

Workshop Session 4

Identity in Christ and Counselling Ministry



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**Doubting our Identity?
Scrupulosity and Union with Christ**

2 – Ministry with Scrupulosity

Eliciting the struggles and the strategies

- Follow the distress
- Ask about the nature of the thoughts
- Eliciting the strategies toward relief
- Hear the bigger story including any triggers

Please indicate how often you have these experiences using the following key:

0 = never; 1 = almost never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often; 4 = constantly

- _____ 1. I worry that I might have dishonest thoughts
- _____ 2. I fear I will act immorally
- _____ 3. I feel urges to confess sins over and over again
- _____ 4. I worry about heaven and hell
- _____ 5. Feeling guilty interferes with my ability to enjoy things I would like to enjoy
- _____ 6. Immoral thoughts come into my head and I can't get rid of them
- _____ 7. I am afraid my behavior is unacceptable to God
- _____ 8. I must try hard to avoid having certain immoral thoughts
- _____ 9. I am very worried that things I did may have been dishonest
- _____ 10. I am afraid I will disobey God's rules/laws
- _____ 11. I am afraid of having sexual thoughts
- _____ 12. I feel guilty about immoral thoughts I have had
- _____ 13. I worry that God is upset with me
- _____ 14. I am afraid of having immoral thoughts
- _____ 15. I am afraid my thoughts are unacceptable to God

**Penn Inventory of Scrupulosity (PIOS)
-Revised Instructions**

Eliciting thoughts (obsessions) – sample questions

- Do immoral or blasphemous thoughts come into your head that you find hard to get rid of?
- Are you afraid that God is not pleased with you?
- Do you worry that you are not Christian, or don't have enough faith?
- Do you worry about Bible passages or questions about your faith?

The dynamic of scrupulosity



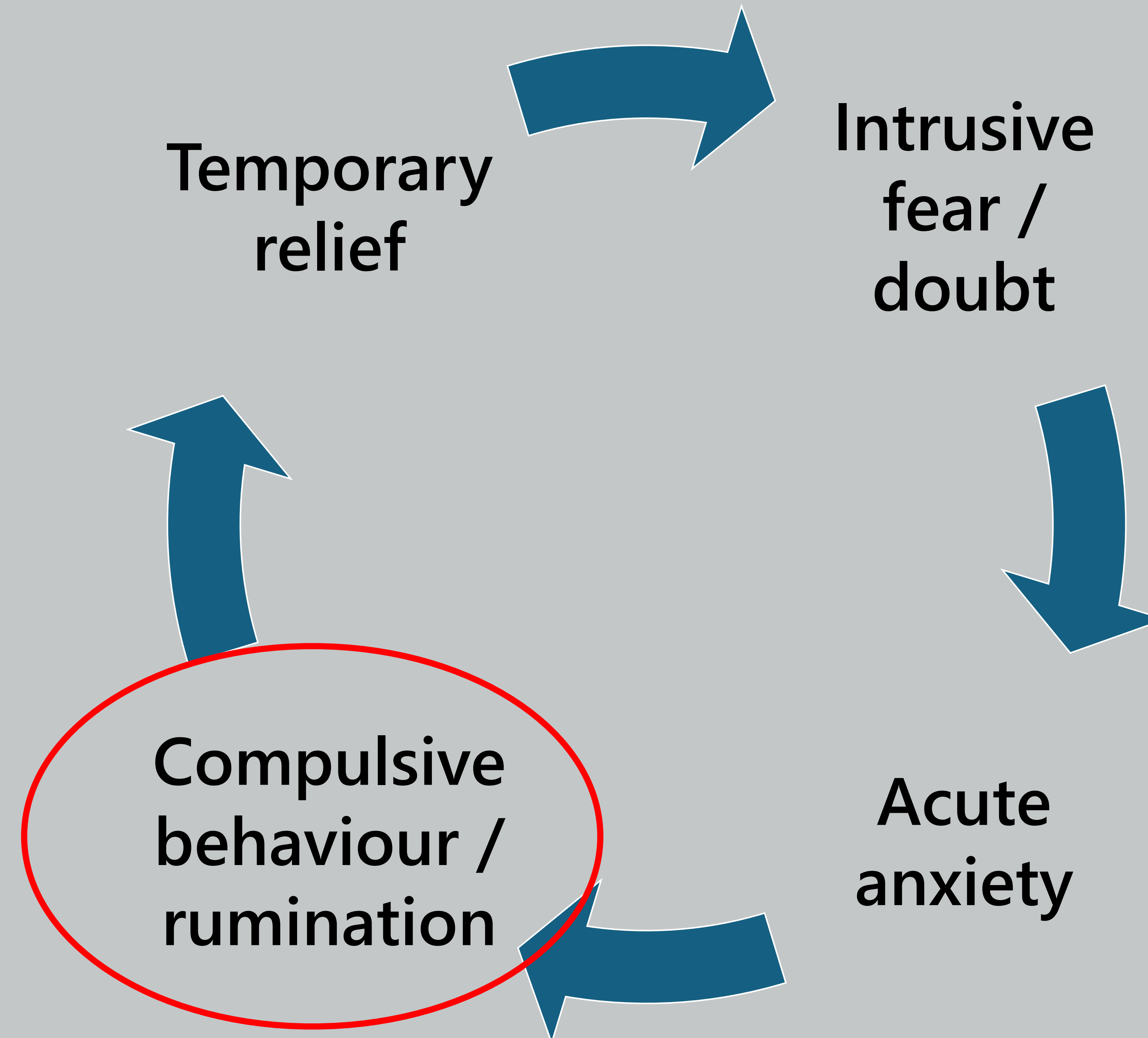
Eliciting the struggles and the strategies

