

# Guidelines for Successful ERP

**Plan your ERP.** Plan daily practices that work with your lifestyle. Set reminders for yourself to do your ERP. You may want to set alerts on your phone, use a prop or sticky notes, or have small stickers placed in strategic places where you want to remember to do ERP. Once you have consistently worked on a particular target and been successful, vary the time interval and time of day of your ERP practice.

**Take a “bring it on” attitude.** Embrace the opportunity to face your fears. You are stronger than you think, and more capable than you realize. Dealing with OCD is hard, and you are the one in charge. Find opportunities to implement ERP. The more you do, the more flexible and confident you will become to own your life and do what is important to you.

**Identify your values.** OCD has narrowed your thoughts and behaviors. This has prevented you from doing what matters most. Use your values as a compass to move toward a more meaningful life. Holding your values in mind can give you strength and motivation to do your ERP.

**Have willingness to fully experience your fears and discomfort.** Your compulsions and avoidance of anxiety have not allowed you to learn that you can cope with your discomfort. Be curious about what you experience while not engaging in rituals or avoidant behavior. Be all-in with your ERP.

**Stay in contact with the present moment.** Mental time travel to the past and future could scare you out of doing exposures. If you notice yourself mentally time traveling, gently bring yourself back to the present moment and welcome what feelings show up.

**Expect to feel anxious and uncomfortable.** The more you practice, the stronger you’ll get. The stronger you get, the more flexible you become. The more flexible you become, the more freely you can move through each day.

**Observe your thoughts, feelings, and sensations without interpretation.** Get curious about what you are experiencing internally while noticing the feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Don’t try to figure it out or explain what’s going on; just observe and take it in as you feel it.

**Allow fear to be present without fighting it.** You can surf the ups and downs of the waves of your anxiety. Don’t push your emotions away. Doing that just makes OCD thoughts rebound more strongly in your mind. Discomfort is dynamic and changes from moment to moment. You can fully accept whatever discomfort shows up.

**Seek out uncertainty.** Practice your “don’t know” mind by allowing questions to remain unanswered. Notice with curiosity what it’s like to leave questions unanswered.

**Treat the content of your OCD thoughts as irrelevant.** The OCD storyteller in your mind is creative and sneaky. Don’t reply to the content of your obsessions. Replying returns you to your OCD cycle, which leads to avoidance and compulsions. You may find yourself experiencing analysis paralysis.

**Keep in mind your metric for measuring success.** The metric of success isn’t anxiety reduction, but tolerating your anxiety. Pursue meaningful activities even while you’re anxious, and welcome the discomfort that shows up.

**Hold your shame, guilt, and self-criticism in a compassionate way.** You can be the brave and kind friend that your anxious self needs.