

## When the Going Gets Tough: Managing Difficult Reactions From Your Child When Saying "No" to OCD

Emily Berner, LMFT, San Francisco Bay Area Center for Cognitive Therapy  
Stephanie Uhl, PsyD, FTD Psychotherapy  
Amy Jenks, PsyD, Bay Area OCD and Anxiety Center

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### Goals

- Understanding family accommodation and it's role in maintaining OCD
- **Emotion Regulation skills for parents: putting your own oxygen mask on first**
- How to respond to difficult reactions (anger, aggression, self-harm)

### Family Accommodation Defined

- The way families act to reduce symptoms of distress and anxiety in their loved one
- Two main types:
  - **Participating in symptoms** (compulsions/rituals) and modifying family routine
  - **Providing reassurance and facilitating avoidance** (most common)
- Exercise

### Examples of FA

- Hiding or removing potential triggers
- Facilitating avoidance
- Taking responsibility for something so your child doesn't have to (e.g. being the last one to lock up, go to bed, throw away trash)
- Allowing extra time for ritual completion
- Not making appointments/demands during certain times of the day
- Purchasing supplies that will help with rituals
- Not disciplining behaviors you otherwise would
- Providing REASSURANCE

### Why we know we shouldn't accommodate...

- Family accommodation is linked to:
  - **More severe OCD, worse symptoms**
  - **More difficulty with functioning** (e.g. going to school, friendships, activities)
  - **Poorer response to treatment** and lower insight about disorder
  - **Parents: higher distress and a poorer quality of life**

### And why we do it anyway

- It's instinctive
- It's easier in the short term
- It's an attempt to minimize distress (your own\* and your child's)
- It might seem harmless
- We lose perspective and forget that **anxiety is not dangerous** and we do not need to protect our child from their own emotions



It's hard not to rescue your child from distress...

"Ray" video

Step 1: Get Yourself Regulated

- Why are we working on my self-regulation? It's my child that needs help!
- Super fun video

Step 1: Get Yourself Regulated

- Surf the urge exercise

Standing with your Child in a bigger, bolder way

- Clarifying your parenting values

Clarifying your parenting values

- How I want to be as a parent/ how do I want to show up for my child during difficult moments**
  - Be a good listener
  - Model tolerance and acceptance of difficult experiences
  - Set limits when necessary to support my child
- Things I can do to get there**
  - Take a parent time-out
  - Slow down and zoom out
  - Set limits when necessary
- What might get in the way**
  - Frustration
  - Self-doubt
  - Lack of skills, tools, and support
- Skills that can help me be the parent I want to be**
  - Mindfulness
  - Self-compassion

### Step 1: Get Yourself Regulated

- Self-compassion exercise

### Self-compassion phrases

- You're doing the best you can
- This is hard
- Other parents suffer as I do. I am not alone
- I love you just as you are
- Parenting through difficult moments takes strength. You got this!

### Step 2: Anticipate and Plan Ahead

- Anticipate any risky behaviors
  - Has your child threatened to harm others, themselves or property before? Have they followed through?
- Expectation is not to manage the disruptive behavior, but simply to **get through it**
- Develop **a plan and contract if necessary**. Use your supports.
  - If you do X then this will happen
  - Importance of follow through
  - Ensure physical safety

### Step 3: Stay Committed to Saying "No"

- De-escalate
  - **Validate, empathize** and communicate **acceptance** and **confidence**
    - "I'm so sorry the worry bully is making you so uncomfortable"
    - "I have to stand up to the worry bully for you right now"
    - "I know this is so hard, but we agreed I'm not going to answer that"
    - "I see you're uncomfortable and I know you can handle this"
- Disengage
- Distance
- Use Supporters

### Step 3: Responding to Extreme Behavior

- Use your plan
- Use guidance of therapist
- How to handle threats of self-injury/suicide
  - Round-the-clock supervision (with help of supporters)
  - ER visit/evaluation

### Parent Serenity Prayer

"Grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change,  
The courage to change the one I can,  
And the wisdom to know it's me"



## Resources

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wu\\_x4dtgXg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wu_x4dtgXg)  
(step-by-step guide for reducing accommodations)
- [Parenting a Teen Who Has Intense Emotions: DBT Skills to Help Your Teen Navigate Emotional and Behavioral Challenges](#), Pat Harvey & Britt Rathbone
- [Treating Childhood and Adolescent Anxiety: A Guide for Caregivers](#), Eli Lebowitz & Haim Omer
- [Devoted Moms, Anxious Kids: The 5 Shifts Needed To Ease Your Child's Anxiety & Empower Your Family](#), Julie Hartman