

WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPULSION?

Attempts to be certain about the content of your unwanted thoughts/images/sensations/urges, including the thought that your FEELINGS will utterly destroy you.

(Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.33)



'Although any MENTAL OR PHYSICAL BEHAVIORS COULD function as a compulsion, using coping and regulating skills is not inherently compulsive (Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.33).'

"Taking a deep breath, engaging in a valued behavior, meditating, mindfulness practices and other emotionally and physically regulating skills can all be strategies for staying in the mental and emotional state where the most learning can take place, otherwise referred to as the WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.33).

5 CATEGORIES OF COMPULSIONS

Remember:
Compulsions can be
PHYSICAL
and/or
MENTAL ACTS

1 Avoidance:

Avoiding valued behaviors that include your triggers, teaches the brain that your TRIGGERS are more powerful than you are. (Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.39).

Avoidance is often a first line defense for anything that your brain has been conditioned to identify as threatening.

Common Examples of Avoidance

Staying away from environments where unwanted thoughts could arise

Changing the channel when something triggering comes on the radio.

Avoiding thoughts and feelings through excessive distraction or zoning out.

Avoiding responsibilities that may include the presence of triggers.

COMPULSIONS CONTINUED

DID YOU KNOW?

2

Reassurance Seeking:

Please Note:
This is not an
exhaustive list of
examples

THAT SEEKING REASSURANCE ROBS YOU OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO OVERCOME YOUR FEARS AND RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN?

(Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.39).

Common Examples of compulsive reassurance seeking:

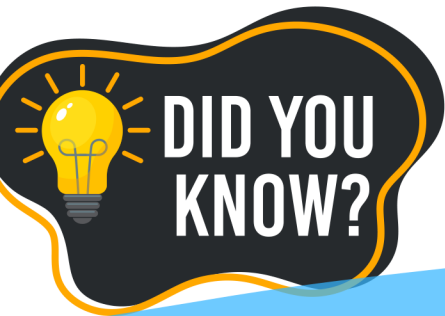
Asking someone to reassure you (again) why your fear is untrue
Example: Moral OCD/Scrupulosity can include the fear that you are a narcissist. Reassurance seeking can include you mentally reviewing all of the behaviors you engaged in today to reassure yourself that you did not act in a "narcissistic" way

Googling/researching for evidence that your fear is not true

Mentally repeating reassuring information

Example: "I'm not a murderer; I wouldn't do that; I wouldn't do that..."

COMPULSIONS CONTINUED



3 Accomodation:

That Exposure therapy will be less effective if loved ones continue to accommodate or facilitate your compulsive behaviors. Accommodations by loved ones is unfortunately very common. Loved ones must become educated about OCD treatment. (Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.40).

Common Examples of compulsive Accommodation:

Providing reassurance

Waiting for you to finish your rituals/compulsions

Providing materials for extra compulsions

Example: buying extra soap, doing extra laundry for contamination obsessions.

Not setting boundaries and allowing you to impose on them

Example: avoiding highways and taking the long way because of your harm OCD obsessions; taking showers when they don't want to due to your contamination obsessions;

COMPULSIONS CONTINUED

4 Neutralizing Behaviors:

Are Attempts to remove or replace triggering thoughts, feelings, urges, or body sensations.

(Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.40).

Common Examples of neutralizing behaviors:

Checking Compulsions

Washing compulsions

Replacing "bad" thoughts/images with "good" thoughts/images

"Fixing" things that appear triggering
Example: making something symmetrical or adjusting something to a "good" number.

Shaking your head NO to signal you are erasing the disturbing thoughts/images

Compulsively praying to "undo" your "bad/unpure/sinful" thoughts/images.

COMPULSIONS CONTINUED

5 Ruminating:

The last time you were triggered by a relentless intrusive thought, you likely took your attention away from what you were doing and focused all of your attention on your TRIGGERING thought/image/urge/sensation. You likely also compulsed, not obsessed. Compulsed because this is a mental act of going over something in your head over and over again.

(Hershfield & Aguirre, 2023, p.41).

Common Examples of Ruminating:

Bringing up a thought in your mind for the purpose of analyzing how you feel about it

Mentally replaying memories, conversations, instructions, dreams, or other mental events until they feel "resolved."

Playing out hypothetical scenarios in your head (imagining what would happen if your fears came true for the purpose of alleviating anxiety/distress.