- Follow the distress
- Ask about the nature of the thoughts
- Eliciting the strategies toward relief (compulsions)
- Hear the bigger story including any triggers

Eliciting strategies toward relief (compulsions)

- Do you feel compelled/have urges to confess sin over and over?
- Do you feel that you must try very hard to avoid having immoral thoughts?
- Do you ever latch on to the thoughts? Do you go into your head with them?
 - Arguing? Defending? Reasoning? Figuring out?
- In what ways do you seek reassurance?
 - Being certain? Making things right?
- How do you try to get peace?

The dynamic of scrupulosity



Eliciting the struggles and the strategies

- Follow the distress
- Ask about the nature of the thoughts
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- Hear the bigger story including any triggers

Questions

Are there other helpful ways of eliciting the person's struggle?

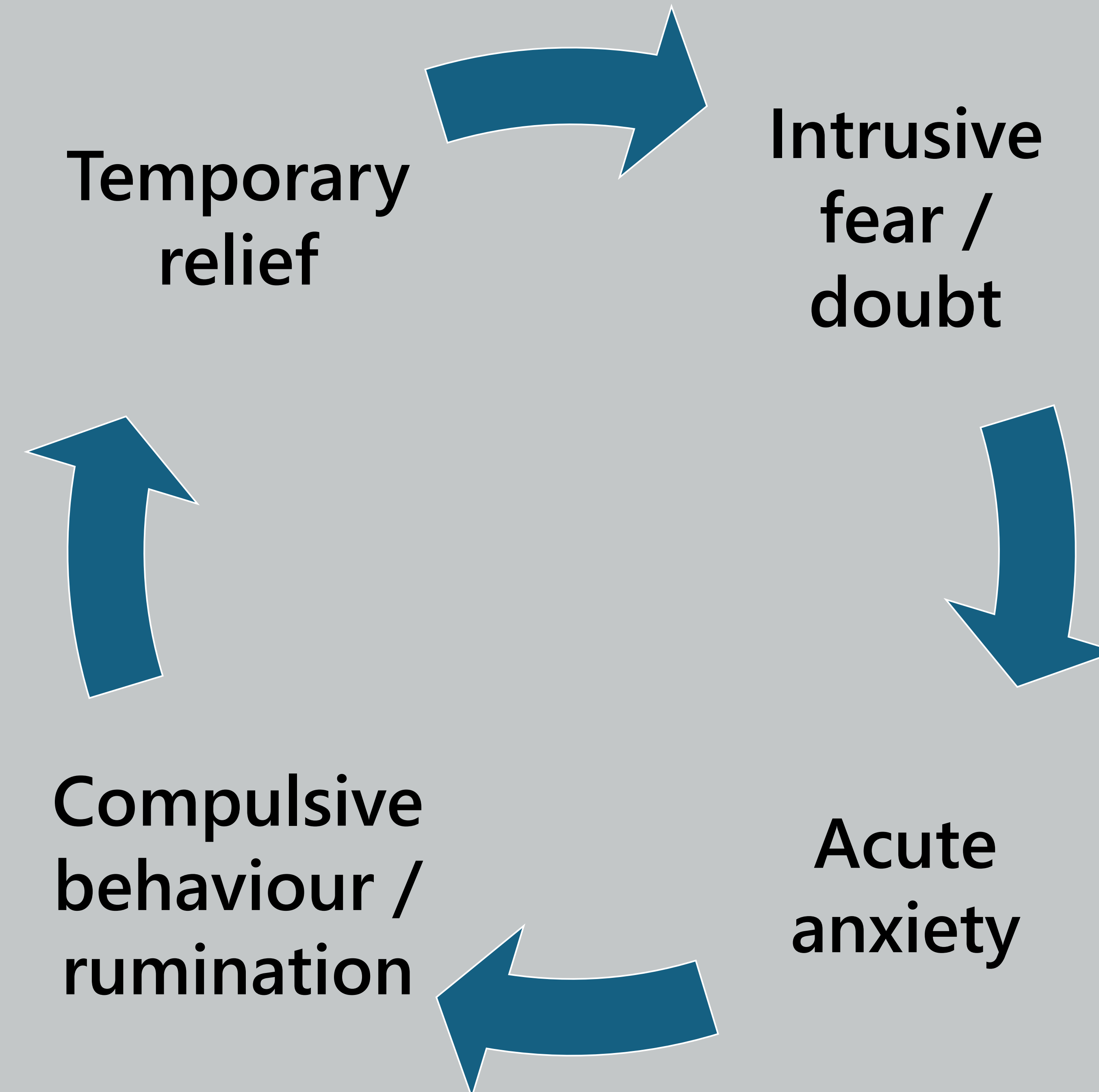
Breaking the cycle through a surer foundation in Christ

1. Help them to understand the dynamic of scrupulosity
2. Encourage a faith that weakens the dynamic

1. Help them to understand the dynamic of scrupulosity

- Explain the dynamic
- Help them to see it as fear-based suffering
- Point out futile strategies for rest
- Reassure them it's a biblical struggle

