



Ready to Practice Our 6-Moment Game?

If you feel motivated to start practicing your skills, then let's go! If you want to take a little more time to get oriented to the project before you start practicing – or if at any time you want to remind yourself of our game plan – then work on the “Learning from the Course” section on page 24.

Preparing for Moment-by-Moment Practice

How do you plan a specific practice?

When Libby didn't make it to her car in those early practices – in those moments when she turned back around to check the stove or the front door – the disorder wins those moments. But it didn't win them all. Do you know why? Because as soon as she begins to walk down the sidewalk, she has already gotten to Moment 5, because she turned her back on that urge to check. By the time she's halfway down her sidewalk, she's probably had several urges. But she keeps turning her back on her theme. She tells herself something like, “No, keep moving.” That means she won all those moments. These aren't failures. These are good accomplishments.

This is what you want to aim for: Win one Moment. Once you win that Moment, try to win the next Moment, then another Moment. Your goal is to keep collecting those winning Moments.

Obviously, you have to start with Moment 4. This is the very first task you should practice. Learn to mentally disengage long enough to name it. “There's my obsession.” When you do that – when you assert your conscious awareness into that closed pattern – you've just modified that pattern. And that's already a win. You win that Moment. Even if nothing else changes, even if you go back to obsessing again, you've just won that Moment. If you can only win Moment 4, then win

Moment 4. Keep winning Moment 4, but at the same time, try to create a way to get to Moment 5. If you get to Moment 5 but can't get to Moment 6, you've still won a Moment. Keep challenging yourself to get as far as you can get.

<i>Preparing for Moment-by-Moment Practice</i>	
Where?	When?
How will you push outside your comfort zone?	
Any rules?	
Verbal cue for Moment 4:	
Verbal cue for Moment 5:	
Verbal cue for Moment 6:	
Verbal cue for motivation/determination:	
Do you want to talk to OCD? If so, say what?	
Do you want to mess with the pattern? If so, how?	
Do you want to try postponing? If so, what's your plan?	
Do you need to add a consequence? What will you do?	

Here's how you complete each of the items.

Where?

Is there a specific location or circumstance where you want to practice? Jot that down. If you want to continually practice this in all circumstances, just write "everywhere."

When?

Either put the specific day and time or simply write "continually."



How will you push outside your comfort zone?

Decide how you want to generate that doubt and distress. [If you're doing it by following new rules, that answer will be in the next line: *Any rules?*]

Any rules?

Decide whether it would be helpful to create rules to support your efforts. If so, then figure out those guidelines before you begin and lock them down. By doing so, you won't have to think about it anymore. You just follow the rules. [Don't start creating rules when you're in the middle of an obsession or having an urge to do a compulsion. Establish rules when you're in the planning stage.]

Do you remember how Conrad started to intervene in Moment 5? He decided that every time he heard an obsession pop up, he'd respond to it by rapping for a moment, and then he'd return to his task.

Think about Sonya's work. Her rituals involved washing and cleaning. Eventually, she needs to decide the acceptable times and ways to clean. Her current goal is to continue to move toward that acceptable level. So she spent time creating rules that move her in that direction. Like Sonya, if you don't feel ready to give up your ritual, then what rules do you want to follow in this practice that move you closer to that standard? How do you want to modify your current ritual?

Verbal Cue for Moment 4

Create a short little message-to-self that will help you step back for a moment. Here are some examples of what you might say. To make it easier on yourself in the future, put a checkmark next to any of the messages below that you imagine might support your intention.

- Oh, I'm doing it again.
- There's my obsession.
- There it is again.
- I'm obsessing.
- Others: _____



Verbal Cue for Moment 5

If you can get to Moment 5, what might you say to yourself to help you turn away? Again, I've provided some examples below. Be sure to find messages that work for you. [I know that our characters spoke their verbal cues aloud, but I suggest that you learn to subvocalize them.]


- Stepping away now.
- And... I'm out of here.
- Wah-wah-wah.
- Nope, not going there.
- None of my business.
- Don't figure it out.
- Leave the room now!
- Keep moving. Don't stop.
- I'm turning my back on that.
- Others: _____

Verbal Cue for Moment 6

When Libby finally made it into her car and started driving away, she made it to Moment 6 several times in a row. She kept instructing herself on the next action: *Stop stalling, keep going. Keep moving. Open the door. Get in the car. Start the car. Drive to the interview.* (By the way, if you look back on that practice, you'll notice that Libby was also supporting herself and motivating herself with verbal cues: "You're killing it!" "I'm taking my LIFE back." "I can handle this." We're talking about them next.)

That's what we're looking for in Moment 6. Give yourself instructions about what to do next. And follow those instructions! That's how you win that moment. Here are a few examples for you. You can also add your own instructions that work for you.


- Now, where was I?
- Getting back to work now.

