

# Curb Your Compulsions to Diminish Your Anxiety

## Objective

To diminish your anxiety level and regain your ability to have power over your anxiety by purposely shortening the length of your compulsions.

## You Should Know

As you know, engaging in compulsions can be incredibly time consuming, essentially stealing precious moments of time that you could be spending with your family and friends or participating in an event you enjoy. Those who have experienced compulsions frequently report that they feel compelled to repeat their compulsion often past the point of exhaustion, and yet still are unable to stop.

Do you often feel as though you are being held hostage by your compulsions after losing countless hours conducting a ritual over and over again, washing your hands incessantly, or checking each and every light in your house only to wonder “What if?” and find yourself checking all over again? Do you ever look at the clock in shock at the realization of how many hours you have wasted engaging in pointless activities?

## What to Do

Shorten the length of your participation in your compulsions in order to establish your control over how your time is spent. This exercise gives you permission to feel your anxiety, while simultaneously allowing you to recognize that you are the one giving yourself permission to indulge in your compulsion; therefore, you also have the power to end it when you feel the time is right.

1. Complete a compulsion log for a week to note how often and for how long you engage in your compulsion.
2. When you find yourself engaging in a compulsive behavior, set a timer for a period that is at least *ten minutes less* than the time you usually engage in this compulsion.
3. If you would like, have a friend or family member remind you when it is time to end your compulsive acts.
4. Do this for consecutive two-week intervals, lessening the time spent on the compulsion by an additional ten minutes until the compulsion no longer has power over you.

## Compulsion Log

	<b>Obsession</b>	<b>Compulsive behavior</b>	<b>Level of stress associated with compulsion (1–10)</b>	<b>Average amount of time spent engaging in compulsion</b>	<b>Goal time (10 minutes less)</b>	<b>Level of stress associated with reduced time (1–10)</b>
	Example: <i>Fiancée must be cheating</i>	<i>Checking social media</i>	8	2 hours	1:50	7
<b>Week 1</b>						
<b>Week 2</b>						
<b>Week 3</b>						
<b>Week 4</b>						
<b>Week 5</b>						
<b>Week 6</b>						

How did facing your compulsions instead of fighting against them impact your level of stress?

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How did your ability to control your compulsions change as you continued this exercise?

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How did it feel to incorporate choice into your compulsions instead of being compelled to finish them only when you were completely exhausted?

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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