The dynamic of scrupulosity



1. Help them to understand the dynamic of scrupulosity

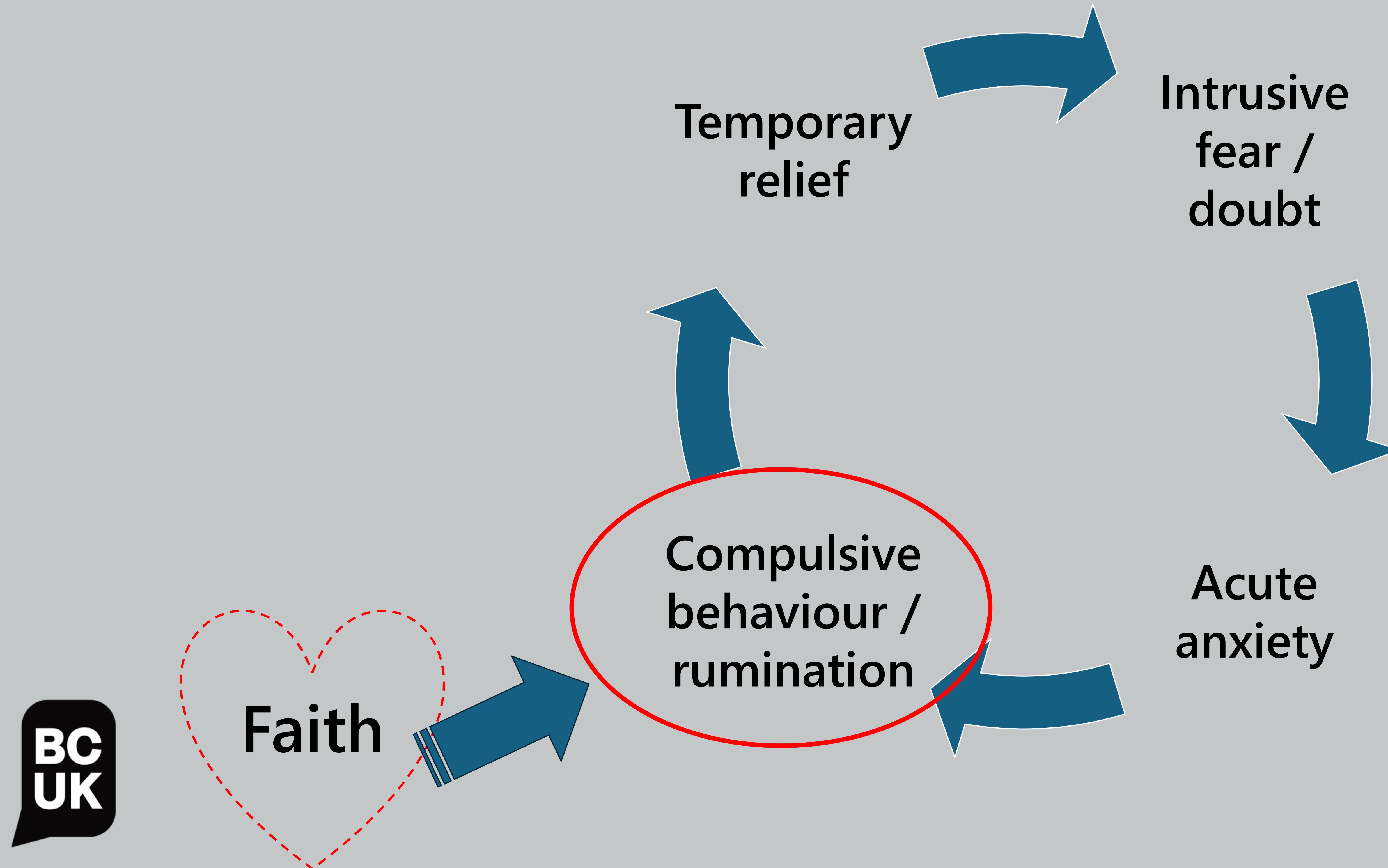
- Explain the dynamic
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2. Encourage a faith that weakens the dynamic

A faith that:

- tolerates anxious uncertainty in Christ
- renounces strategies and rests on Christ
- acts on the basis of rest in Christ

2. Encourage a faith that weakens the dynamic



2. Encourage a faith that weakens the dynamic

A faith that:

- Tolerates anxious uncertainty in Christ – Psalm 56:3
- Renounces strategies and rests on Christ – 1 Peter 2
- Acts on the basis of rest in Christ
 - No to fear-driven compulsions
 - Yes to faith-led behaviours

