

OCD (OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER)

OCD features a pattern of unwanted thoughts and fears (obsessions) that lead you to do repetitive behaviours (compulsions). These obsessions and compulsions interfere with daily activities and cause significant distress.



Common myths and beliefs about OCD:

- ✘ 1. “It is necessary to avoid or ritualize in order to prevent harm.”
- ✘ 2. “The belief that they must avoid the distressing situation or they will be distressed forever.”
- ✘ 3. “If I don’t avoid or ritualize, the distress will get so bad that I’ll lose my mind.”

Facts about OCD:

- ➔ When you actually confront a feared situation repeatedly and don’t ritualize, you realize that no harm follows. Thus, you recognize that the risk is remote and you learn to ignore it.
- ➔ During prolonged exposure, intense anxiety gradually decreases. As the distress drops, it becomes easier to see whether or not a situation is actually dangerous.
- ➔ When you first confront a feared situation, you will become distressed. However, if you remain long enough in the situation, and do so repeatedly, the distress will diminish.

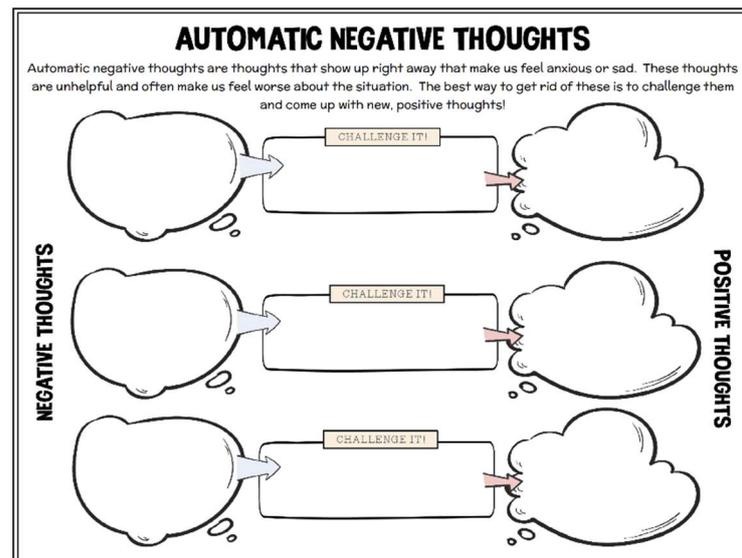
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The **Treatment** for OCD is most effective with the combination of Psychotherapy and Medications. You can manage OCD at home by following the given below:

Cognitive Restructuring

Ideally, the goal of Cognitive restructuring is to help you reduce negative thinking patterns, explore unhealthy belief systems, and be able to engage in healthier and more flexible thought patterns.

The primary tool for strengthening the rational voice inside you is to identify three basic elements: triggering situations, automatic thoughts, and rational alternative thoughts. Write these things in a disciplined format like a thought record. Acknowledging and admitting the content of these thoughts can be very challenging and writing some of these thoughts may be an exposure in itself. The goal is to treat them like thoughts, not threats, and writing them is a step in that direction.



This is called “planting seeds”, every time you identify a distorted thought and challenge it with a more viable alternative, you are giving yourself an opportunity to use that thought later and help it grow. *Here are some examples of alternative thoughts.*

OCD Thoughts

1. “If I have a thought of violence, then I’m a violent person.”
2. “I feel uncomfortable, I must’ve done something wrong.”
3. “I feel like touching women next to me on a bus.”

Healthy Alternative Thoughts

- ➔ “I have lots of thoughts and these scary ones are just some of them. That doesn’t make them the most important ones.”
- ➔ “Just because I feel uncomfortable, doesn’t prove that I have done anything wrong or will do anything wrong. I feel lots of things.”
- ➔ “Not all my thoughts have to be important. I can have an ugly thought like anyone else and not do anything about it.”

Given enough time and practise, Cognitive Restructuring can encourage your mind to gravitate toward a direction that allows you to resist compulsions rather than pushing you to ritualize.

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Exposure and Response Prevention Therapy

Face your fears (the exposure) while resisting compulsive behavior (response prevention). Over time, you will learn that you can choose to respond differently in the face of fear and anxiety. When you complete an exposure, it builds distress tolerance and adaptive thinking. Prior to exposure, you might expect a panic attack or a series of catastrophic events if you were to resist a compulsion. Through practice, you learn that the feared outcome doesn't happen (or doesn't happen nearly as often) and that anxiety is uncomfortable, but not dangerous.

Exposure and response prevention worksheet free

What situation, people or place triggers your obsessions?

