

## RESPONSE PREVENTION: RESISTING COMPULSIONS

Many clinicians believe that when compulsions are discovered and discussed that the person will stop performing them. But as a clinician and individual who have worked closely with OCD, I know that this is an unrealistic expectation for the person to accomplish. Undoing compulsions is multi-tiered process. Similar to the process of confronting obsessional thoughts, voiding out the performance of compulsions must be done methodically by the individual and therapist.

It is a scenario of what comes first the chicken or the egg. Do you stop doing compulsion first or do you begin by confronting obsessions? Most traditional therapists will tell you that these are two of the same and that you are dealing with. However the elimination of compulsions must be done before any work can be done with obsessions. The reason being that if you don't rid yourself of the process of compulsions any exposure work done will be voided by your tendency to do compulsions when you are confronted with the anxiety of the exposure work. So where do you begin? You begin by becoming consciously aware of the compulsions you are doing that have become engrained in you due to the fact that you have been doing them for so long. Once, your level of consciousness has been raised then you can begin on working to stop the performance of the compulsive rituals. This is not an easy task to be performed, since you are attempting to undo all the behavior that you have been accustomed to doing. But as you become aware of the compulsions you can methodically work to undo what you have been doing for so long. The key is for compulsions, which are maladaptive to be replaced with adaptive behavior. Simply the individual must make a turn around in their way of approaching situations. The individual should be aware that the process of eliminating compulsions is anxiety provoking in itself from exposure work. When the individual comes to the point when they can refrain from doing rituals, they can begin their work on their obsessions. Obsessions cause individuals to do compulsions but after awhile the compulsions take over and the person falls victim to their obsessions. So first the individual must stop the compulsions, which are part of the two-step process. The two-step process begins by refraining from doing compulsions and then to confront the obsessions in the absence of compulsions. The individual sheds him or herself from doing the compulsions and leaves him or herself vulnerable to experience their obsessions without having the tool to undo their obsessions. So once the person has deleted the compulsions that they are doing they can go on to work on their obsessions. Now the anxiety drawn from resisting the urge of doing the compulsion is then rolled over to confronting the obsession. The commitment that the individual makes to stop the compulsions and dealing with the anxiety that ensues is a precursor to the anxiety they will face when doing their homework. The individual can now effectively confront their obsessions with the built in resistance to performing their compulsions. The person can now work on their hierarchy effectively without having the temptation to performing the compulsions. Once the individual has mastered the technique of resisting the compulsion, their rate of success goes up when they are climbing the ladder of the hierarchy. The key is to build up a resistance to the anxiety that you feel and let it dissipate to a point that the anxiety is null and void.