

# OCD Exercise Book

*Breaking the cycle of obsessions & compulsions*

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## About This Workbook

This workbook is designed to support people living with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) using evidence-based approaches, primarily Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) and Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT).

OCD is one of the most misunderstood conditions. It is not about being 'neat' or 'fussy' — it involves intrusive, distressing thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours or mental acts (compulsions) performed to reduce anxiety.

The good news: OCD responds very well to the right treatment.

ERP — the gold-standard approach — has strong evidence of effectiveness.

This workbook is a companion to professional therapy, not a replacement.

— Dr Arjumand Raza

# **Chapter 1: Understanding OCD**

## The OCD Cycle

Intrusive Thought → Anxiety/Discomfort → Compulsion → Temporary Relief  
→ Thought returns STRONGER → cycle repeats.

KEY INSIGHT: Compulsions provide short-term relief but maintain OCD long-term.  
The goal is not to stop the thought — it is to stop responding to it with compulsions.

My OCD cycle looks like this:

Obsession/trigger: \_\_\_\_\_

How it makes me feel: \_\_\_\_\_

Compulsion I perform: \_\_\_\_\_

Short-term effect: \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term effect: \_\_\_\_\_

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## My OCD Profile

Types of OCD I recognise in myself (tick all that apply):

- ☐ Contamination fears (germs, dirt, illness)
- ☐ Harm OCD (fear of hurting self or others)
- ☐ Pure-O (intrusive thoughts without visible compulsions)
- ☐ Checking (doors, locks, appliances, etc.)
- ☐ Symmetry / ordering / arranging
- ☐ Religious or moral scrupulosity
- ☐ Relationship OCD (ROCD)
- ☐ Health anxiety (illness OCD)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

My OCD takes up approximately \_\_\_\_\_ hours per day.

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## Intrusive Thoughts: What They Are (and Aren't)

ALL humans have intrusive thoughts. OCD is not about HAVING these thoughts — it is about the meaning you attach to them and how you respond.

OCD LIE: 'Having this thought means I am a bad person / dangerous.'

TRUTH: Thoughts are not facts. They are mental events that come and go.

A thought I've been fusing with as though it were true or dangerous:

What would I say to a friend who had this thought?

What does having this thought actually say about me?

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## **Chapter 2: Exposure & Response Prevention (ERP)**

## What Is ERP?

ERP means deliberately confronting feared situations (exposure)  
while resisting the urge to perform compulsions (response prevention).

This teaches your brain that:

1. The feared outcome does not happen.
2. Anxiety rises but then falls — naturally — WITHOUT compulsions.
3. You can tolerate uncertainty.

ERP is uncomfortable in the short term. It is transformative long-term.

My commitment to ERP (write in your own words):

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## My Fear Ladder (Hierarchy)

List feared situations from LEAST to MOST distressing (0-100 SUDS scale).

SUDS = Subjective Units of Distress Scale.

SUDS 10-20: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 20-30: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 30-40: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 40-50: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 50-60: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 60-70: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 70-80: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 80-90: \_\_\_\_\_

SUDS 90-100: \_\_\_\_\_

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## ERP Exercise Log

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exposure task: \_\_\_\_\_

Starting SUDS (0-100): \_\_\_\_\_

Peak SUDS during exposure: \_\_\_\_\_ Time to reach peak: \_\_\_\_\_ min

SUDS after 20 min: \_\_\_\_\_ SUDS at end: \_\_\_\_\_

Compulsions I resisted: \_\_\_\_\_

What happened (did the feared outcome occur?): \_\_\_\_\_

What I learned from this exposure: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exposure task: \_\_\_\_\_

Starting SUDS: \_\_\_\_\_ Peak SUDS: \_\_\_\_\_ Final SUDS: \_\_\_\_\_

Key learning: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Chapter 3: ACT for OCD**

## Defusion: Unhooking from OCD Thoughts

Cognitive defusion = seeing thoughts AS thoughts, not as facts.

TECHNIQUE: Prefix your thought with 'My OCD is telling me that...'

e.g., Instead of 'I will contaminate my family' →

'My OCD is telling me I will contaminate my family.'

Practise with your most frequent intrusive thought:

Original thought:

Defused version ('My OCD is telling me that...'):

How does this shift your relationship to the thought?

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## Values-Based Action Despite OCD

OCD tries to narrow your life. Values widen it back.

What does OCD stop me from doing?

What matters deeply to me (values)?

One values-based action I will take this week despite OCD discomfort:

What I am willing to feel (anxiety, doubt, uncertainty) to do this:

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## Willingness & Acceptance

Fighting OCD thoughts increases them (the 'white bear' effect).

Willingness means allowing the thought to be present without acting on it.

A thought I have been struggling and fighting with:

What I have tried to do to get rid of it:

What if I allowed it to be present, without feeding it or fighting it?

My willingness statement:

I am willing to feel \_\_\_\_\_ in order to live according to \_\_\_\_\_.

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## **Chapter 4: Relapse Prevention**

## Warning Signs & Relapse Plan

Early warning signs that OCD is intensifying for me:

Situations that tend to trigger a spike:

My plan when OCD spikes:

Step 1: Notice and name — 'This is OCD.'

Step 2: Resist the compulsion for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

Step 3: Do a planned ERP exercise from my hierarchy.

Step 4: Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional support I will seek if needed:

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## My OCD Recovery Toolkit

Top 3 ERP exercises that have helped most:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Top 3 defusion techniques I find most effective:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What I remind myself when OCD is loud:

How far I have already come:

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## Specialised OCD Support Available

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