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- Keep moving. Keep moving.
 - I guess it's time to count those ants again.
 - Others: _____

Verbal Cue for Motivation/Determination

Do you remember when Sonya caught herself breaking her own rule by washing her hands? She slammed her hands down on the counter and yelled, “*I want my life back!*” That’s a good example of how you can motivate yourself and feel determined. A few seconds later, she told herself, “*Keep going!*” As she continued to break OCD’s rules, she told herself, “*You are strong, and you want this.*” That’s what you’re looking for here.

- Geez, this is hard! But this is what I signed up for.
- I’m going to be scared and do it anyway.
- I can do this. I’m gonna stay with it.
- My job is to push forward.
- Keep moving, keep moving.
- I’m going to get stronger, whatever it takes.
- I’m going to take my faith back.
- I want to be available for my family.
- I want my life back!
- I want my mind back!
- This is exactly what I want right now.
- I want to do this hard work.
- I want to take OCD on.
- I want whatever scares me.
- I want this struggle right now.
- I want this doubt. I want to not know.
- I want this distress.

- 
- I'm working on wanting this.
 - I'm willing to feel this.
 - Others: _____

Do you want to try talking directly to OCD? If so, what will you say?

- Nice try, OCD. But I'm not going there.
- I'm coming after you, OCD.
- Is that all you've got? Come on—give me your best shot.
- Hey, back off, OCD!
- You're giving me this? Great! Just what I wanted.
- Bring it on, OCD!
- Others: _____

Do you want to try postponing? If so, what's your plan?

[This is covered in the course.]

Do you want to mess with the pattern? If so, how?

Think of these as backup tactics. If you're getting stuck, and having a hard time making progress, you can pull one of these out of your back pocket. They can help you get unstuck, and they can help you get stronger. In just a moment, we'll go into detail about how to do this (see: *How to Mess with the Pattern*).

Do you need to add a consequence? What will you do?

Think back on that scene when Libby decided to open every door of her car and her trunk. She was adding a very small consequence to her ritual. In the section titled How to Add a Consequence (pg. 22), we'll discuss this tactic in greater detail.



How to Mess with the Pattern

Every step of the way, you should find tactics to mess with what OCD is giving you. Look for some small ways to be both uncertain and distressed. Some of these changes can make it just a bit more troublesome to obsess or ritualize. These pesky little modifications help build your commitment to eventually end your obsessions and rituals. Expect that at some point you might actually think, “I’d rather just not keep doing this right now if I have to do it THAT way!”

In the course, I detailed two ways to mess with your obsessions, and Libby demonstrated the first:

- Sing your obsession
- Act as a stenographer (write your obsessions down)

Your rituals may include a certain number of repetitions or a particular object, like bar soap versus liquid soap. Some rituals require that you’re always standing or sitting, while others must occur in a certain setting, like at your desk or in your car. All of these can be manipulated.

Why change them up? The most important reason is to create some degree of doubt and distress. Each time you modify some component of your compulsion, you loosen OCD’s hold on you. However, making any change, even if it seems minor, will probably cause you some distress. The pattern will no longer match your previously exacting standards, and that will give you uncertainty and discomfort. Keep in mind that two of your tasks in this self-help program are to seek out uncertainty and seek out distress. So, while these changes will be difficult, they will be contributing to your goal of taking back control of your life.

Be willing to experiment with minor revisions to your ritual, and learn to tolerate these small changes.

Are you concerned that you might create a whole new ritual? That’s not going to happen. Because your job is to keep changing it up until it no longer has a hold on you.

- Continue with a particular change for several days. In doing so, you’ll have time to discover your

growing skills in tolerating a modification to the ritual and in tolerating the discomfort you feel as you bring this ritual under voluntary control.

- As you gain mastery in this skill of manipulation, continue to modify your ritual pattern. Then think about adding *postponing* to your practice.


Rituals can have any number of characteristics. They can all be modified. Here's the list of what I'll cover below.

- Change the order in which you ritualize
- Add something to the ritual
- Change the objects you use
- Change the location
- Change your posture during the ritual
- Change how you use your hands
- Reduce the time
- Change words and tone of voice
- Alter the image
- Reduce the participation of others

Here are some ideas about what you might change. Remember that it doesn't matter how small the change is. However, it is important that you create changes that you predict will cause you some doubt and discomfort.

Change the order in which you ritualize

- ✓ For instance, if you shower by first washing your hair and then methodically working your way down to your feet, you can reverse the order by beginning with your feet.
- ✓ Do you have a set of rituals that you feel compelled to do before you go to bed? Must you first check the front door, then the back door, then all windows, then the kitchen appliances... all in a specified sequence? Change it up. For example, you can write each task down on a little piece of paper and draw them out of a jar to decide the order in which you perform them.
- ✓ If you have to wash your hands to the count of ten, try washing them to the count of five. Then dry your hands off and wash them again for the second set of five.



