

Reproducible forms for
Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for OCD
by Fabrizio Didonna
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INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT **Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: An Intensive 11-Session Therapeutic Program**

Please read this handout before your preclass interview.

People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) have uncomfortable thoughts, images, or urges that repeat over and over again. These are called *obsessions*. Obsessions create an often unrealistic sense of threat, which triggers disturbing emotions like anxiety, disgust, guilt, and shame. These emotions can then lead to the unnecessary repetition of behaviors, called *compulsions* or *rituals*. These are intended to prevent harm toward the person or others and to reduce the intensity of those disturbing emotions. These OCD behaviors can create serious problems in work and family relationships. They cause distress to people who are close to those with OCD.

OCD is found in about 2-3% of the general population. It often first occurs during the teen years and early adulthood. Intrusive thoughts, rumination, and obsessions are often the main features of OCD, though not always. However, most people with this disorder also have a troubled relationship with all of their inner experience: memories, attention, sensory perceptions, emotions, and physical sensations. This troubled relationship plays a significant role in keeping the disorder going. One of the features often found in OCD is a deep widespread **mistrust**, particularly toward one's own memory, intentions, actions, and sensations. This mistrust fuels obsessive doubts and justifies rituals meant to repair or prevent harm. Over time, obsessive rituals become automatic, and the person is no longer aware of their real consequences and meaning.

Mindfulness is the ability to keep attention focused on the present in every experience, both internal and external. It involves not judging and not reacting to what is observed. Mindfulness is the opposite of many obsessive symptoms. An obsessive problem can be defined as a *state of severe mindlessness*—that is, a lack of awareness, the opposite concept of mindfulness.

This therapeutic program combines cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with secular mindfulness practice. CBT is considered the most effective treatment for obsessive problems. Scientific research has also shown mindfulness to be effective in treating OCD.

Mindfulness practice can help you to radically improve your relationship with your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. Just as people can become more physically fit through regular physical exercises, you can become more mentally fit by regularly practicing mindfulness exercises. Mindfulness is developed through meditation practice, which trains attention and many other therapeutic attitudes and skills.

People who practice mindfulness learn to see reality as it is, in an undistorted way. Simply becoming aware of what is happening within you and outside of you is the first step to becoming free from mental worries and difficult-to-manage emotions.

(cont.)

How Can This Program Help You?

It can help you:

- Understand OCD. Learn what activates and fuels it. Understand how obsessions create distress and how attempts to reduce the distress fuel the symptoms, creating a vicious cycle.
- Change the mental habits that have led to your obsessive problems.
- Learn to remain grounded in the present and in touch with reality by becoming aware of what is real and what your mind distorts.
- Develop the ability to recognize and accept uncomfortable thoughts, emotions, and sensations without reacting in your usual ways; obsessions and compulsions only fuel the symptoms.
- Observe your inner and outer experiences without judging them.
- Develop a healthy relationship with your thoughts, so they become a useful tool for your life, not your enemy.
- Develop real trust, the most powerful antidote to obsessive doubts.
- Gradually and consciously face feared situations without any type of ritual or avoidance. You can learn to do this through Mindful Exposure. It is an effective therapeutic procedure for overcoming your fears in a lasting way.
- Develop greater awareness of your actions and intentions, which leads to a more realistic and mature sense of responsibility.
- Care for your own suffering in a therapeutic way and free yourself from guilt. Accept your limits as a human being.

Committing to the Program

Changing mental habits and behaviors is not easy. It takes time, motivation, and continuous effort. In order to achieve success in this program, commit from the start to attend all the sessions and practice regularly at home.

The program consists of 11 weekly sessions. Sessions 1, 2, and 4-10 last 3 hours each. Session 3, with family members and partners meeting with participants, lasts 1½ hours. Session 11 takes 1 full day, 8½ hours.

Home practice will take about 1 hour a day, 7 days a week.

At the third session, program participants meet with the family members who want to help them. The aims of the session are to help the family members better understand OCD and to suggest ways to support those in the therapeutic program.

(cont.)

Information about the Program

Teacher/Instructor: _____

Number of participants (maximum 12 participants): _____

Venue: _____

Day and time: _____

Materials: You will receive handouts to read and use for home practice and audio recordings that will lead you through the exercises. Your instructor will give you specific directions on how to get these recordings.

You should come to the sessions dressed in comfortable clothes and bring a mat and a stiff cushion that can also be used in your daily practice at home.

FORM 4.1 **Causes of Mistrust Questionnaire (CMQ)**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Please check all of the statements below (experiences, events, attitudes, behaviors, feelings, etc.) that applied to you **during your childhood and adolescence** (from 0 to 18 years old) and rate how much you agree with each of the statements by placing a checkmark in the appropriate box—from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Other people did not believe me	1	2	3	4	5
2. I was not allowed to make my own mistakes or choices	1	2	3	4	5
3. I received little protection from family members or caregivers	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I told others about my thoughts and feelings, they did not believe me	1	2	3	4	5
5. I was given too much responsibility (such as having to take care of parents or siblings)	1	2	3	4	5
6. I relied on other people to make my choices and decisions for me	1	2	3	4	5
7. I was physically mistreated	1	2	3	4	5
8. People important to me made promises to me that they didn't keep	1	2	3	4	5
9. I was verbally mistreated	1	2	3	4	5
10. I experienced significant losses, such as death or divorce of my parents or the loss of another important person	1	2	3	4	5
11. I was betrayed by someone important to me	1	2	3	4	5
12. My parents (or other caregivers) told lies	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I was a child, people asked too much of me	1	2	3	4	5
14. I asked too much of myself	1	2	3	4	5
15. I was treated differently from others in my family	1	2	3	4	5
16. I lacked good role models	1	2	3	4	5
17. I was not appreciated for what I did	1	2	3	4	5
18. I was not accepted for who I was	1	2	3	4	5

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(cont.)

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	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. I was abandoned by someone important to me	1	2	3	4	5
20. I had many experiences of failure or lack of success	1	2	3	4	5
21. I had difficulties in my first intimate relationships	1	2	3	4	5
22. I was compared unfavorably with others (e.g., siblings, peers)	1	2	3	4	5
23. I felt unsupported by others important to me	1	2	3	4	5
24. I was disappointed by people who were important to me	1	2	3	4	5
25. I had traumatic experiences	1	2	3	4	5
26. I witnessed traumatic experiences that happened to other people	1	2	3	4	5
27. I was rejected or excluded by others	1	2	3	4	5
28. I was blamed for things I did not do	1	2	3	4	5
29. I was humiliated or made fun of	1	2	3	4	5
30. I was bullied by my peers	1	2	3	4	5
31. I felt abandoned by someone important to me	1	2	3	4	5
32. I was frequently criticized	1	2	3	4	5
33. I felt misunderstood	1	2	3	4	5
34. I felt guilty of doing serious harm to others	1	2	3	4	5
35. I felt unloved	1	2	3	4	5
36. I was punished in ways that were unfair or unjustified	1	2	3	4	5
37. I was emotionally mistreated (including insults or threats)	1	2	3	4	5
38. I didn't feel listened to	1	2	3	4	5
39. I received negative or critical messages from important people	1	2	3	4	5
40. I felt ignored	1	2	3	4	5
41. Loving physical care was lacking in my home environment	1	2	3	4	5
42. I had physical defects or disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
43. My parents were insecure, anxious, or worried	1	2	3	4	5
44. I was left alone for long periods of time before the age of 12	1	2	3	4	5

(cont.)

FORM 4.1 (p. 3 of 3)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
45. I received inconsistent messages from people who were important to me	1	2	3	4	5
46. I experienced separation or continuous threats of separation from my parents	1	2	3	4	5
47. People did not believe me when I told the truth	1	2	3	4	5
48. My parents (or other caregivers) told me that my thoughts, feelings, or sensations were wrong, bad, or inappropriate	1	2	3	4	5
49. I was guilty of doing serious harm to others	1	2	3	4	5
50. I felt unwanted by people important to me	1	2	3	4	5
51. My parents were overprotective	1	2	3	4	5
52. I felt deceived by people who were important to me	1	2	3	4	5
53. In my family, I was always treated as if I were younger than my real age	1	2	3	4	5
54. I felt disrespected	1	2	3	4	5
55. I was not given clear rules and limits	1	2	3	4	5
56. I was not encouraged to pursue my talents	1	2	3	4	5
57. My family environment lacked verbal expressions of affection	1	2	3	4	5
58. When I expressed my preferences or opinions, they were not considered	1	2	3	4	5
59. I witnessed many quarrels and a lot of family violence	1	2	3	4	5
60. I was separated from my parents for long periods of time before age 12	1	2	3	4	5
61. I was constantly blamed by my family	1	2	3	4	5
62. People important to me did not trust me	1	2	3	4	5
63. In my family there were many secrets or important things that were not said	1	2	3	4	5
64. I was isolated from my peers	1	2	3	4	5
65. I suffered from long-term illnesses in childhood or adolescence	1	2	3	4	5
66. One or more of my parents suffered from serious and long-lasting diseases during my childhood or adolescence	1	2	3	4	5

What Is Mindfulness?

We all spend most of our time lost in memories or worries and plans about the future. This is not so different from what happens when you have obsessive or intrusive thoughts. It's as if we were on automatic pilot, our bodies going through daily routines while our minds are somewhere else.

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges from paying attention to our experience, internal or external, in the present moment and suspending judgment on what we notice. It is a mental attitude that can reduce suffering, preserve and maintain well-being, and lead to positive personal transformation. It can change the way we respond to life's unavoidable difficulties, not only daily struggles, but also more significant problems such as OCD.

In the same way that we can improve our physical well-being through regular exercise, mindfulness can improve our mental well-being through regular practice of mental exercises. Mindfulness is cultivated and developed through meditative practice (i.e., mental and attentional training) and can lead to positive effects, as has been shown in scientific research.

Mindfulness is an inherently powerful state that allows us to see reality as it is. To simply become aware of what is happening, within and around us, is the first step in freeing ourselves from the worries and emotions that make our lives difficult. The aim of this group is to help you become more aware of what is really happening so that you are able to choose how to respond to situations rather than reacting automatically—for example, with rituals. Becoming mindful requires practice, but it will help you focus your attention at any given time and direct it where you choose to direct it.

You practice mindfulness when you recognize that your mind has wandered into the past or future and you bring it back, each time, to the here and now, to reality as it is in the present.

The focus of this session is to experience what mindfulness is and begin to see how it could become an antidote to your obsessions. There is a relationship between obsessive mechanisms such as rituals, obsessions, and avoidance, and mindlessness or being on automatic pilot. The exercises in this session will help you learn new ways to safely come back to the present moment.

Confidentiality and Privacy

1. What is shared in the group, stays in the group. Group members and instructor(s) commit to keeping anything that is said in class private/strictly confidential.
2. Do not reveal the identity of group members to people not in the group.
3. Do not talk to one participant in the group about another participant in the group.

Attendance

4. Commit to attending every session of the program.
5. Arrive on time.
6. Stay for the entire duration of each session.
7. Inform the instructor(s) in advance if you know you will be missing a group session or arriving late or leaving early.

Respect

8. Be respectful and sensitive to others.
9. Do not interrupt one another. You may challenge one another, but do so respectfully.
10. Criticize ideas, not people. Avoid put-downs (even humorous ones).
11. Accept each other without making judgments. Refrain from using offensive language.
12. Try not to distract or annoy other participants.
13. Respect physical restrictions and the boundaries of your body during exercises in movement.
14. Do not monopolize the discussion.
15. Allow everybody the chance to discover the experiences for themselves.
16. Listen to one another actively and attentively. Give everyone an opportunity to share and give your undivided attention to the person who has permission to speak.
17. Avoid interrupting or engaging in side conversations
18. Turn off all cell phones, tablets, and electronic devices.

(cont.)

Role of Instructor(s) and Participants

19. The role of the instructor(s) is to apply his or her training to facilitate therapeutic experiences in the group setting. This may include leading the exercises in the program, sharing observations, providing feedback and support, creating a safe atmosphere, and finding a balance so that all members have the opportunity to participate.
20. You are encouraged to:
 - a. Ask questions or for clarification if you are confused or need to request assistance during the group sessions;
 - b. Commit to actively participating, informing the instructor(s) (and group) if something comes up that requires additional attention for you, remembering and working on your group goals each session;
 - c. Share feelings and experience, but refrain from giving advice to other participants;
 - d. Build on one another's comments;
 - e. Work toward shared understanding;
 - f. Speak from your own experience, without generalizing;
 - g. Be gentle and have a positive attitude toward yourself and other participants;
 - h. Be supportive and encouraging toward one another;
 - i. Follow these guidelines.

Mindfulness is the awareness that emerges
through paying attention
on purpose,
in the present moment,
and nonjudgmentally
to things as they are.

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*Not through actions,
not through words
do we become free from mental contaminations,
but seeing and acknowledging them
over and over again.*

—ANGUTTARA NIKAYA

*The true voyage of discovery
is not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.*

—MARCEL PROUST

*Just as breathing comes in stages, so do mental states.
Every breath has a beginning, a middle and an end.
Every mental states has a birth, a growth and a decay.
You should strive to see these stages clearly.*

—GUNARATANA

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today.

—CHEROKEE PROVERB

*Life is not lost by dying;
life is lost minute by minute,
day by dragging day,
in all the small and uncaring ways.*

—STEVEN VINCENT BENÉT

*The secret of health for both mind and body
is not to mourn for the past,
not to worry about the future,
or not to anticipate troubles,
but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.*

—GAUTAMA BUDDHA

*Children have neither past nor future;
they enjoy the present,
which very few of us do.*

—JEAN DE LA BRUYÈRE

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 1

When you practice the exercises noted in this handout, remember to take the necessary time; choose a warm, safe, comfortable and quiet place, in which you will not be disturbed or interrupted. Before beginning, switch off your cell phone to “protect” this moment in which you wish to be alone with yourself. Settle in a comfortable position, whether standing, sitting, or lying down. Instructions are not the most important aspect of these exercises; it is your awareness of your unique experience, moment by moment, whatever it may be: pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Learn to enrich and nourish yourself with pleasant experiences, but also to welcome and accept the unpleasant ones, thus preventing them from further hurting you. There is no outcome to achieve during the exercises, no aim to pursue; simply allow yourself to welcome whatever experience presents itself, moment by moment, just as it is, without wishing to change it and without trying to challenge or avoid it. Instead become a witness and observer.

1. Before the next session, do the **Body Scan** each day for 6 out of 7 days by listening to the audio file (Track 2). Do not expect to feel anything in particular during or after the exercise. It is important that you abandon any expectations you may have in relation to this exercise. Allow yourself to simply listen to your physical sensations, without judging what you observe. You will gradually come to realize that your body can be a reliable tool through which to stay in touch with reality, beyond your thoughts.
2. Do the **Mindfulness of the Breath Exercise** (Track 3) each day, for 6 days out of 7.
3. Fill out the Home Practice Record Form for Session 1 in Session 1—Handout 6 each time you do one of these exercises. Report everything you noticed during the exercise so it can be discussed during the next session.
4. Choose a routine activity in your daily life and, each time you do it, make a deliberate effort to become aware of that activity from moment to moment, just as you did during the Raisin Exercise. You might choose, for example, walking along the road, brushing your teeth, showering, drying yourself off, getting dressed, eating, driving, talking to someone, and so on.
5. Eat *at least one meal* in a *mindful way* (i.e., being aware), the same way you ate the raisin. Notice each time you realize you that you are eating in the same way you did during the Raisin Exercise.
6. If you have a problem with compulsive rituals, start to notice how **aware** you actually are of what is happening during and after carrying them out.
7. Carefully read the material provided to you in this session, at least once. The handouts are an important source of support in this therapeutic program.

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SESSION 1—HANDOUT 6 Home Practice Record Form for Session 1

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice. Note anything that happens during the exercise so that we may talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Friday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Saturday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Sunday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Monday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Tuesday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	
Wednesday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of the Breath Informal practice	

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SESSION 2—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 2:
Understanding OCD and How Mindfulness Helps**

OCD is characterized by recurrent, intrusive, and distressing thoughts, images, or impulses (obsessions) and repetitive acts (compulsions or rituals). Patients believe that these repetitive acts will reduce the discomfort and anxiety caused by obsessive thoughts and prevent any perceived harmful consequences. About 2-3% of the world's population suffers from OCD. Most people affected by this disorder have a problematic relationship not only with their thoughts, but also with all internal experience (sensory perceptions, emotions, and physical sensations). This dysfunctional relationship can play a significant role in the perpetuation of the disorder.

Mindfulness can be considered the opposite of many obsessive mechanisms and symptoms. Obsessive symptoms can be defined as being in a state of severe *mindlessness* or lack of awareness. Over time, obsessive rituals become automatic, and the person is no longer aware of their actual consequences and meaning. The practice of mindfulness allows you to develop the **ability to recognize and choose *not* to react to unwanted thoughts, emotions, and sensations. Habitual and automatic ways of reacting (obsessions and compulsions) simply fuel the symptoms of the disorder** (see Session 2—Handouts 5A, 5B, 5C, and 6).

