



1. **Always expect the unexpected.** You can have an obsessive thought at any time or any place. Don't be surprised when old or even new ones occur. Don't let it throw you. Be prepared to use your therapy tools at any time, and in any place. Also, if new thoughts appear, be sure to tell your therapist so you can keep them informed.
2. **Be willing to accept risk.** Risk is an integral part of life, and as such it cannot be completely gotten rid of. Remember that not recovering is the biggest risk of all.
3. **Never seek reassurance from yourself or others.** Instead, tell yourself the worst will happen, is happening, or has already happened. Reassurance will cancel out the effects of any therapy homework you use it on and prevent you from improving. Reassurance-seeking is a compulsion, no matter how you may try to justify it.
4. **Always try hard to agree with all obsessive thoughts** — never analyze, question, or argue with them. The questions they raise are not real questions, and there are no real answers to them. Try not to get too detailed when agreeing — simply say the thoughts are true and real.
5. **Don't waste time trying to prevent or not think your thoughts.** This will only have the opposite effect and lead to thinking more thoughts. Studies have shown that you cannot effectively stop or push down particular thoughts. Your motto should be, "If you want to think about them less, think about them more."
6. **Try to not be a black-and-white, all-or-nothing thinker** — don't tell yourself that one slip up means you are now a total failure. If you slip and do a compulsion, you can always turn it around and do something to cancel it. The good news is that you are in this for the long haul, and you always get another chance. It is normal to make mistakes when learning new skills, especially in therapy. It happens to everyone now and then. Accept it. Even if you have a big setback, don't let it throw you. Remember the saying, "A lapse is not a relapse." This means that you never really go back to square one. To do that, you would have to forget everything you have learned up to that point, and that really isn't possible. Also remember the sayings, "Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat," (F. Scott Fitzgerald) and as they say in AA, "You can always start your day over."
7. **Remember that dealing with your symptoms is your responsibility alone.** Don't involve others in your therapy homework (unless your therapist tells you to) or expect them to push you or motivate you. They won't always be there when you need them, but YOU are always there for YOU.
8. **Don't get too impatient with your progress, or compare yourself to someone else.** Everyone goes at their own pace. Instead, try to simply focus on carrying out each day's therapy homework, one day at a time.
9. **When you have a choice, always go toward the anxiety, never away from it.** The only way to overcome a fear is to face it. You can't run away from your own thoughts, so you really have no choice but to face them. If you want to recover, you will have to do this.
10. **When faced with two possible choices of what to confront, choose the more difficult of the two whenever possible.**
11. **Review your therapy homework assignments daily,** even if you think you know all of them. It is easy to overlook them — especially the ones you don't look forward to doing.
12. **If your therapist gives you an assignment you don't feel ready to do, you can speak up and tell them so.** As half of the therapist-patient team, you should be able to have a say in your own therapy. The goal is for the homework to produce some anxiety for you to get used to tolerating — not to overwhelm you with it and cause you a setback. On the other hand, don't be afraid to stretch yourself a bit whenever you can.
13. **Don't wait for the "perfect moment" to start your therapy homework assignments.** Procrastination is a feature of many people's OCD, so start your therapy homework assignments the day you get them. The perfect moment is whenever you begin doing them.

14. **Don't be side-tracked by perfectionism.** Perfectionism can be another feature of OCD. You may find your OCD telling you that if you don't do your homework perfectly, you won't recover. If you do find yourself obsessing about having to do your homework perfectly, you risk turning it into another compulsion. Watch out for having to do your homework according to the same rigid rules each time you do it. Also, don't do your homework so excessively that it takes up your whole day. Remember that you still have a life to live.
15. **Try to read over your homework assignments at the start of each day.** Don't assume that you know them all and will not forget them.
16. **When carrying out assignments, be careful to not provide yourself reassurance and undo your hard work.** Telling yourself things like, "It's only homework, and the things I'm saying and doing don't count and aren't real," or "My therapist wouldn't ask me to do something that would cause harm to me or others," or "I'm only doing this because I was told to, so I'm not responsible for anything bad that happens," can undermine all the work you're doing.
17. **Give your homework your full attention, focus on what you are doing, and let yourself feel the anxiety.** Try to not let yourself tune out when doing certain assignments, so that you don't have to feel the anxiety. People sometimes let the homework become routine and do it in a very automatic way as a kind of avoidance. Also, don't do homework while carrying out other distracting activities. You are building tolerance to what you fear, and for that to happen you have to be in the moment with it.
18. **When faced with a challenging assignment or an unexpected challenging situation, try to look at it as a positive.** View it as another opportunity to get better instead of saying, "Oh, no. Why do I have to do this?" Instead tell yourself, "This will be good for me — another chance to practice and get stronger."
19. **Try to not rush through your therapy homework so that you don't have to feel as much anxiety.** Take your time, and see if you can view it in terms of all the good it will do you. Getting it over with as quickly as possible is not the goal — raising a moderate level of anxiety and staying with it is the goal.
20. **If your homework doesn't really give you any anxiety, tell your therapist about it.** If your exposure homework doesn't cause at least some anxiety, it isn't going to help you that much. On the other hand, try doing all new assignments for at least a week before deciding that they don't make you anxious. Some assignments can cause reactions later on, and it may take doing them a few times before the anxiety occurs.
21. **It is sometimes possible for OCD to try to make you doubtful about your homework.** It may tell you that you are not in the right treatment, that your assignments cannot possibly make you better, or that you really don't understand what you are doing and won't be able to make it work. Remember that OCD was known as the Doubting Disease, and it will try to cast doubt on anything that is important to you. To fight this, you may have to agree with it by saying, "Yes, that's right. I really won't get better."
22. **Never forget that you have OCD.** This means that you will not always be able to trust your own reactions or the things you think and feel, especially if they seem to be telling you very negative and extreme things. If you are unsure if something is really a symptom, treat it as a symptom. Better to do a bit more exposure than not enough.
23. **Remember that in OCD, the problem is not the anxiety — the problem is the compulsions.**
24. **Always take a moment to be proud of your own efforts and recognize your successes.** It's a good way to help keep up your motivation. Look back at earlier assignments that are no longer challenging if you believe you aren't making progress.
25. **Overall, never forget that OCD is very paradoxical and rarely makes much sense.** The things that you thought would make you better only make you worse, and the things you thought would make you worse are the very things that will make you better.

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by Fred Penzel, PhD**

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