What are your obsessive thoughts

What compulsive behaviours do you perform

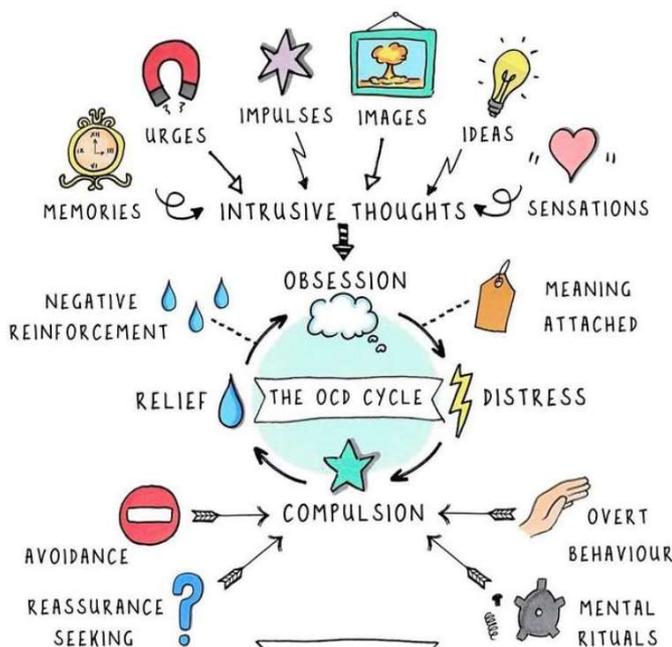
Expose yourself to any of the triggers

What thoughts do you have

Rate your worry due to thoughts
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Write down the compulsive behaviors you want to perform but cross those behaviors by not performing them

Practice Relaxation activities while exposing yourself to the feared stimulus:



- **Memories** (Unwanted Traumatic/ Painful past events)
- **Urges & Impulses** (Screaming, Abusing, Inappropriate behaviour, hurting, killing, violent or illegal)
- **Images** (Sexual Acts/ Nude images of close relatives, accidents)
- **Ideas** (Doubts, Dirt Contamination, Sexual & Religion)
- **Sensations** (False physical sensations; Eg- dirt on your hand)

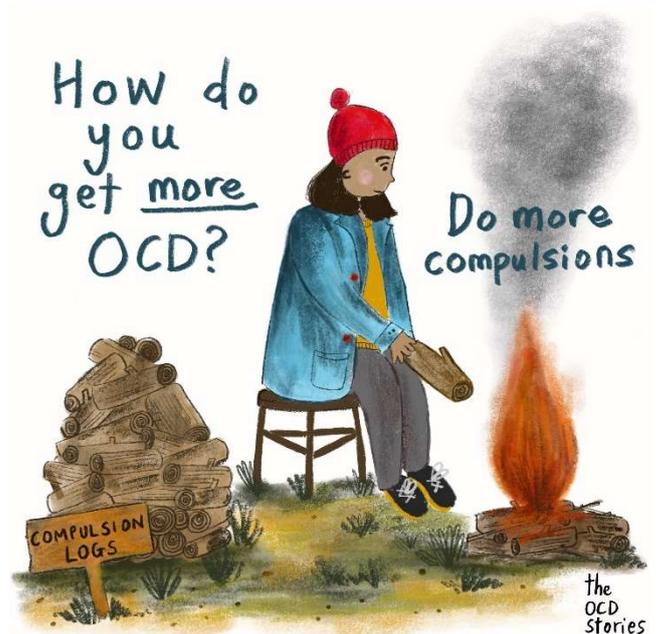
- **Overt Behaviour** (Hand washing, Cleaning, Hoarding, Collecting, Symmetry of objects, Checking- Car, door, locks, taps)
- **Mental Rituals** (Repeating, Counting, Checking)
- **Avoidance** (Place, person, triggering media -violent shows/movies, violent news media, Negative emotional states Eg- anger, Objects- knives)
- **Reassurance Seeking** (Repeatedly asking others if harm would occur, self-assuring)

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The OCD cycle is at the crux of ERP. Obsessions (thoughts that elicits anxiety and distress) are reinforced by compulsions (acts that provide temporary relief from the distress). By engaging in ERP, you can stop reinforcement by learning to tolerate discomfort with high willingness. In short, exposure techniques create learning experiences where obsessional stimuli can be confronted without using rituals (response prevention).

Simply deny acting on your compulsive behavior that provides you temporary relief from the anxiety felt in relation to obsessive thoughts. The longer you are able to deny the compulsion, the more likely it is that the anxiety will begin to ebb. Continue doing so until the anxiety is gone. Repeat this practice each time you feel the need to engage in a compulsive behavior. You can combine this practice with a deep-breathing or grounding exercise to lessen the anxiety you might feel when denying the compulsion.



Deep Breathing Exercise



Here's a deep breathing exercise you can try when you're feeling anxious:

- Breathe in through your nose for 5 seconds
- Hold your breath in your lungs for 5 seconds
- Breathe out through your mouth for 5 seconds
- Repeat

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Grounding Exercise

To begin, think of a place you find comforting: Somewhere in your house, a favourite spot, or a memory from your childhood. Now spend 5-10 minutes visualizing this place that you have conjured in your mind. Use your five senses to help you:

1. **What do you see?** Look around and take in your surroundings in this space. What can you see in the distance? What do you see close to you? Try to notice small details that you might normally miss.
2. **What do you hear?** Listen closely to the noises around you. Are the noises you hear soft or loud? Do they sound close by or far away?
3. **What do you taste?** Are you eating or drinking something? If so, what does it taste like? Is it sweet or savoury?
4. **What can you feel?** Is it warm or cool? Is there a breeze? Is the sun shining on you warming your skin? Or are you bundled up in a soft blanket?
5. **What can you smell?** What does the air smell like here? Is the scent strong or faint? Do you smell any flowers, or a scent from your coffee?



Use this exercise to relax your mind when you are feeling anxious or stressed. Spend as long as you need visualizing your comfortable space. Allow yourself to feel calm and safe.



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