Cultivating mindfulness means learning to remain **rooted in the present, in touch with reality** as it actually is, and not as distorted by the mind. It teaches us how to **observe our own experience without judging it**. Mindfulness practice and all the exercises in this course can radically improve the relationship you have with your internal states, whether they are thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations, and thus help you to gradually feel free from obsessive and compulsive habits and feelings.

The best meditation posture is one in which you feel at once comfortable, awake, and stable and centered, and one that you can continue to hold comfortably for a while. This type of posture allows you to practice with fewer of the distractions or hurdles arising from physical discomfort, drowsiness, and mind roaming. It allows the body to be balanced, still, and awake. You can accomplish this if the body finds balance, serenity, stability, and alertness.

When you practice, be it in a sitting meditation, yoga, or some other exercise, it is a good idea to wear loose clothing, with nothing tight around your waist, and to leave your feet bare.

For most meditation practices in this book, you can sit on a straight-backed chair or on the floor, using a cushion (such as a *zafu*) or kneeling bench to support your bottom.

Keep your back straight, but not rigid, with the back of your neck aligned with your spine. Maintain an upright posture. Visualize your body being drawn up by a string from the top of your head. If you are on a chair, you can sit toward the edge of the chair so that you are not leaning on the back of it. Rest your feet flat on the floor. Incidentally, there is nothing about sitting on the floor that makes it preferable over sitting on a chair. Using a chair is also extremely useful to people with physical problems or especially stiff joints.



A common on-the-floor meditation posture, especially for beginners, is the Burmese position.



Based on Bien and Didonna (2009).

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In this position, sit cross-legged on the floor. Your knees should preferably be touching the floor, but this will depend on each individual’s muscle flexibility and is not a requirement. It can be helpful to use a cushion under the knees.

As an alternative, you can sit in a kneeling position, on a bench or a cushion, with your knees resting on the floor and your arms and hands placed over your thighs.



Whichever way you sit, find the most balanced, relaxed, and fixed position that allows your mind to go deeply into the process of meditation. Try to be gentle with yourself.

Let your hands rest on your knees, or set one hand in the other, palms up and thumbs softly touching at the navel level.



Relax your shoulders. You may keep your eyes open, or close them to prevent outer distractions.

Which symptoms and features listed below do you recognize as present for you? Which features create the most difficulties? These symptoms can improve through this program.

Obsessions are recurring, persistent, unwanted, and intrusive thoughts, images, scenes, impulses, and doubts that cause anxiety, distress, or other negative feelings. The person tries to get rid of these feelings or neutralize them by performing a ritual action.

Typical themes of obsessions are:

- Fear of being contaminated, or contaminating others, by infections or disgusting substances or objects.
- Fear of harming yourself or others.
- Excessive attention to moral or religious ideas.
- Unpleasant sexual or violent thoughts.
- A need for orderliness and symmetry.
- Doubts about not having locked the door or windows or turned off the gas, taps or lights.
- Fear of shameful misbehavior or acting inappropriately.
- Magical thinking and superstitious beliefs (e.g., “If I don’t count to 87 when I am walking down the street then something terrible will happen to my beloved; “I’m afraid of the number 6 and have to avoid it because 666 is said to be the devil’s number”).

Compulsions are behaviors or rituals that the individual feels compelled to perform over and over again. These behaviors are meant to prevent or reduce the distress of obsessions or make them go away.

However, these behaviors are excessive or cannot realistically prevent the feared event. They normally offer only a temporary relief from distress. The obsessions usually come back stronger. Furthermore, these rituals often end up causing distress themselves as they become more demanding and time-consuming.

Compulsions can be either **overt**, when they are observable by others (e.g., washing, checking), or **covert**, when they are unobservable mental actions (e.g., silently counting or repeatedly saying words, phrases, or prayers in one’s mind).

(cont.)

Examples of typical compulsions and other safety seeking behaviors include:

- Washing (hands, body) and cleaning (housecleaning, clothes, objects).
- Checking (doors are locked; the gas, lights, or a tap is off; retracing a driving path to make sure that you have not run over a pedestrian).
- Counting in certain patterns.
- Continuously asking for reassurance.
- Ordering and arranging things, perfectionism.
- Silently repeating words or phrases.
- Excessive praying or engaging in behaviors triggered by religious beliefs or fear.
- Excessive slowness in completing tasks and the consequent delays.
- Repeating tasks excessively.
- Constantly thinking “neutralizing” thoughts to counteract obsessive thoughts.
- Not allowing someone to enter one’s home (e.g., because of fear of contamination).
- Avoiding places, situations, people, or activities that could trigger obsessive thoughts.

Most people with OCD have both obsessions and compulsions, but some individuals may have only one or the other.

Symptoms generally worsen when the person is experiencing more stress.

Most people with OCD recognize that their obsessions and compulsions are irrational and unrealistic, but they feel unable to resist them and break free.

In individuals with OCD, these thoughts and behaviors cause extreme distress, take up much time, and interfere with their daily life, work, and relationships.

Many people who suffer from OCD develop distorted or unrealistic beliefs starting during childhood. These beliefs guide their interpretation of life experiences in a problematic way. They work as “filters” that give particular meanings to internal and external experience. These beliefs activate obsessions, rumination, and, consequently, compulsive rituals.

From the following list of types or categories of beliefs, try to identify the ones you have developed.

1. **Perfectionism:** An unrealistic belief that you have to do everything in a perfect way, whatever the cost. Often this belief leads to rumination, obsessions, hoarding, and rituals of control, order, precision, and symmetry.
2. **Exaggerated responsibility for potential damage and/or for omission:** A misconception that if a serious harmful event occurs or has occurred, you are completely responsible for it. You must therefore do everything in your power to prevent it from happening again or determine why it happened. You may also have the belief that you have not done enough or have avoided doing whatever is necessary to prevent major damage. This belief often triggers obsessions, rituals of control, cleaning, and rumination.
3. **Control over thoughts:** An unrealistic belief that you need to and should be able to control your thoughts—for example, that you can prevent thoughts from appearing or get rid of them when they are undesirable. Often this belief leads to rituals of order and symmetry, hoarding, mental rituals, rumination, and obsessions.
4. **Giving too much importance to thoughts:** A misconception that your thoughts can have a direct impact on your life and say something real about who you are as a person. This may include the belief that thoughts actually have the power to determine your well-being and your actions. This belief can activate rumination and obsessions; rituals of control, order, and symmetry; and hoarding.
5. **Giving too much importance to perceived threats and danger:** A belief that a harmful event has a higher probability of happening to you than to others or may be more severe than it actually is in reality. This conviction often leads to rumination and rituals of control.
6. **Intolerance of uncertainty:** Significant difficulty accepting and remaining in unpredictable or uncertain situations. It may include the unrealistic belief that you will always be able to be certain about what is happening. Such a belief often leads to rumination/obsessions and rituals of control, order, and precision.

Based on Obsessive Compulsive Cognitions Working Group (1997).

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If you carefully observe your OCD, you will realize that there are specific mechanisms that activate and maintain your problems over time. Understanding these mechanisms will help you change them.

OCD problems start with an experience that most people consider harmless. The experience can be a **thought**, in the form of a *doubt* (e.g., “Did I lock the front door?”; “Did I wash my hands properly?”) or an *image* or *scene* (e.g., the memory of something you did or did not do, or of something you fear), **physical sensations** (e.g., “My back is itching”), or **perceptions** that may be visual, auditory, tactile, etc. (e.g., “I saw a stain on the floor”; “I heard a noise”) (see Session 2—Handout 5B). In people with OCD, these experiences trigger a cascade of events. First, the doubt, image, or perception is interpreted (*judging mode*) according to **distorted or irrational beliefs** developed earlier in life (see Session 2—Handout 4 on types of distorted beliefs). The interpretation then activates fears that the situation might be very dangerous.

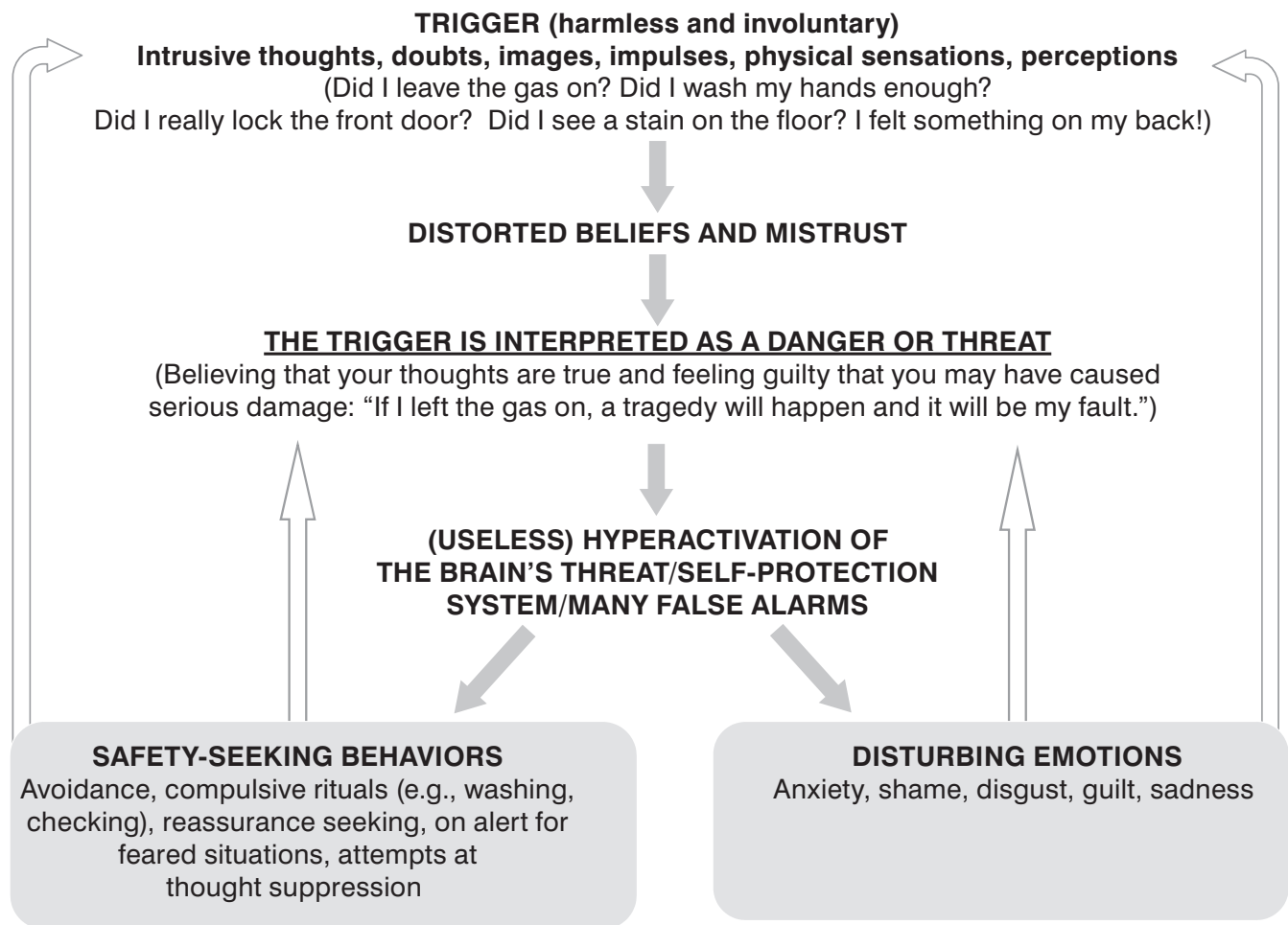
Judging these triggers as dangerous and **mistrusting** internal experience (especially memory and perception) activate the brain and body’s fight, flight, or freeze response. This is part of the **threat/self-protection system**, a set of areas and structures in the brain. This system prepares the body to take defensive action in the presence of a real danger. It can save your life if you are really in a dangerous situation. However, the system can also be activated in the presence of a nondangerous trigger if you believe the danger is real. Frequent activation of the system is stressful because it generates **distressing emotions** (anxiety, disgust, guilt, shame, etc.), leading you to try to protect yourself from the feared danger. You carry out **self-protective or safety-seeking behaviors**, such as asking for reassurance or enacting compulsive rituals of checking or washing. You might also avoid certain situations, or constantly look for danger without noticing that there isn’t actually any danger.

Once activated, distressful emotions and protective behaviors further fuel the interpretation of danger given to harmless thoughts. This increases their frequency and they then quickly become an **obsession** (i.e., a continuous, disturbing thought) and you feel a need to take defensive action. A vicious cycle is now in place, activating and perpetuating obsessive-compulsive problems over time.

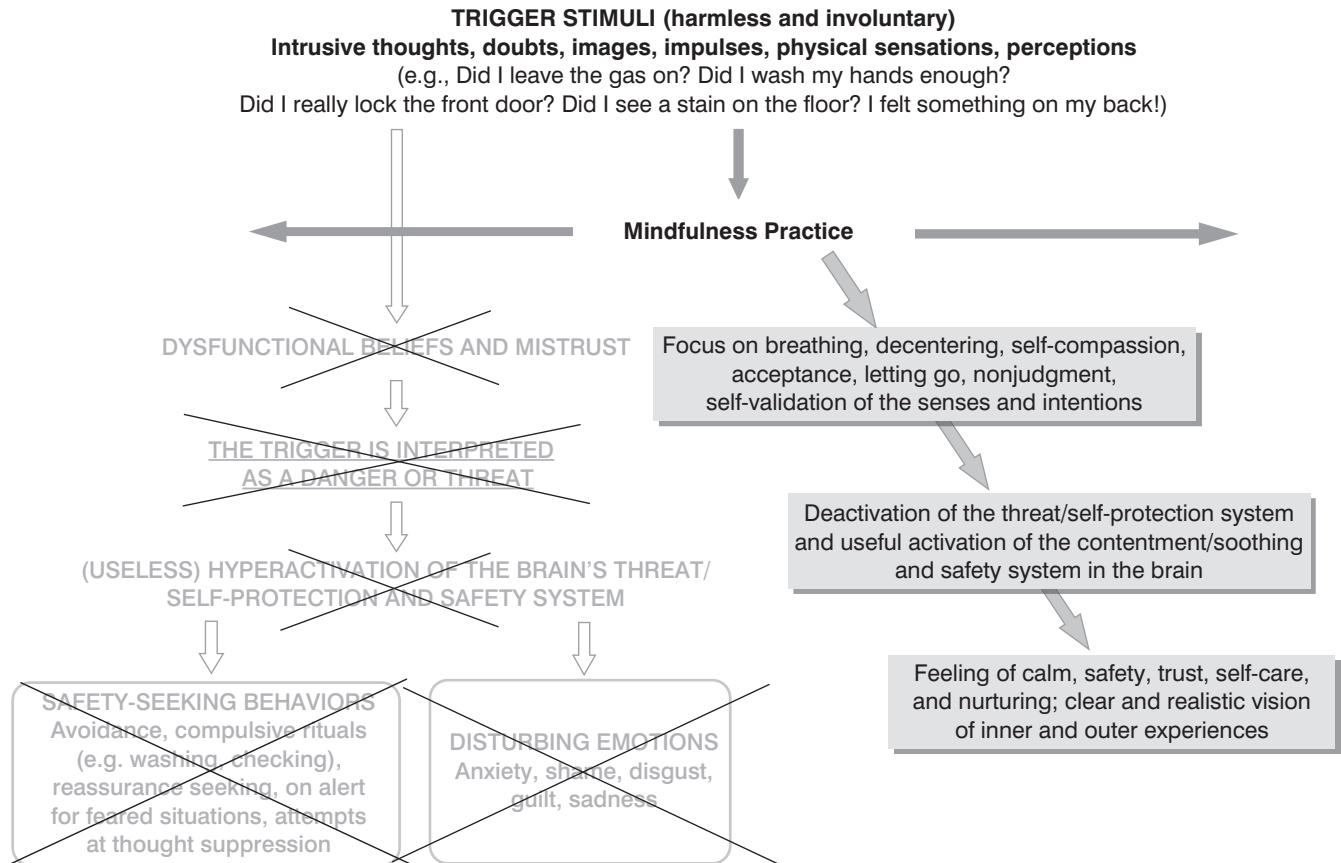
Mindfulness helps prevent unnecessary activation of the threat/self-protection system (see Session 2—Handout 5C). When practiced regularly every day, mindfulness can help you **suspend judgment** that you might give to any trigger. You will learn to observe the trigger without interpreting it or reacting to it, and accept it for what it is—a harmless event that will simply disappear if you do nothing to fuel it. Mindfulness also activates the brain’s **contentment/soothing and safety system**, which calms and promotes a sense of security and trust.

Mindfulness helps you to reduce OCD symptoms (safety-seeking behaviors and distressing thoughts, emotions, and sensations) and to cultivate a sense of calm, stability, and balance.

How OCD Works



How Mindfulness Can Help My OCD



SESSION 2—HANDOUT 6 **A Patient’s Report:
“Mindfulness as a Healing Solution for My OCD”**

Mindfulness practice has truly helped me deal differently with my intrusive thoughts, doubts, obsessions, images. Normally I react to my obsessive thoughts as if they were real, urgent commands that I cannot refuse to act on. I act on them as soon as I have them because it feels like not acting on them would be too risky, that something bad would happen, and it would be my fault.

