

Exposures at Home

Helping your loved one overcome OCD is vital to their recovery. Follow these steps to create effective exposures at home.

Pre-Exposure Preparations

1. Loved ones: Be calm (not anxious). Be supportive (not frustrated). Remember, your loved one cannot control the OCD.
2. Plan the exposure. Everyone involved in the exposure should know when exposure practice will occur, and when the exposure practice will end. (i.e., Schedule exposure practice, understanding how long you'll be practicing for).
3. Gradual practice: In the beginning, exposure practice should begin at a 5/10 difficulty level and increase in difficulty with each practice.

During Exposure

1. The goal of exposure is to feel the fear and do it anyway. Obtain an anxiety rating pre-exposure by asking how fearful your loved one is on a scale of 0-10.
2. Encourage, encourage, encourage your loved one to do what OCD says they cannot!
3. Every few minutes, ascertain another fear rating. Ask your loved one how they are feeling, if they notice any fear in their bodies, and encourage them to stick with the task!
4. Exposure ends when there has been a reduction in anxiety.

Post Exposure

1. Praise! Your loved one overcame a fear during their exposure practice. Provide a reward, or simply tell them you're proud.
2. Ask your loved one how that exposure could be changed to be more difficult.

Additional Tips

- Do exposures in different settings to generalize learning – this means your loved one will see a decrease in anxiety in different settings, not just in one.
- Pay attention to subtle compulsions or avoidances: We want to stop these when noticed, otherwise the exposure will not work.