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Tourette Syndrome • OCD  
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## **T(r)IC(k)S #5:** **Overstimulation Part II**

In the last issue I spoke of overstimulation, and how dealing with disorder on top of everyday chores can be like holding a car high in the air. Despite the phenomenal amount of effort they are exerting, overstimulated people can appear to others to have a short fuse, and to be rather miserable towards others. I suggested that anyone, but especially Touretters, needs to carefully choose what stimulations, or “weights”, to add to their carloads so that the strain does not cause them to look like a bad person when they really only wish to be good. Now I continue with some possible T(r)IC(k)S:

- ☑ The most obvious strategy might be to just live alone: after all, if a person is just fine before other people “add weight” to his/her carload, then why not just eliminate those other people? That is certainly a choice that many people with TS make, and it was a choice that my fiancée and I have each made at times in our pasts. However, this time she and I have agreed that we will try to lighten our carloads in other ways.
- ☑ Prioritize your issues. For example, if deciding that maybe the house doesn't need to be vacuumed religiously every Saturday might mean that we'd freed up enough mental energy to do something pleasant with each other instead, we both realize that that particular ritual was just not a battle worth choosing. Trying to do both would overload us, and we would end up doing neither well. One weight gone.
- ☑ Little things make a difference. Yelling over a loud stereo. Demanding the person look at you when you speak. Touching the person. Having 20 friends over all at once rather than 2 friends at a time. Spontaneously dropping a plan on a person without talking about it beforehand. Avoiding these things can make a car a lot lighter really quickly. Another weight gone.
- ☑ Don't set yourself up. Life is full of stress and transition. Knowing full well that you can't handle either of these well, don't go looking for more when it isn't necessary. Think long and carefully about major decisions that will guarantee considerable extended chaos. Another weight gone.
- ☑ I don't inhibit tics at all. Sometimes I even transfer my tics. In fact, if I feel overloaded and just want to scream for awhile, I do. It's important to have people in your life that are understanding of these things. Another weight gone.
- ☑ Talking about overstimulation with your family and/or partner. My fiancée and I are each getting good at looking up and seeing the other's trembling car chassis overhead. She notices that I bite my nails and retreat to the couch when overstimulated. I notice that she closes her eyes and shakes her hands. By seeing that the other is overstimulated, we can each realize that the others' strained civility is



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## Overstimulation Part II Continued...

not personal, and so we don't yell back. Instead, we roll out from under the others' car and let him/her put it down for awhile, knowing that (s)he is working hard but needs a rest. Another weight gone.

- ☑ Use humour to lighten the load: it's a great distracter, and blows off some stimulation.
  
- ☑ Notice when the person has carried their load well, and remark on it – the next time (s)he is straining from the effort, it will help make it worth it to him/her to keep holding on to the load.
  
- ☑ When one day your load isn't so heavy, help the other person hold theirs. Take some of his/her weights (maybe a household task (s)he usually performs) and put them on your own load. Another weight gone.
  
- ☑ Keep your carload light. Gets lots of sleep. Allow yourself some time everyday to indulge in satisfying and de-stimulating rituals. Take time off away from each other – spend a weekend apart, and alone. Another weight gone.
  
- ☑ When you are just too overstimulated to talk (or listen) effectively face-to-face, find a less stimulating way to communicate -- leave a note, write an email, leave a message on the answering machine. Another weight gone.
  
- ☑ Commit to continually changing yourself. If I blow up, we talk about redirection. If she overloads and loses track, we talk about how to implement more structure in that situation. Then next time in that situation there are no rage or ADHD complications to add more weight to each of our cars. Another weight gone.
  
- ☑ Commit to self-exploration and introspection. Without recognizing who and what you are, you are doomed to continue repeating your same mistakes again and again, wasting esteem, time, and energy. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses helps you to maximize success. Another weight gone.

Bit by bit, things get lighter!!

cheers!  
Duncan  
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