Mindfulness allows me to stop the progression from intrusive thoughts to judgmental thoughts—that if I don’t do my ritual, something bad will happen. Now when I have intrusive thoughts, it’s like I can observe them from a distance, see them for what they are—just thoughts. I’m also able to be aware of what is really happening, and since it is almost never anything truly risky, I don’t have to react anymore.

This ability to not react has made me realize that I don’t need to do my rituals. I no longer believe in the importance of thoughts that tell me “You have to check three times or you have to make sure 10 times.” I know they are just thoughts, and so I let them be until they go away, like clouds passing in the sky. The ability to observe my thoughts without doing anything—without judging, without reacting—allows me to interrupt the mechanisms that have always led to my rituals.

—*Sara (a young woman affected by OCD)*

Pain is a normal condition in the life of every human being. When we are born, we experience great pain as we move from the comfort of the womb to the world, a transition imposed on us by nature. Loss, illness, accidents, and thwarted expectations lead to various forms of suffering. Fortunately, life may also offer many moments of joy and long periods of serenity and peace. All we can do as human beings is to create the best possible relationship with pain when it occurs to try to prevent it from increasing and to do what we can to make it eventually go away. Pain, like everything else in life, is not permanent. Developing awareness allows us to recognize and prevent our usual automatic ways of **reacting** and to **respond** mindfully in more effective ways. For all human beings, but especially for people affected by OCD, suffering is generated and increased by the tendency to react to painful or disturbing experiences in one or more of the following three ways.

1. **Attachment/clinging.** A tendency to consider some elements or experiences (people, objects, or situations) as “essential” to our lives, clinging to something (even thoughts or beliefs) or someone, intensely hoping to experience life in a way that is different from how we are living it in the present moment, continuously wanting what we do not have and not allowing ourselves to let go of pleasant experience when we have to let it go. This clinging is the basis of all addictions and can create anxiety about losing something or not getting what you consider essential. In turn, this anxiety can generate compulsive rituals or requests for reassurance; it can lead to anger, sadness, or desperation if we have lost this something. A Buddhist proverb says, “In life everything you truly need is already here.”

2. **Aversion.** A tendency to resist, fight, deny, oppose, and avoid unpleasant experiences, even normal unavoidable ones. Aversion occurs whenever we don’t accept things that are not the way we would like them to be, including our own thoughts, emotions, or sensations. We try to change or prevent what, in reality, cannot be changed or prevented. All this leads to an enormous and unnecessary waste of energy that can generate feelings of anger, resentment, shame, anxiety, guilt, or sustained stress, and activate compulsive rituals in reaction to those unwanted feelings.

3. **Illusion or distortion.** A tendency to lose touch with reality or distort it by fantasizing, seeing (or fearing) what is not there, and not seeing what is there. When you are not in the present moment, you can get trapped by memories of the past or worries about the future that do not allow you to see things in an objective and realistic way. This condition can generate emotions that are very difficult to deal with and is one of the causes of OCD.

Each of these three ways of reacting causes, increases, and maintains suffering and most psychological disorders. Through the practice of mindfulness we are increasingly able to recognize when one of these three tendencies has been activated in our minds. We can then try to interrupt it or at least reduce its intensity and frequency, and eventually prevent it from happening in the future.

*The basic approach to understanding the mind
is a process of gradually making friends with oneself.*

—CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

*We do not see things as they are;
we see them as we are.*

—THE TALMUD

*Between stimulus and response, there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response.
In our response lie our growth and our freedom.*

—VIKTOR E. FRANKL

*I am an old man and have known a great many troubles,
but most of them never happened.*

—MARK TWAIN

*In the stillness before our habits arise,
we become free.*

—JACK KORNFIELD

It's hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head.

—SALLY KEMPTON

*A belief is not merely an idea the mind possesses.
It is an idea that possesses the mind.*

—ROBERT OXTON BOLTON

*Men are not prisoners of fate,
but only prisoners of their own minds.*

—FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

*If you worry about what might be,
and wonder what might have been,
you will ignore what is.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

1. Practice the Body Scan exercise (Track 2) for 6 out of 7 days and make a note of your impressions and observations on the Homework Record Form.
2. Practice the Mindfulness of the Breath and Body exercise (Track 4) each day, at different times, for 6 out of 7 days. Staying in touch with your breath every day will give you the opportunity to become aware of what you feel when you are in touch with the present moment.
3. Each time you practice any exercise of this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 2 (Handout 10), making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced.
4. Carefully read the material provided in the handouts, at least once, and reflect on the ideas presented, trying to make them yours and using them every day to develop a new relationship to your thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations.
5. Choose a routine activity in your daily life that you can become particularly aware of (e.g., brushing your teeth, showering, washing the dishes, taking out the trash, reading, going shopping, eating).

When you practice the exercises, try not to have specific expectations about what will happen during. When practicing mindfulness, think of yourself as a good farmer who prepares and sows his or her land, trusting that he or she will see the fruit of this work grow and blossom after a few months. Do your best to approach the exercises not as if they were a duty to carry out, but as a healthy activity that you wish to make a permanent habit in your life.

Always remember that the commitment you dedicate to this training will give you significant results in the long run and, with time, mindfulness may become a life choice and a way of being in the world.

SESSION 2—HANDOUT 10 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 2**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice. Also note anything that happens during the exercise, so that we can talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Friday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Saturday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Sunday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Monday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Tuesday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	
Wednesday Date: _____	Body Scan Mindfulness of Breath and Body Routine activity	

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Dear relative or partner of _____,

I would like to provide you with information on the therapeutic process your loved one is going through as part of this program and explain what does and does not help your loved one's problems.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a trust disorder in the sense that people suffering from it cannot trust what they do, what they perceive, or what they remember. People with obsessive problems do not trust their attention, memory, or senses, especially during anxiety-evoking situations. They tend to interpret situations as dangerous or threatening. They think they must do something, such as ask for reassurance or perform compulsive rituals, to prevent feared consequences. The reassurance and rituals reduce the person's intense anxiety but do not deal with the root of the problem.

People with OCD often ask family or friends for reassurance; this delegates the responsibility for what is feared to the person who reassures them. And the effect of receiving reassurance is that it actually feeds and strengthens the obsessive problem. It increases the person's distrust of him- or herself.

Over this 11-session course, your loved one will learn a new way to relate to his or her thoughts, sensations, and emotions. He or she will learn to observe these internal states without having to react to them with compulsive rituals. He or she will recognize thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations as simple, harmless, transient events, without giving them any meaning.

Mindfulness exercises help people with OCD to develop this new relationship with internal and external experiences. People cultivate a new relationship with their senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) that encourages confidence in themselves, which is a fundamental antidote to obsessions.

In order to better help your loved one and to strengthen the effects of the therapeutic program, please follow these guidelines:

1. *Read all the material* your loved one brings home from each session. Reflect on it together, trying to understand how to best use it in everyday life and during difficult situations.
2. *Never give reassurances.* These increase your loved one's insecurity and feed the disorder.
3. *Give your loved one messages of trust,* in which you communicate that you trust him or her and what he or she thinks, feels, wants, hears, and remembers, and that he or she will be able to improve or overcome OCD.

(cont.)

4. *Never help your loved one in rituals.* For example, do not help with showers or washing; do not make sure that something is in its place and do not organize objects. This kind of helping only reinforces and magnifies the problem. Instead, remind the person to use the ideas, principles, and tools provided by the mindfulness group. For example, ask, “What have you learned in the group that would help you out in this situation?” or “Which exercise or attitude could you use to overcome this difficulty?”
5. *Encourage, motivate, and, if necessary, help your loved one remember to do the daily practice* of the exercises assigned at each session. You can also practice the exercises with him or her, listening together to the audio tracks of the mindfulness exercises. The effectiveness of this program *depends* largely on regular practice of the exercises at home.
6. *Help your loved one to become independent* and to make daily life decisions, taking full responsibility for those decisions. This is a fundamental element of the treatment for obsessive-compulsive disorder, because those suffering from OCD tend to find it difficult to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions.
7. Always offer *support and praise* when your loved one manages to do something difficult on his or her own, without rituals and reassurances.
8. *Believe in your loved one’s ability to manage and overcome obsessive-compulsive problems.* Help develop his or her confidence in the ability to change.

I hope the information provided here is clear; I am available if further clarification is needed.

What Is Not Helpful

1. **Never give reassurances.** Reassurances increase the person’s insecurity and feed the disorder. In fact, reassurance is one of the most powerful perpetuating factors of OCD. When your loved one asks for reassurance, you can remind him or her how your reassurances have been of little help in the past and how they reduce anxiety for only a few minutes. If your loved one instead allows him- or herself to feel anxiety, then he or she will realize that, given time, it disappears on its own. Moreover, by not providing the reassurance, you send the message that your loved one—not you—has the best response to doubt. By using the techniques and exercises from the program, participants will learn to trust themselves more and more.
2. **Never help your loved one with rituals.** For example, do not help with showers or washing, making sure something is in its place, or organizing objects. This only strengthens and magnifies the problem, reinforcing the obsessive fears and preventing your loved one from experiencing the real consequences of giving up compulsions. Remind your loved one to use the ideas and tools provided by the MBCT for OCD Program. For example, ask, “What did you learn in the group that would help you in this situation?” or “Which exercise or strategy could you use to overcome this difficulty?”
3. **Do not allow your loved one to compromise and limit your life,** particularly the life of underage family members. Remember to take care of yourself and, if needed, seek support or mental health care for yourself.
4. **Never criticize your loved one for his or her problem.** OCD is not his or her fault. Your loved one is a victim of the disorder and just needs help. See your loved one’s OCD behaviors as symptoms of the disorder and not flaws in character. Remember to look at your relative or friend as an individual who is more than a disorder, who is healthy and capable in many other ways. See your loved one as a whole person.
5. **Do not get discouraged or angry if your loved one has a lapse or relapse** after a period of improvement. This is normal, particularly during stressful periods or situations. The road to recovery is sometimes long. Even when your loved one is better or seems to have recovered, he or she needs to regularly practice the exercises of the program.

(cont.)

What Is Helpful

1. **Read all the material** provided in this program. Reflect on it together; try to understand how best to use it every day and during difficult situations.
2. **Give your loved one messages of trust.** Communicate that you trust what he or she thinks, feels, wants, hears, and remembers, and that you believe your loved one will overcome OCD.
3. **Practice mindfulness exercises yourself** in order to stay calm and centered.
4. Encourage, motivate, and **help your loved one to practice daily the exercises** assigned at each session. Sometimes it can be helpful to practice exercises together with your relative or close friend, for example, by listening to the audio of the mindfulness exercises. The effectiveness of this program depends largely on the level of practice and exercise carried out at home.
5. **Help your loved one become independent, making daily decisions** concerning his or her life, the lives of others, and taking full responsibility for those decisions. This is a fundamental element of the treatment for OCD because people suffering from OCD tend to have difficulty taking responsibility for their own actions and decisions.
6. **Recognize, encourage, and congratulate** even “small” improvements and progress, such as cutting down a ritual by a few minutes, or resisting the urge to ask for reassurance one more time. Although these improvements may not seem significant to family members, they can be hard steps for your loved one. Acknowledging these vital steps toward improvement can be a powerful motivator that encourages your loved one to keep trying.
7. Always **support and praise** your loved one when he or she manages to do something that normally generates obsessions but then refrains from rituals and requesting reassurance.
8. **Believe in your loved one’s ability to manage and overcome OCD.** This is an important aid in helping the person develop confidence in the ability to change, day by day.
9. **Use humor** when you take care of or help your loved one. Humor can help your relative or partner see symptoms from a more decentered perspective and not take them too seriously.
10. **Notice the signs that your loved one’s OCD is active.** Some of the clearest signs could be too much washing or checking; repeatedly seeking reassurance; excessive slowness in completing tasks and consequently often arriving late; not allowing people to enter the home (e.g., for fear of contamination); avoiding certain people, activities, or places; feeling an inflated sense of responsibility about harming themselves or others; repeating tasks over and over again.

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 4:**
Understanding One's Mistrust and Developing Real Trust

OCD can be conceptualized as a **trust disorder**. People with obsessive problems tend to lack confidence in and mistrust their internal experiences and/or mental abilities, especially perceptions, intentions, memory, and attention.

A first step in overcoming mistrust is to try to understand its possible causes and to cultivate acceptance and compassion for past losses, emotional wounds, or unmet needs, any of which can generate mistrust. A second step is to consciously stop any habit, behavior, or mechanism that reinforces and maintains mistrust—and therefore obsessive problems.

Trust is a feeling of safety and openness toward life. It is based on the deep understanding that any experience we encounter, whether positive or negative, pleasant or painful, is part of our development as human beings. We grow as people and improve our well-being by not fighting against the pain, thoughts, feelings, and sensations that life inevitably brings. We can live in the present moment with trust by learning to accept everything we feel, think, and sense in each moment because this is simply our experience. Once we do this, we come to understand that our internal experience is almost always harmless.

With this kind of trust in our inner experience, we can begin to develop a more mature and realistic sense of responsibility and deal with the risks life imposes on us with a greater feeling of security and safety. Living a full life, free from useless fears and worries, follows on the emergence of trust. Feeling *real trust* does not mean living in a naïve state about the problems and difficulties we face in life; on the contrary, it allows us to more clearly understand the real dangers and challenges that occur, to protect ourselves and others from harm, and to waste no time and energy on what is irrelevant, harmless, and transient.

Focusing attention in the present on our senses, physical sensations, breathing, and body in a mindful way helps us develop trust in reality *as it is*, and not how our minds might tend to see it.

To understand how our mistrust developed, we need to look at what we have gone through with great honesty. It may be hard to remember and clearly see what happened to us as children. However, noticing how mistrustful we are today, we can slowly piece together the origin of our mistrust.

Many people with OCD have developed a deeply rooted belief that if they lower their defenses, something terrible will happen to them, or they might do something terrible to themselves or others. We can be affected by this belief, so much so that fear can become paralyzing. We may not allow ourselves to become intimate with others, and we may have difficulties expressing our creativity, confronting others, or being honest with others. We may not let ourselves feel joy or pleasure, only the compulsion to repeat a behavior (rituals). We may have unexplained panic attacks, insomnia, or other physical symptoms. Often, no amount of encouragement from within ourselves or from others can make us feel better. Fear and mistrust keep us blocked.

Some of our problems may have been caused by completely random events during our childhood, such as an illness or an accident, being left alone in a hospital, or the death or absence of a parent. These events can deeply affect the way we relate to the world, to others, and to ourselves.

Mistrust also develops as a result of childhood experiences in which we did not feel loved or appreciated, or our needs were not acknowledged and met. In retrospect, these experiences may seem insignificant; to many, they were just a part of growing up, but for a sensitive child they can be devastating. It is not necessary for physical abuse or psychological violence to occur. While mistrust can be caused by such abuses, it can also develop from smaller, seemingly insignificant traumas: for example, adults constantly requiring us, as young children, to do things and be responsible for things that were far beyond our maturity and ability. This kind of treatment can affect us in very negative ways later in life. If we could watch a movie of our own upbringing, we might be surprised by how much we had to manage.

These types of traumas begin with the context into which we were born. Perhaps our mother had problems or the home environment was stressful. Perhaps the traumas occurred in the pressures, expectations, fears, and frustrations of our parents, with the roles we were forced to play, such as having to take care of parents and give them emotional support. The most suffocating expectations often come from frustrated parents who want to see their children do what they were never able to do.

Traumas can also come from any form of physical or emotional abandonment. Although these experiences of abandonment might seem trivial in retrospect, they can be overwhelming to a defenseless child. Normally, we associate abandonment with physical separation, but children experience deep abandonment whenever they feel they are not listened to or understood or are asked to behave in a way that is older than their actual age. The effects of these traumas then show up throughout their lives.

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A Definition of Self-Trust

Self-trust is the feeling connected with the belief that one is reliable and able to cope in risky situations where confidence is required. It is a feeling of openness, security, acceptance, freedom, and positivity toward life and the world. It encompasses a feeling of being able to manage own actions and feelings, confidence in one's perceptions and memory, and awareness of one's needs, intentions, and resources.

By definition, self-trust is a multifaceted construct that includes several important elements, or what Dr. Fabrizio Didonna, the creator of this program, calls PASIFACO. They are:

- **Positivity:** The willingness to find the positive aspects inherent in many difficult human experiences and the idea that even the hardest and most challenging life experiences can help us grow.
- **Acceptance:** The ability and willingness to welcome internal and external experiences as they are, accepting the fact that we may make mistakes and that the outcomes of our decisions and actions might, at times, be negative. Acceptance is what allows us to take risks and deal with the challenges and changes we face in life.
- **Security:** The feeling that we have the skills needed to effectively deal with different life situations and to make decisions.
- **Internal confidence:** The belief that what we perceive through our senses is true and real; that our emotions are harmless, never wrong, and potentially helpful; and that our values and intentions (and related actions) are fundamentally valid and/or appropriate. This confidence entails a clear and detached awareness of our internal experience.
- **Freedom:** A feeling of not being limited or restricted by the internal barriers and conditioned life experiences that have led us to develop and that keep us from reaching our full and healthy potential.
- **Awareness:** Being aware of our thoughts, emotions, and sensations; of our real needs and intentions; and of our personal resources, which equip us to deal with challenges and risky situations.

