



## **'Harry, me and OCD' by Kirk Stacey, Artist & OCD sufferer**

In 2002, I was in what I now call a relapse bubble. OCD was something I managed, it was a secret to all my friends and family, I lived a torturous life; rituals were strong and dominating. The guilt and anxiety were overpowering, it was a sort-of-life, definitely not the one I wanted to live, but it was something...

OCD stands for obsessive compulsive disorder, It is an debilitating anxiety disorder in which a person will suffer from repeated behaviours, unwanted thoughts with the idea that doing an act/ ritual will take away their anxiety.

I was a very keen artist from a young age, through school and college I loved the medium. On leaving school I worked with my father as an Apprentice in the house maintenance field, sadly the only thing I got to paint were walls... how boring. No artistic licence was needed.

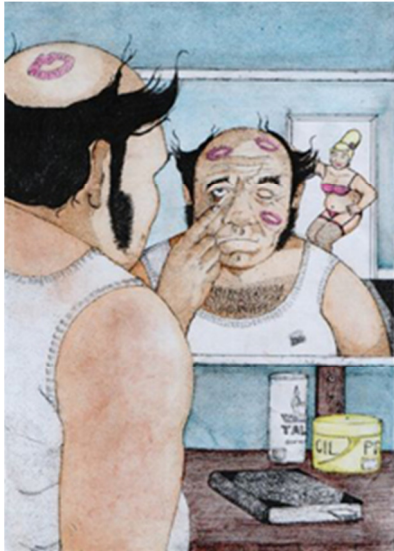
One day in the Summer of 2000, I sat down and decided to brainstorm two characters. I was bored so what I drew was a married couple who lived a grubby sort of existence. This was drawn off the top my head, I was never a fan of copying. I named the glum-looking duo Harry and Hilda.



*(Exposure Therapy)*

*Kirk Stacey 2008 on Show & Tell, [www.insiderart.org.uk](http://www.insiderart.org.uk)*

Over the next few years I decided to work during the week with my father, doing house maintenance and at the weekend I would relax, draw, drink, etc. To me it was a treat. Of course, the more I enjoyed my break and artistic activities, the more my OCD would threaten me. Every Saturday I would leave home at 12 noon and go to my local stationary store to buy the materials I would need to make what I would call 'masterpiece'. I always had such big plans which were actually a bit unrealistic.



*(This must be a Dream)*

Sadly, the OCD ritual of 'making safe' came into play. By which I mean I had to have ready a good thought or image to help me secure the materials I needed to buy. At the time what I wanted to buy was white cardboard. I had to 'make safe' the card with a positive thought before I could purchase it. If OCD got there first then it would tell me, 'You can't buy it. Bad things will happen if you buy that piece!' Negative after negative. However, I increasingly won after a struggle, but while this mini-battle was won, the real battle was just starting...



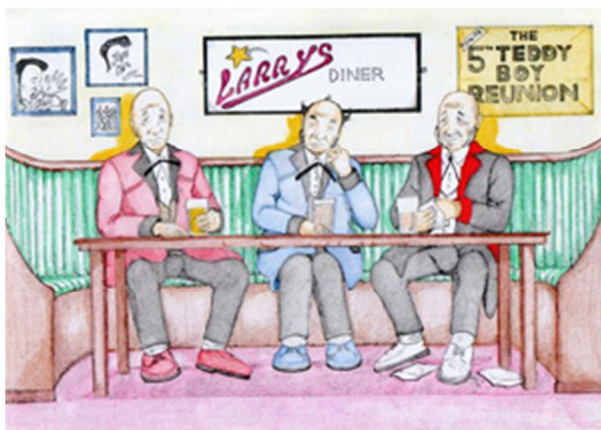
*(Cook it Babe)*

Back home, I'd rip and bin a piece of cardboard. It was the same every week; two pieces of card, one ripped, because if I chose one piece and stored the other, I knew somewhere along the line my OCD would taint what I was using. So, I had to rip one piece of card into bits to force me to stick with the other. It was a mad kind of logic, but it worked and I'd win again and be able to go on. So I would have one jumbo-sized piece of card. I'd think of a Harry picture, wondering, 'what could my duo be doing in my masterpiece this week?' I'd think of a few ideas, but so often it would be too late, with every good idea came an OCD negative. So I'd brainstorm harder and harder for another idea and if possible I'd quickly make it safe!



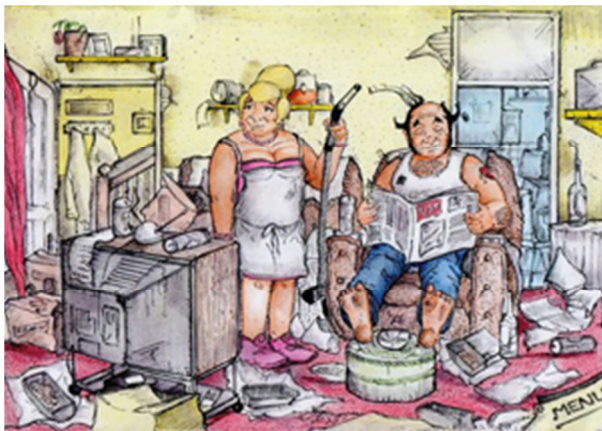
*(Harry & Hilda go Shopping)*

This meant I had to think good thoughts to replace bad ones, anything that made it secure was the idea. This I remember was pure torture, I would always get angry during this process. Finally, I would settle on something and at two in the afternoon I would start to draw. Just before 8pm, I would finish the picture, or try too. Saturday night is a social night for many people, but sadly not for me. I'd finish my work and settle down for a beer and TV, the day had been hampered by OCD, but I had won! I'd drink my beer as a reward and think, 'well done Kirk.....game over.'