Discussion – breaking the cycle

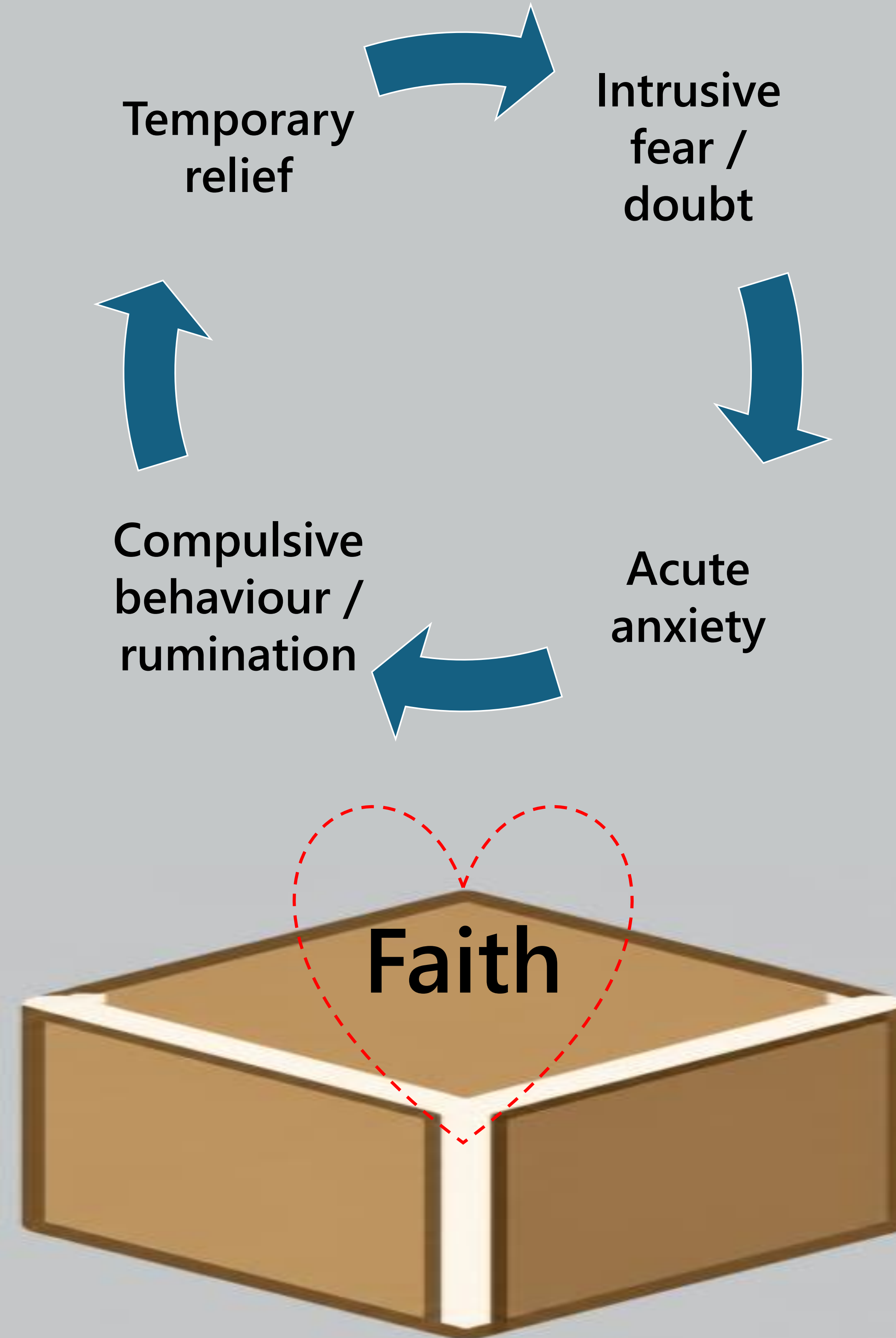
What might you add to this approach?

For those familiar with ERP how does the approach compare or contrast / what might you add from your experience of using that approach?