(cont.)

- **Control:** Self-trust implies feeling able to manage and self-regulate our emotions and actions.
- **Openness:** An attitude that allows us to deal with new experiences and the changes that life requires to improve our lives.

Self-trust stems first of all from the awareness that what you perceive through your senses, which informs your emotions and thoughts, is valid and real. Therefore, trust implies a sense of clarity and security about your internal experience. It is a feeling that allows you to let go of trying to constantly control the outcomes of your actions or the events you experience and to accept the unavoidable uncertainty of the consequences linked to them. It involves accepting that there is a risk of potential failure in anything you do.

As an adult, trust in yourself is the bridge connecting you to trusting others. You understand that, in general, others and the world are basically safe and not harmful, and that even the most difficult events can serve as valuable resources for personal growth and improvement.

Most people are born trustful; during childhood we are trustful because we mainly use our senses and not our minds to understand reality, and our minds have not yet been shaped by the ups and downs and conditionings of life. However, as we grow older, we can lose much of this trust because we start relying less on the senses and more on the mind with its thoughts, worries, and memories. We lose trust because we do not learn the essential tools needed to keep confidence in ourselves; in our intuition, senses, and emotions; and in our ability to distinguish between reality and our fears.

Most people with OCD do not trust. If they experience a feeling of trust, it is actually a false or **illusory trust**. They use compulsive rituals or reassurances to convince themselves that if they do everything they can to ensure that things are under control, then nothing bad will happen and they can feel safe. But this is not real trust.

This type of trust is similar to the infamous slogan, “Work sets you free,” placed at the entrance of many Nazi concentration camps during World War II to deceive and mislead prisoners who were actually going to their death. Many people with OCD tell themselves, “This ritual sets me free”—free from anxiety, worries, and fear of being responsible for something terrible happening. But they are deceiving themselves.

Illusory trust is based on the false belief that people can have total control over everything they do or experience, and that by having control, they can prevent any harm or danger to themselves or others. Of course, when people realize that this ideal cannot be achieved, they fall into mistrust and fear, and resort to useless strategies like rituals or reassurance seeking to regain that illusory trust.

Illusory trust stems from a wounded part inside of us, which probably originated in childhood or adolescence. When we encounter situations that directly or indirectly connect to past wounds, traumas, or deprivations, then fear and insecurity can be reactivated in a powerful way. We need to listen to and understand this wound, but it is important to recognize that it is only a part of who we are.

There is something else inside of us that is deeper and wiser, and which can grow and become stronger: **real trust**. Real trust can grow through the practice of mindfulness. It is similar to the trust we had when we were children, when we lived in the present moment unaware of the future and the past, living through our senses rather than our minds.

Real trust can help us gradually move from doubts, worries, and reassurance seeking to a deeper self-confidence and a realistic, mature sense of responsibility. It can teach us to accept disappointments, frustrations, and obstacles as opportunities to better understand reality, to grow, and to take care of ourselves. In this way, we will be able to see and feel the true fullness and beauty of life and the experiences that come with it.

To be able to do this, we first need to pay conscious attention to our fears, recognizing them and accepting them without reacting to or fighting them, being gentle with them with the same loving-kindness that a parent shows when hugging a frightened child.

Many of the exercises in this program will help you to achieve this goal.

To walk the path of developing trust, first in ourselves and then in others, cultivate the following steps each day with conviction, commitment, and perseverance.

1. **Listen consciously** to your feelings, emotions, and thoughts without reacting to them but instead with kindness, respect, and acceptance. Try to take care of your internal states without judging them. They are neither right nor wrong; they are simply your experience in that moment.
2. **Trust your senses**—what you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Believe in your sensory experience (although occasionally some thoughts might tell you that you cannot) and live according to it. Your senses are the most objective and true guide to reality. Remember how many times in your life your senses have told you the truth about events (perhaps every time); remember how many times your doubts, fears, and worries have come true or proved to be real.
3. **Recognize, listen, give voice to, and value your true intentions** (what you really want and what you do *not* want); this approach can guide all your actions. In each moment, your true intentions can lead you to do what you think is right and to not do what you fear or do not want to do.
4. **Give up seeking reassurance from others.** When you give up this habit, you strengthen your trust in yourself; when you seek reassurance from others, you increase your insecurity and mistrust of yourself. You already have all the answers to most of your doubts, but if you do not look for those answers inside of yourself, you will always depend on external sources of reassurance.
5. **Recognize, valorize, and validate your own resources**, not only your skills and abilities, but also your own personal values, ideals, and what makes you unique in this world.
6. **Rediscover and recreate the natural vital energy** that you had as a child before being conditioned by the outside world. Discover or retrieve from your past the activities that energize you—for example, listening to music, exercising, being in touch with nature. Mindfulness exercises are also effective in this way.
7. **Learn to stay in the present moment** without letting your mind wander too much into the past or the future. Feel and accept any experience that presents itself, in any moment. Practicing mindfulness will help you do this.

(cont.)

8. **Learn to draw boundaries** that determine who can enter your space and when, preventing unwanted people from invading your space, time, and freedom.
9. **Recognize and express your needs** and commit to satisfying them with your own resources, without expecting or asking others to do it for you.
10. **Accept anything in life that you cannot change** and use your energy, resources, and intentions to change what would be useful and that you can realistically change.
11. **As often as you can, focus your attention in a conscious and deliberate way on your physical sensations, breathing, and posture.** This allows you to be more present, rooted and focused in the here and now.
12. **Acknowledge, respect, and accept your limits and imperfections** as a human being; this is important for living a full and free life.
13. **Nurture your creativity.** Cultivate it in any way you can. It is one of the most important way to express your uniqueness to yourself and to the world.
14. **Never expect too much from others;** others were not born to meet your expectations and needs.
15. **Take reasonable risks** that you think may be useful or even necessary for your life and personal development, but that your fears, mistrust, and insecurity have always prevented you from taking.
16. **Take full responsibility for yourself,** your life, and actions, without trying to protect yourself with reassurances or rituals. It is better to trust yourself and make mistakes (which help you to learn and grow) than to always look outside yourself for guidance and reassurance (which increases your insecurities).
17. **Make decisions each day** about your life, be they big or small, and allow yourself to make mistakes and thereby learn and grow. Never let your doubts and worries inhibit your choices and decisions. Once you've made your decisions, calmly accept the consequences.

By cultivating and developing these attitudes and principles, you will follow a path that will open you up to life and bring you back to yourself and to your original feeling of trust.

*You may be deceived if you trust too much,
but you will live in torment if you don't trust enough.*

—FRANK CRANE

*Whether we experience what happens to us as an obstacle and enemy
or as a teacher and friend depends entirely on our perception of reality.
It depends on our relationship with ourselves.*

—PEMA CHÖDRÖN

*Reality is that which, even when you don't see it
or transform it through the mind,
remains exactly what it is.*

—ANONYMOUS

*As soon as you trust yourself,
you will know how to live.*

—JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

*When we walk like (we are rushing), we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth.
We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the earth. . . .
Be aware of the contact between your feet and the earth.
Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet.*

—THICH NHAT HANH

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 4

1. **Every day**, practice Sitting Meditation: Mindfulness of the Breath, Body, Sounds, Emotions, and Thoughts (Track 6) once a day, and take note of your impressions and observations on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 4 (Session 4—Handout 7).
2. **Every day**, practice Mindful Walking (Track 7) once a day.
3. Practice the Breathing Space exercise (Track 5) **every day** at three separate times throughout the day. Staying in touch with your breath throughout the day gives you the opportunity to become aware of what you feel when you are in contact with the present moment, without having to *do* anything.
4. **Every day**, do your best to put into practice at least one of the steps to developing trust listed on Session 4—Handout 4.
5. Each time you practice any exercise of this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 4 (Session 4—Handout 7), making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced. Circling the abbreviation **BS** each time you do the Breathing Space Exercise.
6. Carefully read the handout material provided for Session 4 at least once and reflect on the contents, trying to make them yours, and try to use them day after day in order to develop trust.

Choose a time and a place in which you will not be disturbed to practice the formal exercises. Do your best to approach the exercises not as if they were a duty to carry out, but as a healthy habit you hope will become a permanent routine in your life. Always remember that the commitment you dedicate to this program will give you significant results in the long run.

SESSION 4—HANDOUT 7 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 4**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice. Circle **BS** each time you practice the *Breathing Space* exercise. Also, note anything that happens during the exercise, so that we may talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Friday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Saturday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Sunday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Monday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Tuesday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	
Wednesday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Walking BS BS BS How to Develop Trust	

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Summary of Session 5: Using the Senses to Develop Trust

People with OCD seldom listen to their senses (smell, touch, taste, hearing, sight) and have little confidence in them. Therefore, when trying to understand reality (e.g., what they have or have not done), they rely on their often distorted and unrealistic thoughts, doubts, and beliefs. This habit of not listening to their senses and overestimating the importance of thoughts is often learned during childhood.

This session focuses on **mindful perception**; that is, how to **bring attention to our senses** and develop a constructive relationship with them. We can use our senses to build trust and achieve a deep, clear, and true view of reality. Trust in our senses can prevent the distorted thinking that leads to obsessive symptoms. Mindful perception is one of the most powerful antidotes to obsessive doubts.

Mistrust feeds doubts and obsessive behaviors. The first step to abandoning mistrust and developing real trust is to bring attention to our senses and validate the information they give us, moment to moment, and to give less importance and power to what our minds tell us because this information is often false.

The Perceptive Experience Validation (PEV) Technique: Example

Date: _____

1. Intrusive thought: I'm afraid I hit the van behind me when I was getting out of my parking space.
2. Level of belief in thought (0-100%): 75%
3. Level of distress (0-100): 80

<p>Information <u>not</u> coming from my perceptual experience (What am I worried about? What do I think happened?)</p> <p>List everything that encourages the obsessive thought and is not based on your senses (doubts, assumptions, inferences, e.g., “I may have not seen/heard”).</p>	<p>Information coming from my perceptual experience (What did I see, hear, smell, feel, touch, taste in that situation?) (What do my senses tell me: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste?)</p> <p>List everything that your senses have communicated to you in the situation (e.g., “I saw . . .”; “I didn’t hear . . .”) and value this information.</p> <p>Cultivate trust in your senses and in what they are telling you.</p> <p>When you have finished, compare the two lists and decide which you want to value.</p>
<p><u>I think</u> I drove backward in reverse.</p> <p>The driver <u>might not</u> have realized I hit the van.</p> <p><u>I think</u> I was at the right angle to have hit it.</p>	<p><u>I didn't hear</u> any sounds of a crashing car.</p> <p>When I looked in the rear view mirror, <u>I saw</u> that the van was far enough away not to cause me any problems.</p> <p>When I left, <u>I heard</u> a noise, but it wasn't the typical noise you hear when you hit a car.</p> <p><u>I saw</u> that the bumper wasn't damaged.</p> <p><u>I saw</u> the van pull out into the road without any problem.</p>

Level of belief at the end of the exercise (0-100%): 20% **Level of distress (0-100):** 15

How did the intrusive thought change by the end of the exercise? (Changes in its content or frequency or replacement with other thoughts): Using what my senses have told me, I think it's practically impossible that I hit the van.

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SESSION 5—HANDOUT 2B **The Perceptive Experience Validation (PEV) Technique: Home Practice Sheet**

Date: _____

1. Intrusive thought: _____

2. Level of belief in thought (0-100 %): _____

3. Level of distress (0-100): _____

<p>Information <u>not</u> coming from my perceptual experience (What am I <i>worried</i> about? What do I <i>think</i> happened?)</p> <p>List everything that encourages the obsessive thought and is not based on your senses (doubts, assumptions, inferences, e.g., “I may have not seen/heard”).</p>	<p>Information coming from my perceptual experience (What did I <i>see, hear, smell, feel, touch, taste</i> in that situation?) (What do my senses tell me: <i>sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste</i>?)</p> <p>List everything that your senses have communicated to you in the situation (e.g., “I saw . . .”; “I didn’t hear . . .”) and value this information.</p> <p>Cultivate trust in your senses and in what they are telling you.</p> <p>When you have finished, compare the two lists and decide which you want to value.</p>

Level of belief at the end of the exercise (0-100 %): _____ Level of distress (0-100): _____

How did the intrusive thought change by the end of the exercise? (Changes in its content or frequency or replacement with other thoughts): _____

All our knowledge has its origin in our perception.

—LEONARDO DA VINCI

The senses do not deceive us, but the judgment does.

—JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

*Reason is the cause of our falsification of the evidence provided by senses.
In so far as the senses occur, pass and change, they do not lie.*

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Nature never deceives us; we deceive ourselves.

*It is not the sensation that is wrong,
but the judgment formed with regard to it.*

—JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 5

1. Practice **6 out of 7 days** the Sitting Meditation: Mindfulness of the Breath, Body, Sounds, Emotions, and Thoughts (Track 6), plus exposure to a difficult state (e.g., a disturbing thought or feeling). Notice the effects of the exposure on your body and your reactions to it.
2. Practice **6 out of 7 days** Mindful Movements and Stretching (Track 8) for 15-20 minutes. Make a note of your impressions and observations on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 5.
3. Practice the **PEV** technique whenever you have thoughts, doubts, or obsessions (e.g., “Did I lock the door?”; “Did I run over someone?”) that make you feel unsure about what you actually did in a particular situation that led you to carry out your rituals (washing, checking, repeating actions, etc.).
4. Practice **Mindful Perception** every day, using the following cycle for alternating exercises: on the first day the **Mindful Seeing** exercise for 7 minutes, the following day the **Mindful Listening** exercise for 7 minutes, and the next day the **Mindful Touching** exercise for 7 minutes. Then begin again with the Mindful Seeing exercise.
5. Practice **sensory attention each day** to direct your attention as many times as you can (at least once an hour) to what your **senses** are telling you during your daily activities (e.g., “I hear this sound”; “I see the color of this flower”; “I feel the warmth of this object”; “I perceive the smell [or the taste] of this food”). Intentionally give value to this information.
6. Carefully **read the material** provided in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents to make them yours.
7. Practice the Breathing Space exercise (Track 5) **each day**, at least three times a day at different preplanned moments. Each time, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form by circling a **BS**. By becoming aware of your breathing on a regular basis, you can **learn to stop** thinking and **become aware** of what you are feeling when you are in the present moment, **without having to react** (e.g., with rituals) to thoughts or emotions.
8. Practice the Coping Breathing Space exercise **any time** you feel unpleasant emotions or have disturbing thoughts. Report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form by circling an **X**.
9. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 5, making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced.

Choose a time and a place where you will not be disturbed when you practice the formal exercises. Make sure you are in a stable and comfortable position. Do your best to approach the exercises not as something you *have to do* because someone has imposed it on you, but rather as something you *want* to do because it will help you get better.

Always remember that your commitment to practicing these exercises now will give you significant results in the long run.

SESSION 5—HANDOUT 5 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 5**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice. Circle **BS** each time you practice the Breathing Space exercise on a regular basis, and circle the **X** when you practice it occasionally to respond to difficult situations (Coping Breathing Space). Also note anything that happens while you're doing the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations), so that we may talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Sunday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Sitting Meditation Mindful Movements PEV Seeing, Hearing, Touching BS BS BS X X X X X X	

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SESSION 6—HANDOUT 1 Summary of Session 6: Developing a Healthy Relationship with Thoughts

Thinking is the normal function of the mind, and *thoughts* are its normal (and useful) products; they are not a problem in themselves. The real problem is the relationship that people affected by OCD have with their own thoughts and minds. People affected by OCD usually have a challenging and distorted relationship with their own thoughts. Many tend to blindly believe everything their thoughts tell them. They may think the mere occurrence of a thought can cause an event to take place or make it more likely to cause harm. This phenomenon is called thought–action or thought–event fusion (e.g., “Since I thought this, this event is going to happen” or “I am going to do this horrible thing”). The tendency to give thoughts such importance and power often develops during childhood because of environmental conditioning, but it can also be caused by witnessing a negative event that, by pure chance, coincides with a negative thought related to the event.

In this session, you will better understand the unique relationship you have developed with your thoughts; this relationship may involve identification, thought-action fusion, and/or negative judgments. Developing a different relationship with thoughts is one of the most effective things people with obsessive problems can do to overcome their disorder. Through **disidentification**, **decentering**, and **acceptance**, mindfulness meditation can help you to develop a new and healthier attitude toward your inner experience.

Disidentification from your thoughts means realizing that a thought is not reality, and that it doesn’t say anything about who you really are. Thoughts randomly occur, but they are not an organic part of you, nor do you have to follow them just because they appeared. Through disidentification you may realize that “I am not what I think” or “I am not what my thoughts tell me I am.” Each of us is much more than a simple judgment. The contents of your thoughts do not define you as a person. Just because you think “this” does not mean you are “this.” If you think, “I did a bad job,” it does *not* mean you are unable or you are a failure; if you think “I might hurt someone,” it does not mean you are a dangerous murderer.