*(Harry's reunion)*

By 2005 I was fed up with fighting, and living the OCD life, I wanted freedom. I did not want to have to make things safe, ritualise them or lose the great ideas I had planned. I sort of cracked, but with the support forums and family, I took up drawing again. As I became more confident I attempted to break rituals and risk new ways of working, I looked back at the past art work I had created. I remembered the Harry pictures which it seemed were just made to pass the time. I didn't feel I'd had a life in that relapse bubble, I'd never even bothered to colour the pictures! It would have taken ages what with their size – they were around 23inches x 17inches.



One day I remember pulling out all the Harry pictures from my portfolio and scattering them on the floor. I started to laugh, I really began to look at and enjoy my work, but then, I felt scared. As I looked in detail, I felt the oddest feeling, it was like looking at another person's work. All that I could see was OCD and its influence; in the choice of paper; pen; pencil; idea; all of it! And yet I could also see every picture was humorous. Was that humour really me? Was it my show of strength, my way of not letting OCD ruin or hurt what I loved? My way of keeping OCD contained/ stopping OCD Tainting everything in my life.



(Harry's School Reunion)

So in 2008, we have a selection of reduced HARRY PICTURES FULL COLOUR who knows, maybe I'll colour the rest, but here on the website I have picked the best.



I am now happy to present a collection of pictures from a time of my life that was such a struggle. I hope you find the Pictures Fun. No matter how hard OCD affects you, with support and some kind of personally meaningful creative habits/ work/ things to do you can win at the end of it. It's not exactly about getting rid of OCD but about finding ways to keep it busy, divert it and filling life with more interesting, and often funny, things to do.



I recently heard a good phrase by Carl Jung, he said 'problems are not solved, they are out grown'. I think Harry, Hilda and my art work have really helped me to outgrow my OCD.

*Kirk Stacey*

2008



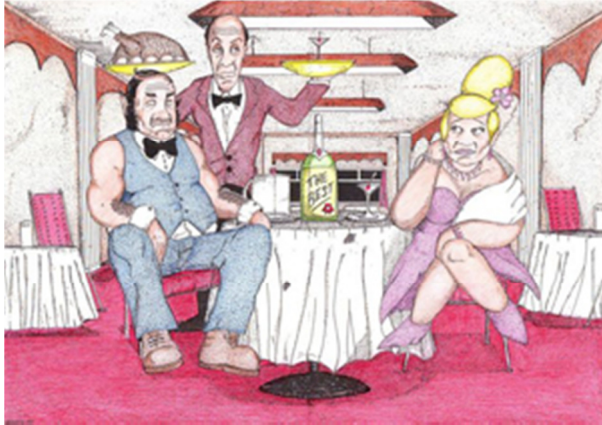
*(Romance never Dies)*

### **Greetings from Hilda Brown!**

So I find out all along my loving Harry has OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) it explained a great deal, his cleaning, his hoarding and the door checking. what could I do to help? It was time for a trip to see the Doctor... SEVEN THINGS WE DID!

1. After a full Diagnosis from the Doctor I created something to help Harry. I made him a 'from me to you card' it was a reminder for him not to feel guilty or bad about what OCD would make him think. The other idea was 'post it' notes!! He liked noting down what he had to do and to achieve. I had a friend make him a Badge too.
2. Exposure therapy.....um.....this was tricky, but they say the anxiety level that relates to a compulsion will fall after a while, Harry was not convinced but I insisted we try breaking a ritual. To keep Harry distracted I made a DVD full of memories and cooked him bangers and mash, a distraction whilst fighting OCD is very important.
3. Hoarding. Harry was always an untidy person, so I insisted he sort his junk out. Old news papers and such, I suggested he start throwing away the smallest thing first, this worked! We were making progress at last! Worth a praise or two! Even with the old bike parts he used to hoard! We could sell them on ebay.
4. We broke his door checking ritual by just not turning back the car on our trip out, He insisted! But I said, be calm, plus those grandsons of ours were a quite distraction too. Harry now closes the door once, and walks away. The voice inside is now becoming silent, more of whisper.
5. Medication time. This kept Harry in control and helped to tackle his traits. I suggested mixing them with his beer but this was not a good idea. The doctor said they were his 'water wings', Harry does not like swimming but I insisted we must try an outing there with the Grandchildren!

6. Early starts and planning was key! Motivation came first. After all, it's very easy for me to type out a battle plan, and tell people to try it, but I must stress, developing motivation before fighting OCD works.
7. Contamination. This was hard, as he loved that bike of his to look good, but the 'just one clean' RULE over time became the norm. No more cold teas for him.



It took a while but Harry really changed, he is stronger now, happier, more in control, I am amazed what self help and support can do. Of course it takes strength and confidence but this you gain on the way. It was a learning experience for me, and I am happy to pass on the positives. All the best to you self help people!

*Kirk Stacey*

2008

For more of Kirk's work go to this You Tube slide show

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX8Dc9iKkTw&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX8Dc9iKkTw&feature=channel_page)