Add something to the ritual

- ✓ If you must tap each arm three times, then tap each arm twice, clap once, and then tap each arm a third time.
- ✓ If you check more than once that the doors are locked each night, then before each check do a pirouette (a spin in place). I know: That's ridiculous. Are you surprised?
- ✓ Must you pull on the emergency brake of your car four times? Decide to pull on it twice, then wait 60 seconds before you pull on it the next two times.
- ✓ Can you wear sunglasses while you're checking whether the windows are locked?

Change the objects you use

- ✓ If you always clean up with paper towels during your ritual, switch to cloth hand towels.
- ✓ If you wash with liquid soap, you could change to bar soap.
- ✓ If you use a bar of soap, can you cut it up into twelve pieces, use one piece each time you wash, and then throw that piece away?

Change the location

- ✓ If you have to dress and undress repeatedly, you might do each set in a different room.
- ✓ If you wash your hands more than one time, try changing sinks each time you wash (the kitchen, the guest bathroom, etc.).
- ✓ Is it a ritual that you do indoors? Could you do it outside?
- ✓ If you do it in your office, could you choose to do it in your car instead?



Change your posture during the ritual

- ✓ Could you make yourself sit when you normally stand?
- ✓ If you always have your eyes open, can you try doing your compulsion with your eyes closed?
One eye closed?
- ✓ Consider some silly change, like standing on one leg.
- ✓ If you can't change the order of how you dress, could you make yourself get dressed while lying on your bed?


Change how you use your hands

- ✓ If your hands are involved in your ritual, do you mainly use your dominant hand? Can you switch to your nondominant hand?
- ✓ Do you clean a surface in clockwise circular motions with your right hand? Can you clean in counterclockwise square patterns with your left? Can you switch hands every ten seconds?

Reduce the time

How much time does each sequence of the ritual take? Reduce the time you take for each action. Can you create a time limit to complete a segment? Please remember: I'm not suggesting that you simply "go faster." The purpose of making these changes is to feel some degree of doubt and distress.

- ✓ If you force yourself to complete your ritual in an abbreviated manner, you'll feel uncertain about how well you did it.
- ✓ If you stop at your new designated time even if you haven't completed your ritual, you'll certainly make yourself feel distressed.



Change words and tone of voice

- ✓ Must you repeat any specific words either silently or aloud? Can you change any of those specific words?
- ✓ Can you sing those same words in your mind?
- ✓ Can you modify your tone of voice (e.g. change a respectful tone to a silly tone)?

Alter the image

During your ritual, must you purposely see some positive image? How might you change that image?

- ✓ Can you alter its appearance?
- ✓ Can you add purple stripes to the background?
- ✓ Can you change brown shoulder-length hair to short blonde hair?
- ✓ Can you change a color image to black-and-white?


Reduce the participation of others

Do you ask others to participate in your ritual? Must they say or do something specific? Is there any way to change the participation of others? Can you reduce or limit the behaviors of others?

How to add a consequence

You may have a ritual that is so “automatic,” so ingrained, that you can’t seem to catch it in time to change it. One simple change that can greatly increase your awareness is to add a consequence – some additional task – every time it happens that way. Choose a task that requires you to disrupt your normal routine. And, most importantly, if you agree to add this task, then follow through 100% of the time, because that’s how you’ll raise your awareness. For instance...

- ✓ decide to drive to a park and pick up trash for an hour
- ✓ do some kind gesture for someone you’re angry with
- ✓ practice the piano for forty-five minutes

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- ✓ hand-copy ten poems from a book
 - ✓ take a brisk 30-minute walk

If these sound like disruptive, time-consuming tasks, it's because they're intended to be! Yet don't perceive them as punishment. To be effective, the consequences must be costly in time and effort. After paying that cost a number of times, you'll start becoming aware of the moment that you're about to ritualize, and you'll hesitate. You'll pause to think about whether it is best to start ritualizing. This moment of hesitation gives you an opportunity to resist the compulsion in order to avoid that costly consequence.

Think about Libby's struggles with the stove. Let's say you must ritualistically check the stove every time you leave the house for work in the morning. You tend to get stuck touching each knob six times before you walk out the door. Later, when you're on the front porch, you doubt whether the stove is off, and back you go for another round of checking – “just to be sure.” This would be a good time to implement a consequence.

Perhaps you decide that, starting tomorrow, each time you check the stove again, touch a knob while checking, or even glance at the knobs again while walking through the kitchen, you must take a brisk thirty-minute walk as soon as you come home from work. You commit to taking a walk before doing anything else. No stopping at the store on the way home. No having a snack after you get home. You'll just put on your walking shoes and go, regardless of whether it's hot and muggy, raining, or snowing. After a few of these thirty-minute walks, you'll be thinking twice before stepping back inside from the porch – “just to be sure.”

This tactic will work whether you're a washer who wants to stop washing your hands a second time, a hoarder who wants to stop collecting meaningless materials, or an orderer who wants to stop straightening up repeatedly. Use your creative thinking, and enlist ideas from your family or friends. Find consequences that cost you some time and effort, and then stick to them. If the consequence you choose does not have this intended effect after numerous trials, then switch to a consequence that seems a little more costly.