Decentering is the ability to observe your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as temporary, harmless events in the mind rather than as representations of reality. Decentering involves awareness of experiences and keeping a distance from them so as not to be carried away by them. It includes taking a present-focused, nonjudgmental stance toward thoughts and feelings, and *accepting* them for what they really are: just transient and harmless mental events.

By observing your thoughts as they arise, then letting them go and returning to the original focus of attention (e.g., your breath), you learn to develop a *decentered* and *detached* perspective regarding your thoughts. At that point you can **choose which thoughts to stay with** (because they are useful or pleasant in that specific moment) and which to just let go of (because they are not useful).

Through regular mindfulness practice, you can radically change the distorted relationship you have with your mind, reducing your vulnerability to *reactive modes of mind* (e.g., rumination and obsession), and gradually become a nonreactive and nonjudgmental observer of your thoughts. You will stop feeling like a victim or a slave to your thoughts. Mindfulness teaches you not to believe everything your mind tells you, to understand that thoughts are not facts, to free yourself from the tyranny of these harmless mental events.

Our mind is made up of two basic components. We can call the first one the **Thinking Mind** and the second the **Observing Mind**. The Thinking Mind is the part of the mind that creates all our thoughts, whatever the form or content—words or mental reproduction of sounds, images, or scenes, whether positive, neutral, or negative.

What the Thinking Mind produces is mostly out of our control. Thoughts typically arise involuntarily, without an invitation, just like the salivary glands automatically produce saliva. The amount or kind of thoughts that our minds produce is not a problem in itself. You can imagine the Thinking Mind as a factory whose products (thoughts) run on a conveyor belt. Most of these products are rejects, without real utility, and will disappear from the production system, in the same way our minds eliminate the vast majority of the thoughts they produce.

Some researchers estimate that a person produces an average of 17,000 thoughts in a day. If, at the end of a day, we ask ourselves how many of the thoughts we actually remember, we probably would not remember more than a few dozen. We have the ability to spontaneously dispose of the useless thoughts, what we might call *garbage of the mind*.

People with OCD tend to give great importance to thoughts that later turn out to be useless, but which are sustained by the meanings they are given. The thoughts then cause intense anxiety or other disturbing emotions.

However, the second component of the mind, the **Observing Mind**, has liberating potential. The observing part of the mind is able to detect our internal events (thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations), to record most of them, and to report them on request. Problems arise when the mind decides to react to our internal states. This can happen because we consider thoughts as something real and concrete that say who we are, or that may make an event or our action more likely, even when it is contrary to our intentions and desires. This mistaken view gives thoughts extraordinary power that they do not actually have when they arise.

The detached and nonjudging observing attitude allows you to understand that thoughts are not necessarily valid representations of reality. Thoughts can reflect aspects of reality accurately, but they can also be inaccurate or distorted reflections of reality. Even if they are accurate, the contents of thoughts are not the reality they represent. If you think of a past event, you are *not* actually reliving that event, since it has, in fact, already passed. In this way, you may experience that thoughts are just **innocuous**, **insubstantial**, and **impermanent** mental events. This is the nature of *all* thoughts (no exceptions) if you do not do anything to them, such as judge them, assign a meaning to them, avoid them, or attempt to drive them away.

With this kind of observation of thoughts, you learn to decide which thoughts are useful or helpful and to cultivate them. These are thoughts that help you achieve your healthy goals, meet your healthy needs, cultivate well-being, and make you feel the way you want to feel. Thoughts that are not useful or unhelpful are simply all the others; they *do not* help you achieve your healthy goals or they activate uncomfortable and undesirable emotions and feelings in you. You can choose to let go of these.

When the Observing Mind merely observes the continuous flow of internal events (as if they were clouds in the sky), without reacting, without judging, and without entering into a relationship with them (like trying to change, avoid, or fight them), such events tend to dissolve. It is the nature of all thoughts and emotions (no exceptions) to be impermanent. We begin to free ourselves from our unhelpful thoughts when we learn to cultivate this attitude.

The thing a person frequently reflects on, the one he often thinks about, becomes the inclination of his mind.

—GAUTAMA BUDDHA

Nothing is more dangerous than an idea, when it is the only one we have.

—ÉMILE CHARTIER

You cannot stop the mind, but you can choose not to feed the mind.

—THOMAS TROBE

I would never die for my beliefs because I might be wrong.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

Thought itself is not more powerful than a shadow moving on a wall. We give it power. It is our mind. We give it energy.

—ROB NAIRN

There is nothing more dreadful than the habit of doubt. Doubt separates people. It is a poison that disintegrates friendships and breaks up pleasant relations. It is a thorn that irritates and hurts; it is a sword that kills.

—DHAMMAPADA

Worry often gives a small thing a great shadow.

—SWEDISH PROVERB

There is no use worrying about things over which you have no control, and if you have control, you can do something about them instead of worrying.

—STANLEY C. ALLYN

Make a list of the 10 most frequent and disturbing obsessive thoughts you experience each day. They may be in the form of words, sentences, images, scenes, or even imagined sounds. This list will help you to recognize them more easily when they appear and help remind you that they are not facts you need to pay attention to. It can also be helpful to use these thoughts as a target in several exercises of this program (e.g., the Observing Mind Meditation, Sitting Meditation including exposure to a difficult state) to develop decentering and disidentification from them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Be gently curious and detached toward your obsessive thoughts, recognizing them for what they really are: **simple, harmless, transient mental events**, which have no real power over you if you decide not to give it to them. You may start to tell yourself, “This thought is not me,” or “This is just a symptom of my OCD!” or even “This thought is not reality.”

Each time these thoughts appear, do your best to recognize them, observe them at a distance without judging them or reacting to them, and try to let them go when they are ready to go. **At a certain point you will realize how much energy, time, and pain you have dedicated to mental events that very often (if not always) have no real relation to reality.**

1. Practice the **Observing Mind Meditation each day** (Track 9), once a day for 6 days out of 7. Make a note of your impressions and observations on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 6.
2. Practice the **Mindful Hand Circles Meditation** (15 minutes) **each day**, for 6 days out of 7, to stabilize and balance mind and body.
3. Complete the list of the **Top-10 Obsessive Thoughts** and, when you practice the mindfulness exercises, begin to actively and intentionally relate to these thoughts by introducing them into your meditation and relating to them in a mindful and distancing mode (decentering), and without reacting to them (rituals).
4. Practice the **PEV** technique in writing whenever you have thoughts, doubts, or obsessions that make you feel unsure about what you have actually done (e.g., “Did I lock the door?”; “Did I run over someone?”) and lead you to carry out your rituals (washing, checking, repeating actions, etc.).
5. Practice **Mindful Perception** every day, using the following cycle for alternating exercises: on the first day the **Mindful Seeing** exercise for 7 minutes, the following day the **Mindful Listening** exercise for 7 minutes, and the next day the **Mindful Touching** exercise for 7 minutes. Then begin again with the Mindful Seeing exercise.
6. **Sensory attention:** Do your best **each day** to direct your attention as many times as you can (at least once an hour) to what your **senses** are communicating to you during your daily activities (e.g., “I hear this sound”; “I see the color of this flower”; “I feel the warmth of this object”; “I perceive the smell or the taste of this food”) and intentionally give value to this information.
7. Practice the **Coping Breathing Space** exercise each time you notice unpleasant emotions or thoughts.
8. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 6, making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced. Mark an **X** each time you do the Coping Breathing Space.
9. Carefully read the material provided on the handouts in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents, trying to make them yours. Make an effort to use them day after day to develop trust and a healthy relationship with your thoughts and emotions.

Do your best to approach the exercises *not* as if they were an obligation to be carried out, but as a healthy habit you wish to become a regular part of your life. Always remember that the commitment you dedicate to this training now will give you significant results in the long run.

SESSION 6—HANDOUT 6 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 6**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice and circle the X each time you practice the Coping Breathing Space exercise to respond to difficult situations.

Also, make a note of anything happening during the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations) so that we can discuss it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Sunday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Observing Mind Meditation Mindful Hand Circles Meditation PEV Mindful Perception X X X X X X	

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SESSION 7—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 7:**
Developing Acceptance as a Core Step to Change

One of the central issues for people with OCD is acceptance. Individuals suffering from this disorder find it extremely difficult, if not often impossible, to accept intrusive or obsessive thoughts, unpleasant emotions (anxiety, guilt, shame, disgust), and some physical sensations that are actually normal, harmless, and nonthreatening. *Acceptance* can be defined as an active and intentional attitude of allowing an unpleasant internal experience (thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations) or an external one (facts, events, situations) to just *be* without automatically reacting to it or trying to change it. Through acceptance, individuals with OCD cultivate a willingness to stay in touch with disturbing emotions and thoughts as they occur, without assigning any meaning or judgment to them.

In other words, *acceptance* means trying to create the best possible relationship with an experience that we perceive to be uncomfortable but which, at least for the moment, cannot be changed or avoided. When uncomfortable experiences arise, we sometimes feel a sense of refusal to feel unpleasant sensations or think disturbing thoughts—yet we feel/think them anyway. Perhaps we even feel shame or guilt for having such feelings or thoughts. But if we are willing to remain present with what is happening, seeing reality as it is, a different quality of attention will emerge.

This intentional attitude of allowing, of letting the experience of the moment be and of letting it go when it spontaneously ends, is a fundamental step toward changing and even overcoming the problems associated with OCD. It is a way to soften our defenses and feel a liberating sense of openness toward the continuous flow of experiences. Acceptance is not about liking an experience. You can dislike an experience and still accept that it exists. Acceptance also does not mean giving up on ever trying to change an experience or situation. Rather, it means dropping the fight to change something that cannot be changed in that moment. Acceptance preserves energy that can be used later for creating realistic change. You only need to accept things that cannot be changed. If you do not do so, you will just have one more problem—the initial one (e.g., anxiety) and the struggle to resist its presence.

The first step toward acceptance is often realizing that you are resisting something; the second step is acknowledging the experience of resisting, allowing the refusal, bodily tension, anxiety, guilt, and aversion that are already there.

Acceptance also means cultivating a kind and open attitude toward yourself. It is useful to remember that we are all imperfect. Imperfections are simply human nature, and it is normal to find within yourself thoughts, emotions, sensations, and behaviors that are not as you would like them to be. Opening yourself to the reality of who you are and what you feel allows you to develop a deep inner calm. You do not waste energy purposelessly, nor do you activate uncomfortable emotions deriving from nonacceptance.

$$\text{Suffering} = \text{Pain} \times \text{Resistance}$$

Pain is a normal and unavoidable part of the life of every human being.

We are all born and die in a condition of pain.

When we resist pain, we dramatically increase it.

In this way we create suffering.

OCD is a form of suffering.

Imagine relating to your inner states (thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations) just like a good hotel manager relates to his or her guests. When a customer enters the hotel, the hotel manager warmly and kindly welcomes the person at the reception desk. The manager asks for the customer’s identification. This is our **recognition** of the events that come to “visit” us—thoughts, emotions, or sensations. The hotel manager then assigns a room to the customer, gives him or her the key, shows him or her where the room is, and wishes him or her a pleasant stay (**welcoming, acceptance**).

The hotel manager will not urge the customer to leave as soon as possible or by a certain date, if the room is available for many days—something we often do with our thoughts and emotions when we give ourselves a deadline for our tolerance toward them (e.g., “I can resist/stay with this emotion just 10 minutes and then I have to get rid of it”). The manager will allow the customer to stay in the hotel for as long as he or she wishes, with the awareness that he or she will leave sooner or later.

Once guests are registered, the hotel manager will not have any dealings with them, unless a guest asks for information or makes a request. The hotel manager remains behind the reception desk and, in a kind way, only does what the position requires him or her to do. He or she will never enter into an intimate relationship with the customer.

A good hotel manager would never dream of visiting customers’ rooms at night or following them or going out for a meal with them. These things are not included in the role of a hotel manager. Although he or she provides accommodation to guests, the hotel manager keeps his or her distance from them until they decide to leave.

Like the manager, we can welcome thoughts and feelings until they go away, without having a direct and close relationship with them. We can *distance* ourselves from them and separate who we are from our thoughts and feelings (**decentering** and **disidentification**).

A good hotel manager also welcomes anyone asking for hospitality, not only the people he or she likes or he or she thinks will not create problems. Imagine what would happen on a stormy night if the manager refused accommodation to customers who did not have anywhere else to spend the night. What would happen if these guests started to continuously ring the bell demanding accommodation, perhaps even shouting at the manager? This would probably disturb all the other guests and lead to chaos. When we refuse to accept inner experiences, such as unwanted thoughts or emotions (our inner guests), which have the “right” to enter into our minds, and resist them and try to avoid them, they become more insistent and intense, thereby creating more pain and confusion in our minds.

A good hotel manager should welcome even demanding customers because rejecting them can cause bigger problems than letting them in.

Always try to be a good hotel manager with your internal guests—your thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. You may be surprised to notice that these guests will go away much sooner than you imagine (**letting go**), without creating any problems.

Things You May Need to Accept to Overcome OCD

Here is a helpful list of things you may need to accept in order to deal with your OCD effectively:

1. Intrusive thoughts (accepting intrusive thoughts prevent them from becoming obsessive)
2. Unpleasant emotions (e.g., anxiety, guilt, shame, disgust)
3. Unpleasant physical sensations
4. Imagined or feared consequences of failing to prevent harm or doing things in the wrong way
5. Taking full and healthy responsibility for your actions
6. That you are not perfect; you are a fallible human being
7. That things often are not as you would like them to be and will never be perfect
8. The uncertainty of reality and the future
9. That you cannot change the past and you cannot predict the future
10. That you cannot control everything
11. Giving up your nonuseful strategies for coping with obsessions and distress (e.g., rituals, seeking reassurance, avoidance)
12. Other people as ordinary, imperfect beings
13. That others do not have to do what you need or expect them to do, and do not have to support your counterproductive efforts to deal with obsessions and distress
14. That you have to commit yourself and work hard every day in order to overcome your problem

We cannot change anything unless we accept it.

—CARL G. JUNG

Without a pause our actions are automatic.

In a moment of stopping, we break the spell between past result and automatic reaction.

When we pause, we can notice the actual experience, the pain or pleasure, fear or excitement.

In the stillness before our habits arise, we become free.

—JACK KORNFIELD

Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can change,
and the wisdom to know the difference.*

—REINHOLD NIEBUHR

*To be without some of the things you want
is an indispensable part of happiness.*

—BERTRAND RUSSELL

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

—LAO TSU

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 6 **Table of Acceptance**

Each time you notice a disturbing thought, emotion, or sensation, do your best to **cultivate acceptance** toward this experience. To help you do this, try to answer all the questions in the following table when you notice a disturbing thought, emotion, or sensation.

What is my experience right now? (thoughts, emotions, sensations)
Where do I feel this discomfort in my body?
In this moment, am I trying to cultivate acceptance toward these inner experiences? (Yes/No)
Have I been able to allow, welcome, and accept this state (emotions, physical sensations, thoughts) and to stay in contact with it, without reacting to it? If not, why?
How do I feel now if I have been able to accept it? How do I feel now if I have not been able to accept it? What are the consequences?

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Home Practice for the Week Following Session 7

1. Practice the **Observing Mind Meditation** (Track 9) for 6 days out of 7, introducing a disturbing thought and cultivating a sense of **decentering** and **active acceptance** toward it.
2. Practice the **Loading and Unloading Exercise** for 10-15 minutes for 6 days out of 7.
3. Practice the **R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice** at least once a day (Track 10) and cultivate **acceptance** for something that disturbs you (a thought, an emotion, a physical sensation) by welcoming this internal experience, as a “good hotel manager” might do with customers.
4. Fill in the **Table of Acceptance** whenever unpleasant experiences are noticed.
5. Practice the **Coping Breathing Space** exercise every day, whenever you notice unpleasant experiences.
6. Practice **sensory attention** every day by directing your attention as often as you can (at least once an hour) to what your senses are communicating (e.g., “I hear this sound”; “I see the color of this flower”; “I feel the warmth of this object”; “I smell or taste this food”).
7. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 7, making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced. Mark an X each time you do the Coping Breathing Space.
8. Carefully read the material provided in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents, trying to make them yours. Use them day after day in order to develop trust, acceptance, and a free and healthy relationship with your thoughts and emotions.

When you decide to practice these exercises, remember to take the necessary time and find a warm, secure, comfortable, quiet place, where you know you will not be disturbed or interrupted. Find a comfortable and stable posture. Do your best to approach the exercises not as if they were an obligation to be carried out, but as a healthy habit you wish to establish in your life. Always remember that your commitment to practice this training now will give you significant results in the long run.

