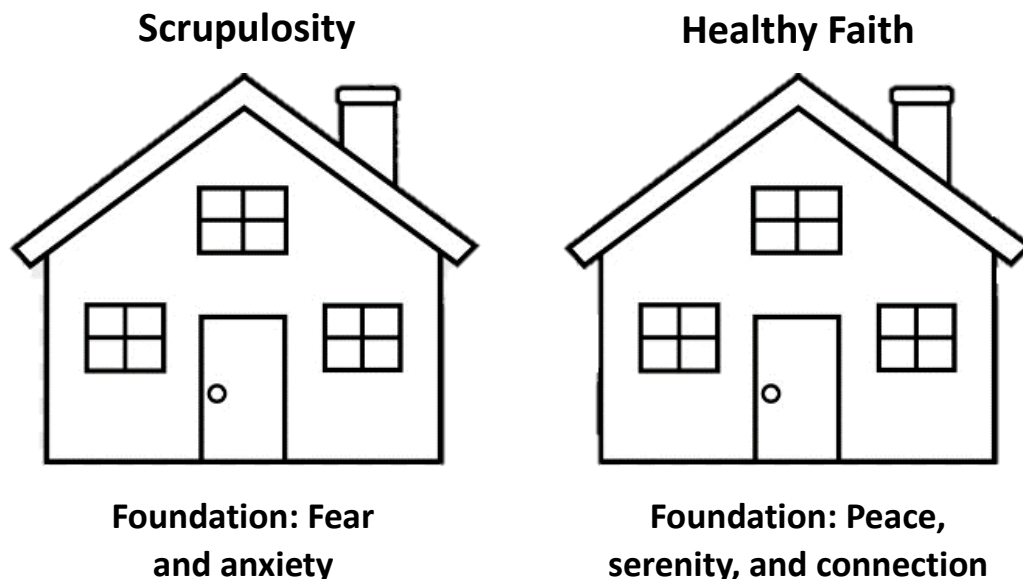


Gender, Sexuality, and Religion

Some faiths teach that being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+) is morally wrong and even sinful. Individuals with scrupulosity concerns may go to extreme lengths to avoid being associated with LGBTQ+ people, such as avoiding going to religious services or other places where LGBTQ+ people might be, feeling the need to warn LGBTQ+ people that they will go to hell if they act on their gender or sexuality, or avoiding LGBTQ+ people out of fear that their gender or sexuality will be contagious. Often, these behaviors are rooted in a fear that one will go to hell or be excluded from their religious community for being and/or supporting LGBTQ+ people.

Remember that in all faiths, **respect is foundational**. Respect means that you can accept someone else even if your faith does not allow you to approve of them; respect and acceptance are not the same as approval. Respecting someone else involves keeping an open mind about the possibility of having positive interactions and relationships with LGBTQ+ people rather than thinking in all-or-nothing terms. People of all faiths hold different values and none are wrong, they are just different. Identifying and living in accordance with your core values can help you learn how to respect people in a meaningful way through your thoughts and your actions.

Scrupulosity is a manifestation of OCD in which one's religious and moral beliefs are the focus of intrusive thoughts and compulsive rituals. Scrupulosity is built on fear and anxiety – it is characterized by “have to, ought to, or should” beliefs and often a sense of urgency (“I have to pray right now, or else”). Scrupulous beliefs center on more rigid, dogmatic expectations of religion rather than on open and loving practices of faith. Healthy faith, conversely, is built on peace, serenity, and connection.



These houses can look very similar on the outside but by digging deeper into their foundation, we can tell if they are built on scrupulosity or healthy faith.

Spend some time thinking about how scrupulosity might impact your perceptions of LGBTQ+ people. Consider the following, and then discuss with your treatment team:

What are my faith-based beliefs about LGBTQ+ people? Where did I first learn these and how were they reinforced?

What do other members of my religious community (e.g., clergy) say about LGBTQ+ people? Are these different from my perceptions?

If my religion does strictly oppose LGBTQ+ people, how can I consider my own freedom of choice to determine which aspects of my faith are most consistent with the values I want to live by?

To what extent might my beliefs about LGBTQ+ people be rooted in fear and anxiety rather than in peace, serenity, and connection?

How can I learn to respect (i.e., accept, not necessarily approve of) people who do not practice life in the way that I do?

What are my core values (e.g., love, honesty, connection)?

What might I have common with LGBTQ+ people (e.g., values, life experiences, wishes, goals)?

How can my commitment to my core values guide my interactions with LGBTQ+ people?