Reinforcing a surer foundation

1. Go deeper toward the heart
2. Counsel a bigger God, a smaller me and a better rest
3. Envision the longer walk

Reinforcing a surer foundation



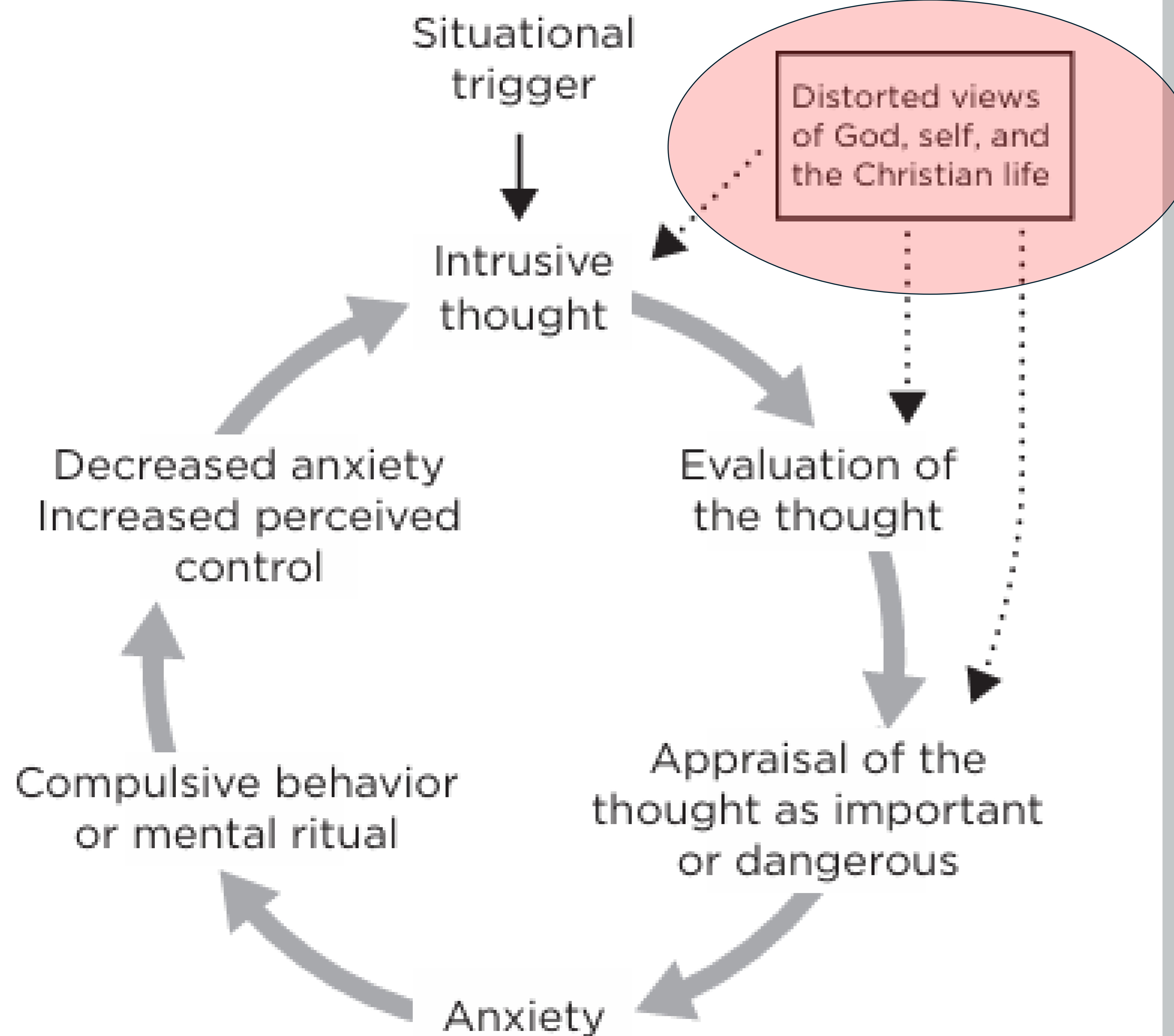
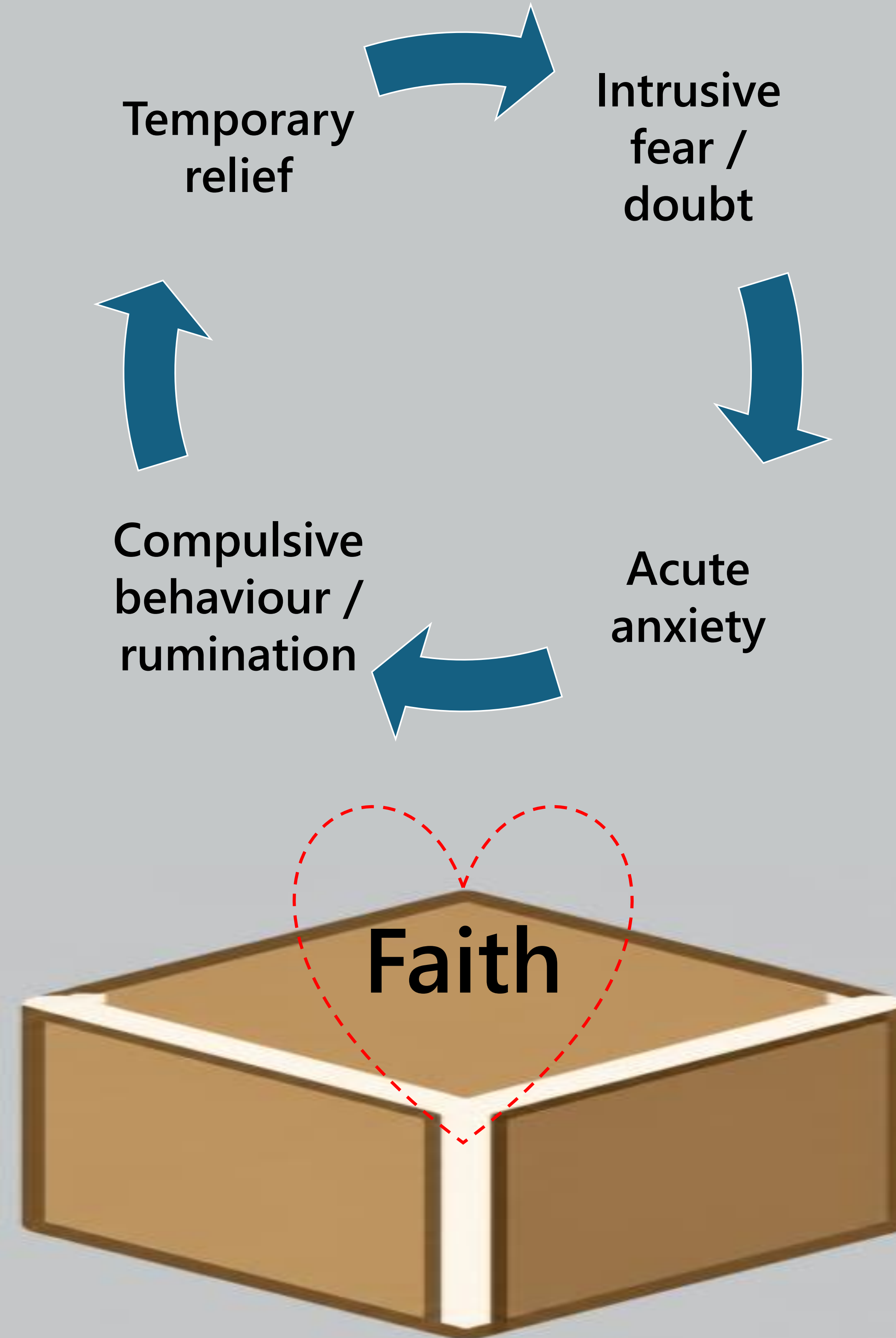