SESSION 7—HANDOUT 8 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 7**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice, circling an X when you practice the Coping Breathing Space exercise to respond to difficult situations. Also, note anything happening during the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations) in order to talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Sunday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Observing Mind + acceptance Loading and Unloading R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice Sensory attention Table of Acceptance X X X X X X	

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SESSION 8—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 8:
Mindful Doing and Mindful Exposure**

In people with OCD, the doing mode is often, if not always, focused on acting to prevent harm, reduce responsibility, and reduce emotional distress through compulsions, rumination, avoidance, and reassurance- and safety-seeking behaviors. Those suffering from OCD often carry out these repetitive actions mindlessly. They do not attend to their actual perceptions and the outcomes of their rituals.

One of the focuses of this session is on understanding how the lack of awareness in your daily activities contributes to OCD by fostering an inflated sense of responsibility that often activates your obsessions and rituals. You will also ask yourself why you automatically carry out rituals. You may be surprised to discover at a certain point that there is often no connection between what you do and your real intentions and goals in life, or the results you expect to obtain. Through the practice of mindfulness, you may notice the many contradictions present in your life because of OCD: between your thoughts and your actions, between facts and your beliefs. With a mindful attitude you can learn to observe what you do in a nonjudgmental way, asking yourself afterward why you did it. Through regular practice, you can discover your intentions—your real, genuine, and healthy intentions—that can guide your actions. The consistent practice of mindfulness can help you build a mature and realistic sense of responsibility and function in the world with trust and a sense of security.

One of the most effective therapeutic procedures for OCD and fears in general consists in repeatedly exposing yourself to obsessions and fears. This means intentionally facing them and staying with activated anxiety or discomfort, without carrying out any ritual. The mindful exposure practice will be used in this session to show you a new way of staying in a situation that creates anxiety or distress. It will allow you to overcome your obsessive fears without having to carry out unnecessary and counterproductive rituals.

An inflated sense of responsibility is considered a central feature of OCD, especially among people whose main problem is checking or cleaning, and it is apt to induce a strong feeling of guilt. Those with an inflated sense of responsibility believe they possess a special power to produce or prevent significant damage to themselves and/or others. Harm might occur through mistakes by omission (things not done) as well as by commission (things done). The person feels it is essential to prevent such harm from occurring.

Individuals with OCD lean toward misinterpreting responsibility because they connect it with the notion of “duty” or “rules.” They then harshly hold themselves to these rules. It’s common that such individuals have had the childhood experience of being taught that this rule-bound style is the right way to live. For others, experiencing specific events (commonly traumatic ones) left them with an inflated sense of responsibility.

Having a mature sense of responsibility means being prepared to make important decisions involving possible risks, being able to trust oneself to do what is right or useful, and accepting any possible outcomes. It entails being aware of the **true** influence of your actions on yourself and others, and the willingness to feel that impact. It is interesting to note that the term *responsibility* derives from the Latin verb *responsus–respondere*, meaning “ability to respond”—that is, the ability to be present in each moment and respond (not react!) appropriately to events you are faced with daily. This could also be a definition of *Mindful Doing*. Someone who is truly responsible is a person who is aware of the real possible consequences of his or her behavior, moment by moment. This person is also willing to make decisions that may involve risk if doing so could result in a useful outcome.

When you are able to understand the true meaning of responsibility, you begin to develop respect for and trust in yourself. Cultivating mindfulness (paying attention to the present moment without judgment) day by day, you will be able to understand your actual participation in any challenging situation as well as the real effects of your behavior. Mindfulness practice can help you to develop a more mature sense of responsibility and act in a more aware and confident way.

Based on Didonna (2009c).

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SESSION 8—HANDOUT 3 **Discrepancy Technique**

Think about an action you are afraid of doing and write it here: _____

Then do your best to answer the following questions realistically and honestly, starting from the bottom left and following the numbering.

2. Do they want to do it? 6. Do they want to do it? 10. Do I want to do it?

3. Are they worried they might do it? 7. Are they worried they might do it? 11. Am I worried I might do it?

4. Did they do it? 8. Have they ever done it? 12. Have I ever done it?



1. People who (write the type of feared action) 5. People who do not (write the type of feared action) 9. Me, a person who does not (write the type of feared action)

From intention springs the deed, from the deed springs the habits, from the habits grows the character, from the character develops destiny.

—CHINESE BUDDHIST TEXT

The intentions and resolutions you cultivate every day, every hour, shape your actions and have a powerful impact on your life, the life of others, and ultimately on the world to which you belong. What intentions do you wish to cultivate that can lead to your well-being and to the well-being of others? Focusing attention on intentions means becoming deeply aware of what you really want and what you do not want.

As soon as you wake up in the morning, find a comfortable sitting position and focus on your breath for a while. At a certain point, start directing some clear intentions toward yourself that are connected to the attitudes, thoughts, actions, moods, and words that are consistent with your healthy values and life goals. In your heart feel everything you wish to realistically and sincerely cultivate during the day that is about to begin. Try to commit yourself to doing your best to put those intentions into practice. Make a note of your intentions in the spaces below. Try to carry this list with you during the day and look at it as often as you can, so as to reawaken and remind yourself of your intentions:

1. What healthy, realistic general intentions do **I want** to cultivate today (e.g., “I will enjoy what this brand new day has to offer me”; “I want to be kind to myself and others”; “I will accept what I can’t change”)? _____

2. What thoughts (words, sentences, messages, images) do **I want** to cultivate today (e.g., “I want to trust myself”; “Thoughts are not facts”), and which thoughts instead **will I try** to allow to just be and let go of without feeding them? _____

3. What actions and decisions do **I want** to undertake today, and what do **I want** to prevent? _____

4. What emotions and feelings do **I want** to cultivate and feed (e.g., calmness, trust, self-compassion), and what do **I want** to accept and let go of (e.g., anxiety, disgust, shame, anger, sadness)? _____

5. What “healthy” words, sentences, or messages do **I want** to communicate to others, and what **will I try** to prevent communicating (because they are “unhealthy”)? _____

List of Distressful Situations for the Mindful Exposure Exercise

Name: _____ Date: _____

Step 1: Preparing for the Exposure: On this handout try to note all the **triggers** you experience in your life that tend to activate distress and your OCD symptoms (list all the situations in increasing order of distress, i.e., from least to most distressful); the **intrusive thoughts** or obsessions that are usually activated in that situation; the type of **distressful emotion or feeling** (e.g., anxiety, disgust, shame) you feel in that moment; **how much distress** you feel (rating from 0 to 100; see the Levels of Distress Scale below) being in that situation or having the intrusive thought in mind, and **not** carrying out your rituals, seeking reassurance, or other safety behavior; and the **safety behavior or ritual** you feel the urge to enact. If it is the case, indicate also the time spent and/or the frequency of the rituals if spending too much time and/or the frequency in doing something is your OCD problem.

Levels of Distress Scale

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Lack of Distress		Very Slight Distress		Moderate Distress, Annoying but Tolerable		High Distress/Difficult to Manage		Very High Distress/Very Difficult to Manage		Maximum Level of Distress (e.g., panic)/Unable to Manage
Triggering Distressful Situations or Stimuli in order of the level of distress: first the items with the lowest level	Intrusive Thoughts, Obsessions activated by the situation or stimulus		Type of Distressful Emotion, Feeling (e.g., anxiety, disgust, shame)		Imagined Level of Distress (0-100) (just staying in contact with the situation or stimulus without carrying out rituals or other safety behavior)		Safety-Seeking Behaviors (compulsions/rituals, avoidance, seeking reassurance, slowness, etc.)		Frequency of the Safety Behavior and/or Time Spent Usually (if excessive frequency or spending too much time in doing something is the problem)	
example: <i>Touching some objects, such as door handles, my shoes, and the water taps</i>	<i>I'm worried that I could be contaminated, catching HIV/AIDS or other illnesses.</i>		<i>Anxiety</i>		<i>80-90</i>		<i>Excessive washing of my body, taking several long showers a day</i>		<i>4-5 showers a day, 50-60 minutes each</i>	

(cont.)

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 5A (p. 2 of 2)

Triggering Distressful Situations or Stimuli in order of the level of distress: first the items with the lowest level	Intrusive Thoughts, Obsessions activated by the situation or stimulus	Type of Distressful Emotion, Feeling (e.g., anxiety, disgust, shame)	Imagined Level of Distress (0-100) (just staying in contact with the situation or stimulus without carrying out rituals or other safety behavior)	Safety-Seeking Behaviors (compulsions/rituals, avoidance, seeking reassurance, slowness, etc.)	Frequency of the Safety Behavior and/or Time Spent Usually (if excessive frequency or spending too much time in doing something is the problem)

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 5B **Mindful Exposure Record Form**

Name: _____

Step 2: Starting the Mindful Exposure: Before starting the exposure, indicate the distressful situation you want to expose yourself to (starting with the least distressful ones) and the therapeutic goal(s) you want to reach through exposure. Then, begin to practice Mindful Exposure, following the instructions of the Mindful Exposure audio track (Track 11) and starting with the mindfulness exercise you have chosen (e.g., Mindfulness of the Breath). After that, notice the real level of distress (0-100) as you enter into the distressful situation. If exposing yourself to a situation does not create distress, move on to the next one until you reach a sufficient level of distress (e.g., 50 or over is a level of distress that makes you want to carry out your safety behavior). Avoid carrying out your rituals or safety behavior in any way, at least till the end of the day. In each moment remember to use what your senses are communicating to you in order to have the best view of reality. At the end of the exposure and at the end of the day, rate your level of distress, the frequency of your safety behavior and/or the time spent in doing a normal behavior, if excessive in frequency (e.g., washing hands) or in length of time (e.g., taking shower, getting dressed).

Levels of Distress Scale

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Lack of Distress		Very Slight Distress		Moderate Distress, Annoying but Tolerable		High Distress/ Difficult to Manage		Very High Distress/Very Difficult to Manage		Maximum Level of Distress (e.g., panic)/Unable to Manage

Date	Triggering Distressful Situations or Stimuli You Want to Expose	Therapeutic Goal (e.g., preventing a specific ritual, reducing the time spent to do something, refraining from seeking reassurance)	Mindfulness Practice before Exposure	Level of Distress Starting Exposure (0-100) (just staying in contact with the situation or stimulus without carrying out rituals or other safety behavior)	Level of Distress at the End of Exposure (0-100)	Frequency of the Safety Behavior and/or Time Spent after Exposure
example Wednesday, October 1st	Touching the door handles in my office	Accepting the feelings and my intrusive thoughts and decentering from them; taking just one shower a day, of a maximum 15 minutes	Mindfulness of the Breath	90	20	Just one shower today; it lasted 18 minutes

(cont.)

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SESSION 8—HANDOUT 5B (p. 2 of 2)

Date	Triggering Distressful Situations or Stimuli You Want to Expose	Therapeutic Goal (e.g., preventing a specific ritual, reducing the time spent to do something, refraining from seeking reassurance)	Mindfulness Practice before Exposure	Level of Distress Starting Exposure (0-100) (just staying in contact with the situation or stimulus without carrying out rituals or other safety behavior)	Level of Distress at the End of Exposure (0-100)	Frequency of the Safety Behavior and/or Time Spent after Exposure

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 5C **Mindful Exposure Summary Flowchart**

1. Mindfulness practice to calm and balance your mind (e.g. Mindfulness of the breath and body).



2. Exposure to a distressful object, situation or stimulus. Use your breath as an anchor.
(Remember to notice your level of distress or anxiety on the 0-100 scale every 3 or 4 minutes).



3. Be aware of thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations by actively observing and describing the inner experience without any judgment FOCUSING ON WHAT YOUR SENSES (sight, hearing, touch, etc.) ARE COMMUNICATING to you, NOT YOUR THOUGHTS.



4. Use an attitude of acceptance, allowance and “letting be” toward thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations.



5. Use decentering and disidentification; consider your thoughts as simple, harmless, and transient mental events. You don’t have to react to your thoughts, and you are not your thoughts.



6. Use metaphors to decenter (e.g., look at your thoughts as if they were white clouds passing in the blue sky, or remember the river metaphor, the waterfall metaphor).



7. Prevent any ritual. Actively give up any physical or mental reaction to your distressful inner states (rituals, compulsions, reassurance-seeking behaviors).



8. End the exercise with a mindfulness practice to calm and steady your mind (e.g., Breathing Space).

- Planning your daily activities
- Planning short-, medium-, and long-term goals
- Practicing mindfulness, yoga, and mindful movements
- Exercising, playing a sport
- Listening to music that relaxes you or energizes you
- Looking after plants or flowers
- Doing volunteer work
- Reading self-help books
- Giving and receiving hugs
- Taking a relaxing bath
- Organizing a party
- Joining a cultural, recreational, or sports association
- Renting or buying an interesting movie
- Playing, or learning to play, a musical instrument
- Joining a therapy or self-help group
- Reading novels, poems, magazines, newspapers
- Practicing relaxation exercises
- Getting a relaxing massage
- Going to the library or a bookstore
- Singing
- Giving value to your qualities every day
- Taking a relaxing and mindful walk
- Going for a bike ride
- Signing up for a course (dancing, photography, restoration, driving license, languages, computer, sewing, etc.)
- Attending conferences, seminars
- Making your point of view and your opinions clear to others and defending them
- Treating yourself to a beauty treatment
- Going to the hairdresser
- Watching interesting TV programs
- Thinking about something positive for the future
- Going out with friends or colleagues
- Having conversations with nice people
- Trying out new experiences
- Carrying out your work and activities with commitment and passion
- Giving and receiving help
- Making useful and nourishing purchases (clothes, books, magazines, audio CDs, movies, etc.)
- Dressing casually
- Taking care of a pet
- Going to an exhibition or a fair
- Going to a concert
- Renovating your home (changing the arrangement of the furniture, buying new furniture, decorating the walls)
- Going on an organized trip
- Taking up an interest in gardening, botany, growing a vegetable patch
- Visiting a beautiful city

(cont.)

- Venting your feelings by shouting, saying what you think, punching a pillow
- Cultivating religious faith or spirituality
- Taking care of your appearance
- Listening to others
- Embroidering or crocheting
- Painting
- Sculpting
- Going dancing
- Repairing things in the house
- Running, jogging
- Treating yourself to something you like
- Taking up photography
- Looking at old photos and videos
- Showing photos to your friends
- Collecting things (coins, shells, stamps, stones, fossils, etc.)
- Taking up model making
- Doing crosswords
- Knitting
- Listening to the radio
- Taking a sauna or a Jacuzzi bath
- Looking after a fish tank
- Horse riding
- Doing a jigsaw puzzle
- Going for a picnic
- Bowling
- Inviting friends to visit or visiting friends
- Allowing yourself a moment of freedom and relaxation every day
- Going to the theatre
- Improvising (e.g., going on a trip at the last minute)
- Organizing a dinner with friends
- Giving presents
- Writing letters
- Chatting on the phone
- Dedicating a day to yourself only
- Spending time outdoors
- Cultivating different hobbies and discovering new ones
- Having a mindful, respectful, and gratifying sexual relationship/experience
- Wearing clothes that suit you
- Being in the company of people you love and who make you feel good
- Going to places or events where you can meet new people, make new contacts
- Stopping to admire the landscape
- Cooking food you like
- Keeping a diary or writing a story
- Taking some time off and using it in the best possible way
- Going to the cinema
- Understanding that “each day of your life, all you really need is already present”
- Others: _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

*From intention springs the deed,
from the deed springs the habits,
from the habits grow the character,
from character develops destiny.*

—CHINESE BUDDHIST TEXT

*What we practice becomes habit.
What may at one time be beneficial
can later become a form of imprisonment.*

—JACK KORNFIELD

*Move yourself,
but don't move the way fear makes you move.*

—RUMI

You cannot control the results, only your actions.

—ALLAN LOKOS

*Whatever you would make habitual, practice it;
and if you would not make a thing habitual, do not practice it,
but accustom yourself to something else.*

—EPICTETUS

What lies in our power to do, lies in our power not to do.

—ARISTOTLE

The essence of good and evil is a certain disposition of the will.

—EPICTETUS

*Be mindful of intention.
Intention is the seed that creates our future.*

—SEVENTEENTH PRINCIPLE OF BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

*Life is available only in the present.
That is why we should walk in such a way that every step
can bring us to the here and the now.*

—THICH NHAT HANH

1. Practice the **Observing Mind Meditation** (Track 9) on days 1, 3, 5, and 7, introducing a **disturbing thought** in the exercise and **cultivating** a sense of active **acceptance** toward it.
2. Practice the **R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice** on days 2, 4, and 6 (Track 10), cultivating **acceptance** toward something disturbing you (a thought, an emotion, a physical sensation) and welcoming this internal experience as a “good hotel manager” does with his or her guests. Fill in the **Table of Acceptance** (Session 7—Handout 6) whenever you deal with difficult states.
3. Practice **Mindful Walking with Stabilizers** once a day for 15-20 minutes, trying to memorize the words associated with your walk. Make a note of your impressions and observations on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 8.
4. Practice the **Mindful Exposure** exercise at least once a day in situations where you have anxiety or distress. Initially follow the audio track (Track 11) and the guidelines indicated in Session 8—Handouts 5A and 5B. Remember to focus as much as possible on what your senses communicate to you (e.g., “I can see there is no dirt”; “I recognize the noise present in this moment”).
5. Each morning, just after you get up, fill in the **Healthy Intentions Practice** form (Session 8—Handout 4) with conviction and commitment, and during the day try to do your best to put into practice what you have set for yourself in the form in terms of actions, thoughts, words, intentions, and moods.
6. Choose at least three activities from the **List of Nourishing Activities** (Session 8—Handout 6) and commit to implementing them to gradually fill the time formerly occupied by rituals and obsessions and to nourish your life.
7. If it is helpful for your specific OCD problem, practice the **Discrepancy Technique** each time you are worried about doing any harm to yourself or others.
8. Practice the **Coping Breathing Space** exercise each time you notice unpleasant emotions or thoughts.
9. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 8, making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced. Marking an **X** each time you do the Coping Breathing Space.
10. Carefully read the material provided in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents, trying to make them yours.

