'S GREATEST HITS

or these



ocdgooglesearches

how to mute brain

When I have  
intrusive  
thoughts



*"Intrusive **thots** are really scary but i have two techniques that I made up that really works for me! if there is object harming you, make it rubber. you heard me. make that shit harmless! make is a feather! and if that doesn't work... imagine all of your body as armor. unbreakable armor, to be exact. I have always thought as metal as unbreakable, and this was great for me!" - @peirrette*



Image Source: Rookie Mag (Jehan Segal)



## ADVICE FROM JEHAN SEGAL

"Over the past couple years, I have discovered that I experience intrusive thoughts—thoughts that do not feel like mine. Thoughts that scare me, disturb me, and for a long time caused me to believe I was a genuinely bad person. I walk into a classroom, I think about school shooters. I walk into my mother's kitchen, I think about all the things I can do with a knife. Even though I would never act on any of these thoughts, it's nightmarish and hard to talk about. But it is also part of how I experience the world. "



## ADVICE FROM JEHAN SEGAL

"Discussions with teenagers about mental illness don't usually stray far from depression, anxiety, and suicide. It's not that those subjects aren't important—they are. **But when you spend your life imagining death and harm around every corner without any discussion of that experience, it can be dangerous.** It took me a very long time to realize that my intrusive thoughts do not define who I am. I created this series of photographs to help explain my experience to those who don't understand, and to allow those who understand all too well to know they're not alone, even if it feels like they are."

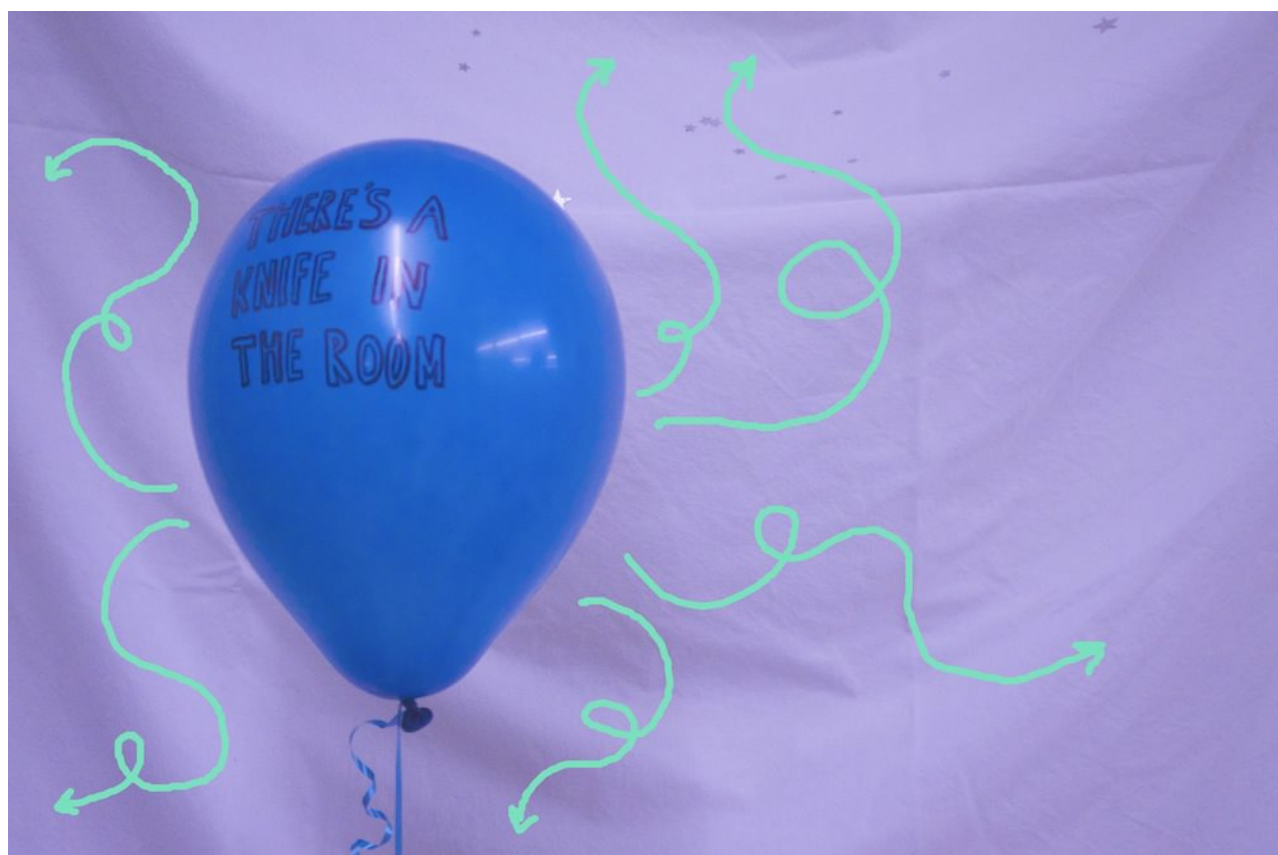




Image Source: Rookie Mag (Jehan Segal)

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