Figure 1. The Pattern of Scrupulosity

Reinforcing a surer foundation



1. Go deeper toward the heart

The common belief domains in a CBT model of scrupulosity:

- Inflated responsibility
- Over importance of thoughts
- Overestimation of threat
- Importance of controlling one's thoughts
- Need for absolute certainty
- Perfectionism

1. Go deeper toward the heart

Listen for themes

- God – justice > grace
- Self – need for certainty; overly responsible
- The Christian Life – atomizing; perfectionism

2. Counsel a bigger God, a smaller me and a better rest

- A bigger gracious God: responsible, in control, certain, good
- A smaller me: clay, children
- A better rest



3. Envision the longer walk

- Moving up the hierarchy of fear
- The longer-term goals

Max - what helped?

- Meta-compulsions – J. A. Bryant 'A Quite Mind to Suffer With'
- Acting on faith rather than looking for evidence of it
- Using Psalms 130-131
- Emphasising suffering not 'just sin'
- Moving in the direction of rest in Christ as a choice

Max - where still growing?

- God not a comfort, mostly
- Fear very automatic
- Need to grow in doctrine of sanctification

Questions

Resources mentioned

- Emlet, M. When Doubts Devour, JBC
- Emlet M. Using Scripture to address OCD, JBC
- Midgley S. Spiritual Perspectives OCD, JIM
- Bryant, J. A. A Quiet Mind to Suffer With