When you decide to practice these exercises, remember to take the necessary time and to find a warm, secure, comfortable, and quiet place where you know you won't be disturbed or interrupted. Find a comfortable and stable posture. Do your best to approach the exercises **not** as if they were an obligation to be carried out, but as a healthy habit you wish to introduce into your life as a stable feature. Always remember that the commitment you dedicate to this training now will give you important results for the rest of your life.

SESSION 8—HANDOUT 9 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 8**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice. Circle the X when you practice the Coping Breathing Space exercise occasionally to respond to difficult situations. Also note anything that happens while you are doing the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations), so that we can talk about it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	
Friday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	
Saturday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	

(cont.)

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SESSION 8—HANDOUT 9 (p. 2 of 2)

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Sunday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	
Monday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	
Tuesday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	
Wednesday Date: _____	Observing Mind plus acceptance R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice plus Table of Acceptance Walking Meditation with Stabilizers Mindful Exposure Healthy Intentions Practice Nourishing activities Breathing Space: X X X X X X	

SESSION 9—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 9:**
Developing Self-Compassion and Self-Forgiveness

It can be very difficult to care for one's own suffering. We often fight it, avoid it, or refuse it. People suffering from OCD tend to have an aggressive attitude toward their own thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. They chase thoughts away or negatively judge them, fight or suppress emotions, and heavily criticize themselves and what they feel. Consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, these actions feed their suffering. But the first step in effectively relieving suffering is to *stop fighting it*.

Compassion is the opposite of these counterproductive modes. It consists of a deep sensitivity and kindness toward our own suffering and that of others, combined with a deep and active commitment to search for effective ways to relieve it. Compassion is a way of being and feeling that can be cultivated and developed with training. It can free you from many difficult emotions and help you to develop a healthy relationship with your body, your mind, and subsequently with the people and world around you. The **practice of self-compassion** is taught during this session so that you can develop a different approach toward your own suffering and everything that feeds it. This practice can significantly soften many of the reactive mechanisms of OCD.

In both Eastern and Western cultures, **forgiveness** has always been seen as a liberating act of acceptance of a past that cannot be changed and of the imperfect nature of human beings. Forgiveness frees us from emotions and feelings that would otherwise continue to make us relive the past. Forgiveness toward ourselves is an attitude of deep acceptance of our nature as human beings and the mistakes we make in our lives. The **practice of self-forgiveness** can help to neutralize overly critical, perfectionist attitudes, as well as dysfunctional feelings of guilt and an inflated sense of responsibility.

**Part 1:
Which Imperfections Make You Feel Inadequate?**

Everybody has something about themselves that they don't like; something that causes them to feel shame, to feel insecure or not "good enough." It is the human condition to be imperfect, and feelings of failure and inadequacy are part of the experience of being human.

Take a piece of paper and try writing about an issue you have that tends to make you feel inadequate or bad about yourself (physical appearance, work or relationship issues, etc.). How does this aspect of yourself make you feel: scared, sad, depressed, insecure, angry? What emotions come up for you when you think about this aspect of yourself? This is just between you and the piece of paper, so please try to be as emotionally honest as possible and avoid repressing any feelings, while at the same time not being overly melodramatic. Try to just feel your emotions exactly as they are—no more, no less—and then write about them.

**Part 2:
Write a Letter to Yourself from the Perspective
of an Unconditionally Loving Imaginary Friend**

Now think about an imaginary friend who is unconditionally loving, accepting, kind, and compassionate. Imagine that this friend can see all your strengths and all your weaknesses, including the aspect of yourself you have just been writing about. Think about how this friend feels toward you, and how he or she loves you exactly as you are, with all your very human imperfections. This friend recognizes the limitations of human nature and is kind and forgiving toward you. In his or her great wisdom this friend understands your life history and the millions of things that have happened in your life to make you who you are in this moment. The inadequacy you wrote about in Part 1 is connected to so many things you didn't necessarily choose: your genes, your family history, life circumstances—things that were outside of your control.

Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend, focusing on the perceived inadequacy for which you tend to judge

(cont.)

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yourself. What would this friend say to you about your “flaw” from the perspective of unlimited compassion? How would this friend convey the deep compassion he or she feels for you, especially for the pain you feel when you judge yourself so harshly? What would this friend write to remind you that you are only human, that all people have both strengths and weaknesses? And if you think this friend would suggest possible changes you should make, how would these suggestions embody feelings of unconditional understanding and compassion? As you write to yourself from the perspective of this imaginary friend, try to infuse your letter with a strong sense of his or her acceptance, kindness, caring, and desire for your health and happiness.

Part 3:
Feel the Compassion
as It Soothes and Comforts You

After writing the letter, put it down for a little while. Then come back and read it again, really letting the words sink in. Feel the compassion as it pours into you, soothing and comforting you like a cool breeze on a hot day. Love, connection, and acceptance are your birthright. To claim them you need only look within yourself.

*People will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

—MAYA ANGELOU

*Find a place inside where there's joy,
and the joy will burn out the pain.*

—JOSEPH CAMPBELL

*The mind creates the abyss.
The heart crosses it.*

—NISARGADATTA

*There are two kinds of suffering.
There is the suffering you run away from, which follows you everywhere.
And there is the suffering you face directly, and in doing so become free.*

—AJAHN CHAH

*Compassion is our deepest nature.
It arises from the interconnection between ourselves and everything else.*

—SECOND PRINCIPLE OF BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

*The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome,
to endure, to transform, to love and to be greater than our suffering.*

—BEN OKRI

*Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past.
Forgiveness is a way to move on.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent;
the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult;
the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.*

—ALDEN NOWLAN

*Not forgiving, staying in bitterness, anger, hostility,
is like drinking a cup of poison and waiting for the other person to die.*

—FRED LUSKIN

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 9

1. Do the **Self-Compassion Practice** (audio Track 13) **each day** in order to learn how to care for your suffering.
2. Write a **compassionate letter** to yourself following the instructions on Session 9—Handout 2.
3. Carry out the **Self-Forgiveness Practice** (audio Track 14) **each day**, cultivating a deep sense of **acceptance** toward your condition as an imperfect human being who can make mistakes even while doing your best not to make any.
4. On days 1 and 5 do the **R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice** (audio Track 10), cultivating acceptance toward something (a thought, an emotion, a physical sensation) that disturbs you by welcoming this internal experience as a “good hotel manager” might do with customers.
5. On days 3 and 7 do the **Observing Mind Meditation** (audio Track 9), introducing a disturbing and distressful thought and cultivating a sense of active acceptance toward it.
6. On days 2, 4, and 6, practice an exercise of mindfulness in motion of your choice (Mindful Walking, Mindful Walking with Stabilizer, Mindful Hand Circles, Loading and Unloading, Mindful Movements and Stretching) for about 10-15 minutes.
7. Practice **Mindful Exposure** at least once a day, **every day**, in situations that create anxiety and distress. Initially follow audio Track 11 and the guidelines on Session 8—Handouts 5A, and 5B, remembering to focus as much as possible on what your senses communicate to you (e.g., “I see that there is no dirt”; “I recognize the noise present in this moment”). When you feel ready, you may choose to practice the exercise without the audio track, just following the basic steps in your mind.
8. Each morning, just after you get up, fill in the **Healthy Intentions Practice** form (Session 8—Handout 4) with conviction and commitment for 5-10 minutes, adding a **compassionate attitude** to the intentions, and then during the day try to do your best to put into practice what you proposed in the form in terms of actions, thoughts, words, intentions, and moods.
9. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 9, making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced.
10. Carefully read the material provided in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents, trying to make them yours, and try to use them day after day in order to develop trust and awareness.

When you decide to practice these exercises, remember to take the necessary time and find a warm, safe, comfortable, and quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed or interrupted. Find a comfortable and stable posture. Do your best to approach the exercises not as if they were a duty to carry out, but as a healthy habit you wish to become a permanent routine in your life. Always try to remember that the commitment you dedicate to this program will give you significant results in the long run.

SESSION 9—HANDOUT 5 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 9**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice, noting and writing anything that happens during the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations) in order to discuss it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Friday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Saturday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Sunday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Monday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Tuesday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	
Wednesday Date: _____	Self-Compassion Mindful Exposure Self-Forgiveness Healthy Intentions Observing Mind Mindfulness in motion R.E.A.L. Acceptance	

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As discussed in Session 8, a mature, healthy, and authentic sense of responsibility consists in being willing to make important decisions, to trust yourself to do what is right or useful, and to be aware of the real impact of your actions, choices, and decisions. This includes being willing to recognize how your behavior actually affects you and others, and to accept the outcomes, whatever they may be. It is a question of trusting that your actions are carried out to the best of your abilities, with the best intentions.

Over the past few weeks of practicing Mindful Exposure, you have become accustomed to opening up to distressing situations related to OCD and trusting your ability to stay in contact with these situations without reacting in your habitual ways. Taking useful constructive risks in your life is one of the best ways to further overcome mistrust and insecurity and to build authentic responsibility and real trust.

This is not about making rash or irrational choices or acting in ways that can endanger your physical or psychological safety. It means taking the risk of doing something that, in your heart, you would love to do or think would be useful to do, but that old negative messages have told you is wrong or too risky. Perhaps in the past you were told you should not do it or were not capable of doing it. Risking in this way can empower you and increase your self-trust, security, and energy. It can also be useful in preventing avoidance and safety-seeking behaviors, such as compulsive rituals and seeking reassurance.

This session helps prepare you to deal with life and its challenges after the end of the course by encouraging you to take constructive risks. Doing so can lead to significant changes. In addition to this you will learn to plan and carry out Letting-Go Rituals, which will help you to understand that rituals can be normal human behaviors. They can empower you and strengthen your motivation to give up unhelpful and counterproductive behaviors.

Freedom from Your Past Conditioning Requires Taking Risks

Taking risks is one of the most powerful step you can take to develop trust, to distance yourself from past limitations, and to live your life more fully. Take the risk of doing something you would love to do, aspire to, or that would be useful to you, even though you might have been told that this thing is wrong or too dangerous. You might have been told you are not able to do it or do not know how to do it correctly (but you disagree). This may be something you are afraid of doing or not doing, such as compulsions. Taking risks like these can empower you and give you self-trust. It can increase your energy and broaden your view of reality. Your identity can change from being a person full of shame, guilt, and fear to being a capable, unique, and confident person. This does not mean carrying out rash acts of defiance or dangerous behaviors. It means taking specific risks that go against your habits and limitations. Here are some examples:

1. The risk of exposing yourself to situations you are afraid of but that most other people do not fear. Do this without carrying out rituals or protecting yourself in unnecessary, counterproductive ways.
2. The risk of taking responsibility for what you do or decide not to do.
3. The willingness to accept uncertainty in every aspect of life and in each choice or decision you make.
4. The risk of feeling and expressing all your emotions, feelings, and vital energy instead of hiding them.
5. The risk of revealing yourself to others and being seen, despite fear of being criticized, disapproved of, or rejected.
6. The risk of expressing your opinions, ideas, and desires, even if they are in disagreement with other people's.
7. The risk of letting things be as they are, even if they are not perfect (and never will be) or are not as you think they ought to be or should be.
8. The risk of being angry and confronting someone who is angry with you.
9. The risk of being with others without "too many defenses," rather than trying to always be "right," closed in your armor.
10. The risk of being afraid, defenseless, and insecure in some situations, and accepting these situations as a normal part of life, perhaps sharing them with someone.
11. The risk of feeling and understanding what you really want in life and what are your healthy needs, and learning to give it to yourself without expecting it from others.
12. The risk of making big or small changes in your life.
13. The risk of saying "no" (to other people's requests) when you would automatically say "yes."
14. The risk of giving priority to yourself, even if doing so may disappoint someone.
15. The risk of opening up to the world and to life, and feeling pain and disappointment when life and others are not as you would like them to be.

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SESSION 10—HANDOUT 3 **List of Mindful Risks**

Think about the situations you would normally avoid but that you would like to do, or would consider helpful. They may be unrelated to your OCD. In the table below list all these actions or choices (mindful risks) in order of increasing difficulty, indicating the level of difficulty or discomfort linked to them. Do not to include actions or decisions that could seriously jeopardize your physical or psychological safety. List only items that you truly believe will be useful to improve your life. Some examples are joining a club or signing up for a course, changing the order of the objects in your home or the color of the walls, taking a big trip, keeping in touch with people, or going to parties. Some risks can also be taken from the List of Nurturing Activities (Handout 8.6) introduced in Session 8. Then, starting from the least difficult risk, try to do something on your list every other day in a mindful way for at least for 4 weeks. You should stay with the risk (whether situation, thought, or action) until the distress or anxiety decreases. Once you no longer feel distressed (if you did at all), make a note on this handout of how you feel once you have taken a mindful risk.

Type of Useful Risky Action, Change, or Decision	Level of Difficulty (0-100)	How You Felt after Doing It
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

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SESSION 10—HANDOUT 4 **List of Letting-Go Rituals**

Think about all the situations involving your OCD, such as actions you avoided or feared, which caused you great distress and absorbed an enormous amount of your time. Then reflect on how you are feeling today in relation to your problem. What improvements do you feel you have obtained, thanks to your commitment and courage to engage with the challenges of the program? What symptoms have decreased or even disappeared?

Now imagine Letting-Go Rituals that you could carry out to celebrate or mark with solemnity the end of bad habits (e.g., compulsions, avoidances, reassurance seeking), or a decision to definitively stop dwelling on specific negative thoughts, beliefs, or actions. On the following form, describe what you are letting go of and what shape your ritual will take. Such a ritual, for example, may be burning a sheet of paper on which you have written your 10 most distressful obsessive thoughts, or burying an object linked to your OCD that you are afraid to let go of, or lighting a candle to celebrate the end of an OCD ritual or your decision to prevent it in the future. Then make a note of how you feel once you have carried out your letting-go ritual.

Type of Thought, Action, or Habit You Have Let Go	Type of Letting-Go Ritual	How You Felt after Doing It
EXAMPLE: <i>I no longer check the doors</i>	<i>Lighting a candle</i>	<i>I felt a feeling of freedom</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

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The biggest risk in life is not taking any risks.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

The only way out is always through.

—ROBERT FROST

*In order to learn the most important lessons of life,
one must each day surmount a fear.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Life is a play that does not allow testing.

So, sing, cry, dance, laugh and live intensely,

before the curtain closes and the piece ends with no applause.

—CHARLIE CHAPLIN

I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my basketball career.

I've lost almost three hundred games.

Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed.

*I've failed over and over again in my life, but I still keep going out on the
court. And that's why I succeed.*

—MICHAEL JORDAN

You gain strength, courage, and confidence

by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.

You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.

—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

*Peace does not mean being in a place where there is no noise or trouble or
hard work. It means being in the midst of these things and still being calm in
your heart.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Home Practice for the Week Following Session 10

1. Do the **Self-Compassion Practice** (using Track 13) every other day in order to learn how to care for your suffering.
2. Carry out the **Self-Forgiveness Practice** (using Track 14) every other day, cultivating a deep sense of **acceptance** toward your condition as an imperfect human being who can make mistakes even when trying to do your best.
3. Following the guidelines in Session 8—Handouts 5A and 5B, practice **Mindful Exposure** every day, at least once a day, in situations that cause you anxiety and distress and are related to your obsessive problem. Remember to focus as much as possible on what your senses communicate to you.
4. Fill in the **List of Mindful Risks** in Session 10—Handout 3 and rate their level of difficulty. Starting from the least difficult risks, do your best to carry out an action, make a decision, or make a choice in a mindful way every other day for at least 4 weeks. On the same handout, make a note about how doing this made you feel.
5. Fill in the **List of Letting-Go Rituals** for celebrating or marking the end of a bad habit (e.g., compulsions) or a decision to stop feeding certain thoughts or carry out counterproductive actions. Do your best to carry out one of them every other day and make a note of how doing this has made you feel.
6. Practice a **static mindfulness exercise** of your choice (in particular, R.E.A.L Acceptance Practice or Observing Mind Meditation) every other day.
7. Practice a **mindfulness exercise in motion** of your choice (e.g., Mindful Walking, Mindful Walking with Stabilizer, Mindful Hand Circles Meditation, Loading and Unloading Exercise, Mindful Movements and Stretching) for 10-15 minutes every other day.
8. Each time you practice any exercise in this session, report your experience on the Home Practice Record Form for Session 10 (Session 10—Handout 7), making a note of any comment, impression, or difficulty you might have experienced.
9. **Carefully read** the material provided in this session, at least once, and reflect on the contents trying to make them yours, and try to use them day after day in order to develop trust in yourself.

