EXPOSURE AND RESPONSE PREVENTION

Exposure planner

What I expect, what actually happened, and what that taught me

Use one sheet for each exposure, and fill in the Before section before you start, because memory rewrites what you expected once you know how it went.

This sheet is for planned exposures: something you choose to do, at a time you have decided, with the compulsion or safety behaviour left out on purpose. Running into a trigger by accident and getting through it is good, but it is not the same thing. The most useful learning comes from the planned kind, because you went in knowing what you were going to leave out and can see afterwards that you did.

With OCD the main thing an exposure teaches is usually that you can handle the anxiety and the doubt without the compulsion. The feared outcome is often something that cannot be checked, so do not use the sheet to prove the fear wrong.

Before

The exposure, in specifics, and when I will do it. Write exactly what I will do (e.g. talk to 6 strangers and ask directions, asking the 3rd person who passes me on each street so I can't pick and choose)

What I am not going to do (the compulsion, or the small thing I usually do to feel safer)

What the OCD or the anxiety says will happen, and how strongly I believe it, 0 to 100

After

What actually happened, and how long I stayed with it

Anything I did to make it easier that I had not planned

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Not treatment or a diagnosis. Best used with a clinician. If it makes things worse, stop and see your GP. Emergency: 999.

What it taught me

What I learned about handling the anxiety and the doubt

How strongly I believe what the OCD or the anxiety said, now, 0 to 100

What would make the next one a slightly bigger step

> The anxiety does not have to come down for the exposure to count. What matters is that you planned it, stayed with it without the compulsion, and did not undo it afterwards.

A worksheet, not treatment, advice about your situation or a diagnosis. It is best used alongside a qualified clinician. If using it makes things worse, stop and speak to your GP or clinician, and in an emergency call 999. Written by Anxiety CBT Ltd and free to print for personal or clinical use, unchanged and with this footer left on. Not for sale. © 2026 Anxiety CBT Ltd · Dr Daniel O'Rourke · anxietycbt.co.uk/resources/exposure-planner