

What are compulsions?

Compulsions are the behavior that one engages in to reduce the anxiety often associated with an obsession. These are avoidance behaviors. Unfortunately, they become a huge barrier as they actually continue and maintain the anxiety, thereby making it worse and bound to continue over time. These behaviors can interfere with daily life due to their time-consuming nature and disruption. Some examples include extreme handwashing, checking, counting, repeating certain phrases to oneself, and many other behaviors that involve avoiding certain stimuli that trigger the anxiety. Although many compulsive behaviors are connected to an obsession, it is not a requirement. In fact, there are times when a compulsion cannot be easily tied to a specific obsession.

Although compulsions are designed by an individual to reduce anxiety in the short run, they actually create and maintain more anxiety in the long run. Reducing compulsive behavior is key in treating OCD.