When you decide to practice these exercises, remember to take the necessary time and find a warm, safe, comfortable, and quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed or interrupted. Find a comfortable and stable posture. Do your best to approach the exercises **not** as if they were a task to be carried out, but as a healthy habit you wish to make a staple in your life. Always remember that the commitment you dedicate to this training now will give you significant results throughout your life.

SESSION 10—HANDOUT 7 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 10**

Name: _____

Fill this form each time you practice, noting and writing anything that happens during the exercise (health benefits, difficulties, observations) in order to discuss it during the next session.

Day/Date	Exercise (Yes/No)	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (static): _____ Self-Compassion Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Mindful Risk: _____	
Friday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (in motion): _____ Self-Forgiveness Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Letting-Go Ritual: _____	
Saturday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (static): _____ Self-Compassion Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Mindful Risk: _____	
Sunday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (in motion): _____ Self-Forgiveness Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Letting-Go Ritual: _____	
Monday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (static): _____ Self-Compassion Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Mindful Risk: _____	
Tuesday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (in motion): _____ Self-Forgiveness Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Letting-Go ritual: _____	
Wednesday Date: _____	Exercise of your choice (static): _____ Self-Compassion Practice: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Mindful Risk: _____	

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SESSION 11—HANDOUT 1 **Summary of Session 11:**
Facing Life with Trust and Dealing with Obstacles Effectively

During this challenging, intense, 10-week journey we have traveled over different territories, all connected with the basic themes of the program: understanding what mindfulness is, the importance of attention, how OCD works, the roots of our mistrust, how to use our senses to develop trust and relate to reality, how to create a healthy relationship with our thoughts, treating them for what they are, developing acceptance, acting in a mindful way in life, aware of our intentions, exposing ourselves to our fears, developing self-compassion, self-forgiveness, and a mature sense of responsibility, and taking healthy risks to free ourselves from old habits and their limitations. This course has repeatedly highlighted the benefits of awareness, of distancing ourselves from our thoughts, of accepting and mindfully **responding** to situations rather than carrying out automatic, mindless reactions. The way we direct attention to our inner and external experience can generate wellness and trust or distress and suffering. We have learned that every problem starts with resisting, fighting, or avoiding our thoughts, emotions, and sensations; that resistance feeds on itself and at that point can become unmanageable. Acceptance can be the first step in changing our relationship with thoughts and emotions, and an effective way to prevent the obsessive mechanisms that then lead to anxiety and often to unmanageable compulsions.

The most useful and liberating relationship with difficult thoughts is the one adopted by the good hotel manager. He or she kindly welcomes all the guests who turn up, recognizing them, accommodating them inside, and letting them go their own way. Through this process we can recognize the imperfect nature of every human being and every experience in life. We become aware that everything is impermanent, even the most difficult moments. There are no certainties in our journey, except perhaps for our breathing, which is with us from the first to the last moment in our lives.

Practicing mindfulness and sharing our experiences have also made us aware of a fundamental fact: the only moment in which we can create, change, and improve anything is the present one. For this reason we need to be awake in the present, live it intensely, and *drink it to the last drop*.

To consolidate the improvements and skills learned on this journey and create further improvement, it is essential to continue with a regular, daily program of mindfulness practice. Decide which mindfulness exercises you will commit to practicing in the coming weeks. Do your best to be regular and persevere during this period, noticing any difficulty you might encounter. Remember that every improvement and moment of well-being during these weeks proves to you that change is always possible. But to consolidate it and prevent relapse, it is necessary to practice mindfulness regularly. Open yourself to life with trust and responsibility.

*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,
but taking a first step does not mean that we must walk a thousand miles.*

—CONFUCIUS

*Everything can be taken from a man but one thing:
the last of the human freedoms—
to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances,
to choose one’s own way.*

—VIKTOR E. FRANKL

*The past is our definition.
We may strive, with good reason, to escape it,
or to escape what is bad in it,
but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.*

—WENDELL BERRY

*The best way, the wisest, to face life,
in any place and in any situation,
is to calm the mind and open the heart.*

—JACK KORNFIELD

*No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
Never give it.*

—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

*He who has a why to live for
can bear almost any how.*

—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

Date: _____

1. Think back to the beginning of the course, when you arrived at the first session. What were your expectations and why were you there? What did you want or hope for?

2. What actually happened afterward? What have you learned or done on your own? In what ways do you feel that you have improved?

3. How much have these 10 weeks cost you in terms of **commitment**?

4. Which **sessions** were **the most effective and useful** for you and your problem in order of importance (1 = the most important; 11 = the least important)?

(1) _____	(7) _____
(2) _____	(8) _____
(3) _____	(9) _____
(4) _____	(10) _____
(5) _____	(11) _____
(6) _____	

Session 1. Understanding What Mindfulness Is; Session 2. Understanding OCD and How Mindfulness Helps; Session 3. Helping Family Members and Partners Support Patients with OCD; Session 4. Understanding One’s Mistrust and Developing Real Trust; Session 5. Using the Senses to Develop Trust; Session 6. Developing a Healthy Relationship with Thoughts; Session 7. Developing Acceptance as a Core Step to Change; Session 8. Mindful Doing and Mindful Exposure; Session 9. Developing Self-Compassion and Self-Forgiveness; Session 10. Learning to Take Risks; Session 11. Facing Life with Trust and Dealing with Obstacles Effectively

(cont.)

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5. Which **exercises and practices** (see Session 11—Handout 4) are the **most effective and useful** for your problem in order of importance (1 = the most important; 12 = the least important)?

(1) _____	(7) _____
(2) _____	(8) _____
(3) _____	(9) _____
(4) _____	(10) _____
(5) _____	(11) _____
(6) _____	(12) _____

6. What are the greatest **difficulties and obstacles you face** in regularly continuing your daily mindfulness practice? What **strategies** might help you maintain everything you've gained and to move forward in this important journey?

7. Write down whatever **quotes or sentences** (if any) have been particularly helpful for you in understanding and overcoming difficulties during these past 10 weeks. Write them down the way you remember them, even if the wording is not exactly right.

8. How useful has this course been for you on a scale of 1-10? Place a mark on the level you consider appropriate.

Not useful at all								Extremely useful	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. Share a sincere comment indicating what this program has meant for you. Also add any suggestions for changes to the content and structure of the course that you would recommend. Your feedback is highly valued, will remain anonymous, and will be used to improve future courses.

List of Practices and Exercises of the MBCT for OCD Program

- Body Scan (Sessions 1, 2)
- Mindfulness of the Breath (Session 1)
- Mindfulness of the Breath and Body (Session 2)
- Breathing Space (Sessions 4-6)
- Coping Breathing Space (Sessions 5, 7, 8)
- Sitting Meditation: Mindfulness of the Breath, Body, Sounds, Emotions, and Thoughts (Sessions 4, 5)
- Mindful Walking (Sessions 4, 11)
- Mindful Perception Practice (Sessions 5, 11)
- Perceptive Experience Validation Technique (PEV) (Session 5)
- Mindful Movements and Stretching (Sessions 5, 11)
- Observing Mind Meditation (Sessions 6-11)
- Mindful Hand Circles Meditation (Session 6)
- R.E.A.L. Acceptance Practice (Sessions 7, 11)
- Loading and Unloading Exercise (Sessions 7, 11)
- Healthy Intentions Practice (Session 8)
- The Discrepancy Technique (Session 8)
- Mindful Walking with Verbal Stabilizers (Sessions 8, 11)
- Mindful Exposure (Sessions 8-11)
- Self-Compassion Practice (Sessions 9-11)
- Self-Forgiveness Practice (Session 9)
- Take Mindful Risks (Session 10)
- Letting-Go Rituals (Session 10)
- Bus Driver Exercise (Session 11)
- Compassionate Relational Mindfulness (Session 11)

Here are some tips that will allow you to incorporate mindfulness throughout your everyday life and possibly make it a lifestyle and a way of being. It could be helpful for you to carry this list with you every day, wherever you are.

- As soon as you wake up in the morning, before getting up from bed, focus your attention on your breath. Take a Breathing Space moment.
- Create a list of healthy intentions for the attitude and commitment you want to have that day in the actions you perform, the thoughts you have, the words you use, and the moods you feel. Do your best to put those intentions into practice during the day.
- As often as you can, pay attention to your physical sensations and posture. This awareness allows you to be more present and grounded in the here and now.
- Listen to and trust your senses. At least once an hour, try to direct your attention to what your senses are telling you during your daily activities (e.g., “I see the colors of this flower”; “I hear this sound”; “I feel the texture of this object”; “I perceive the smell or the taste of this food”). Intentionally give value to and believe in this sensory information. It is the best way to live in reality.
- Take a mindful walk in a normal pace, if possible, through green spaces. Be aware of what goes on in your body as you are walking. Take a while to notice your posture. Pay attention to the contact with the ground under your feet, step by step. Feel the air on your face, arms, and legs as you are walking. If you are in a peaceful, outdoor landscape notice whatever is surrounding you.
- Notice your fear of and resistance toward discomfort. Recognize your attitude toward whatever disturbs you or that you don’t like, or toward something you like or are used to that you’re trying to give up. Fear and resistance have you stuck in your old bad habits and prevent you from starting new, enriching experiences. For example, be aware of your resistance to particular sounds or smells, sensations in your skin, a disturbing thought, the taste of a food, or your body temperature being too hot or cold. You may realize that in most cases the problem is not the stimuli and experiences you live every day, but your aversion and resistance to them. You might try to gradually expose yourself to the less uncomfortable stimuli, looking mindfully at your fear and resistance.
- Cultivate acceptance: Feel and accept any disturbing internal and external experience that presents itself, in any moment. In particular, recognize and accept anything in your day that you don’t like and cannot change, without trying to resist, fight, or control it. Direct your energy to change what you can realistically change and is useful to change. Also accept

Based on M. Klyne, cited in Segal et al. (2013).

(cont.)

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people you meet and reality as they are. When you are able to accept the way you, people, and events are in every moment, you will find freedom and peace.

- Seek out everything that can give you natural vital energy. Discover, or retrieve from your past, the activities that energize you—for example, listening to music, exercising, being in touch with nature.
- During the day, take some breaks and be aware of your breath. Take a Breathing Space moment. Remember that calming the breath is a key step to calming the mind.
- Be kind and compassionate toward yourself and the people you meet during the day. Take care of your suffering and be gentle and sensitive toward the suffering you see in others.
- Mindful Doing: Be aware of what you do whenever you do it. Turn daily tasks into mindful moments and also notice the real effects of your actions and behavior after you've performed them. Be fully aware as you are brushing your teeth, taking a shower, washing your hands, drinking a cup of tea, driving the car, holding the baby, doing your job, or having a chat with a friend. Refrain from multitasking and do your best to focus on one task entirely for a certain period of time, and then take a break before moving on to another task.
- Do your best to nourish yourself with healthy foods, prepared and eaten with care, taking your time and paying attention to the tastes and sensations. Each time you eat or drink something, take a mindful breath. Focus your attention on your food and become aware of how it is connected to the different things that have nurtured its creation. Can you see the sun light, the water, the soil in your food? Pay attention, mindfully eating this food for your health. Be conscious of different sensations when eating: seeing your food, smelling it, tasting it, chewing it and swallowing it.
- Nurture your creativity. Express it in any way you can and like doing (writing, cooking, sketching, painting, singing, furnishing or decorating the house, etc.). It is a way to show your uniqueness to yourself and the world, to nourish yourself and calm your mind.
- When you are with other people, be aware, as soon as possible, of your way of listening and talking. Can you listen in a neutral way, or without knowing what you will say in response? As you talk, can you simply say what you need to say without saying anything more or nothing less? Try to notice how you feel in your body and mind.
- If possible, try to get outdoors, in green spaces, spending some time in nature. It's a powerful way to free your mind and to better connect with your body and the senses.
- Throughout the day, try not to take yourself and your behavior too seriously. As often as possible, do your best to use humor and irony toward the internal and external experience you face. They are powerful antidotes to stress, fear, and negative feelings.

(cont.)

- Whenever you are put on hold on the phone, wait in a line, or are stuck in traffic, take advantage of this time to notice your posture and your breath. Feel the contact of your feet with the ground and notice your feelings. Do you feel calm, worried, or impatient? Use mindful breathing.
- Have a healthy relationship with your phone or other electronic devices. Decide in advance when not to check your cell phone during the day and set the times during which you will be checking emails, messages, or social media sites. Remember to set aside your cell phone whenever you are spending time with your beloved.
- Be aware of your urges and try to prevent acting on them. Notice, for example, your urge to scratch your skin when you feel itchy, to check something you already did (maybe over and over again), to look at your phone hoping to find new messages or something interesting, to drink alcohol or eat food, to watch TV, to search for reassurance, to be distracted. These urges arrive and then disappear, and you can realize that you don't have to act on them just because they appear. You just have to "ride the urge wave."
- Let go of control and of unrealistic expectations or ideals about the things you do or are going to live by in your day. These expectations or ideals can too easily create stress, disappointment, fear, frustration, sadness, and/or anger. Reality is what it is; life is uncontrollable and things will never be perfect. You have to find the best relationship with reality *as it is*, moment by moment.
- During the day, become aware of any area of tension in your body. See if you are able to breathe into the tension, and as you breathe out, to let go of it. Is there more tension accumulated in any other part of your body? Perhaps in your neck, shoulders, chest, stomach, jaws, or lower back? If possible, do some stretching exercises once a day.
- Do your best to seek out and open yourself to new experiences. Do not be afraid of what you do not know, and live any moment that can enrich, nourish, and grow your life.
- Dedicate and nurture your mind and body with enough (but not too many) hours of sleep per night; 7-9 hours of sleep are recommended.
- Acknowledge and appreciate, as often as possible, what you have and can do in your life, in any moment. At the end of the day, be grateful for at least one thing you had the chance to live, feel, do, or share with other people in this unique day of your life.
- Before going to bed at night, take a moment and direct your attention to your breath. Take a Breathing Space moment, thinking of what you learned and received from this day, enjoying what you are able to feel in the moment, and trustfully realizing that a brand new day will come.

Recommended Practice for the Weeks Following Session 11

1. Among all the various types of mindfulness exercises you have experienced up to now (Sitting Meditation, Observing Mind, R.E.A.L. Acceptance, Self-Compassion, Mindful Perception, Mindful Walking, etc.), choose the ones you feel have given you greater benefit and prepare a *program of exercises* you are willing to practice regularly, **every day** for at least 40 minutes in the coming months, or at least in the next 5 weeks. You may choose to alternate static practices with dynamic ones. It is essential that you use this program daily and afterward make a note of your impressions and observations on the Record Form (we suggest you make plenty of copies of this form).
2. Continue to practice the **Mindful Exposure** exercise **each day**, at least once a day, from your list in Session 8—Handout 5A. Always remember to focus as much as possible on what your **senses** communicate to you in each moment.
3. At least once a day, **for at least 3 weeks, continue** to carry out a **risky action in a mindful way**, or to make a decision or a choice from your List of Mindful Risks in Session 10—Handout 3. Afterward, once the discomfort is over, make a note of how you felt after you did it on the same handout.
4. Each morning, just after you get up, mindfully read or fill in the form on **Healthy Intentions Practice**, and during the day try to remember your intentions and to put them into practice as many times as you can, making sure your actions and choices are mainly driven by these intentions.
5. Practice the **Coping Breathing Space** exercise when needed: that is, *any time you notice distressful emotions or thoughts*. Being present with your breath in this way, every day, gives you the opportunity to learn to **stop and become aware** of what it feels like when you are connected and present in the moment, **without having to react** (e.g., with rituals) to thoughts and emotions.
6. **Carefully read** the material provided in all 11 sessions once again and reflect on the contents, making them yours. Try to use them day after day in order to develop trust and live the best possible relationship with yourself and your life experience. It may at times be beneficial to carry with you some of the materials that you consider most helpful from the 11 group sessions so that you can use them if and when needed.

When you decide to practice these exercises, remember to take the necessary time and find a warm, safe, comfortable, and quiet place where you know you will not be disturbed or interrupted. Find a comfortable and stable posture.

Do your best to approach the exercises as a healthy habit that you wish to introduce regularly into your life and as a precious inner resource always available to you to achieve well-being. Experience the exercises you practice as the most precious and important appointment in your life: the one with yourself.

SESSION 11—HANDOUT 7 **Home Practice Record Form for Session 11**

Name: _____

Fill in this form each time you practice the mindfulness exercises you have set out in your plan for the weeks following the end of the program, which you have chosen from the practices of the entire program. As always, also note anything that happens while you are doing the exercises (health benefits, difficulties, observations).

Day/Date	Exercise	Comments
Thursday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Friday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Saturday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Sunday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Monday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Tuesday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	
Wednesday Date: _____	Practice of the day: _____ Practice of the day: _____ Mindful Risk: _____ Mindful Exposure: _____ Healthy Intentions: _____	

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