



# EXPOSURE AND RESPONSE PREVENTION

Exposure And Response Prevention (ERP) is one of the recommended treatments for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). ERP involves exposing oneself to a trigger or obsession and refraining from performing any usual compulsions. This can involve tolerating considerable anxiety, and individuals are encouraged to record the pattern of this over time as they complete ERP.



## **Instructions:**

The technique of exposure and response prevention should only be carried out in the presence of a clear shared formulation of why it is expected to be helpful. The basic steps involved in ERP are:

1. Expose yourself to the trigger.
2. Resist performing the compulsion.
3. Record distress (or urge to perform compulsion) over time.

Exposure and Response Prevention is about exposing yourself to a situation that triggers your obsessions or compulsions (exposure), and then deliberately resisting the urge to carry out the compulsion that would normally relieve your anxiety (response prevention).

### **Situation / Trigger**

*What situations trigger my obsession?*

### **Obsession**

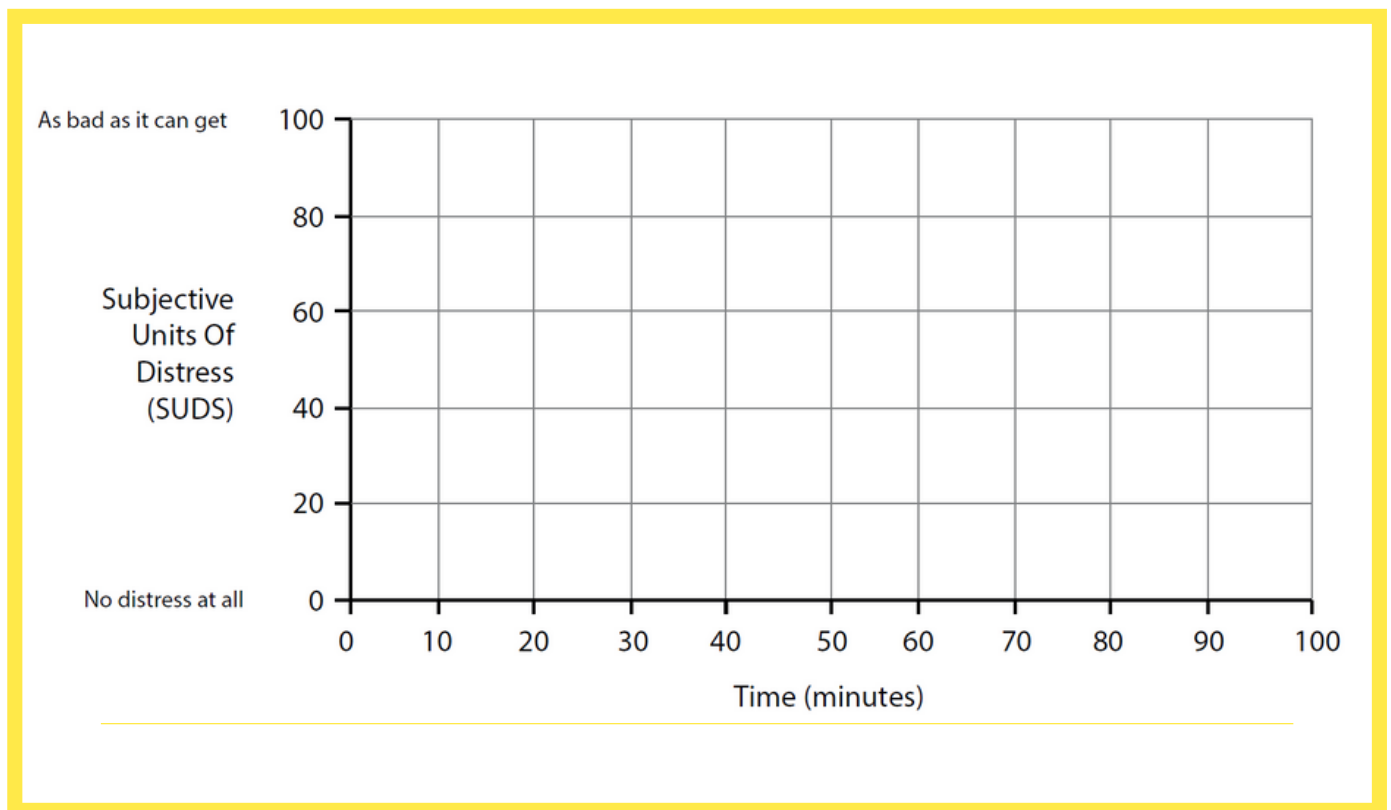
*What is the thought, image, urge or impulse that bothers me?*

### **Compulsion**

*What do I do to make myself feel better when I get the obsession?*

## EX/RP Instructions:

1. Expose yourself to the trigger.
2. Resist performing the compulsion.
3. Record how distressed you feel over time using the graph below.
4. If you do perform the compulsion, expose yourself to the trigger again.



## References

- Abramowitz, J. S. (1996). Variants of exposure and response prevention in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder: A meta-analysis. *Behavior therapy*, 27(4), 583-600.
- Boersma, K., Den Hengst, S., Dekker, J., & Emmelkamp, P. M. (1976). Exposure and response prevention in the natural environment: A comparison with obsessive-compulsive patients. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 14(1), 19-24.

## EXAMPLE

Exposure and Response Prevention is about exposing yourself to a situation that triggers your obsessions or compulsions (exposure), and then deliberately resisting the urge to carry out the compulsion that would normally relieve your anxiety (response prevention).

### **Situation / Trigger**

*What situations trigger my obsession?*

Seeing dirty things - worst things are used  
diapers or band-aids

### **Obsession**

*What is the thought, image, urge or impulse that bothers me?*

Image of my family getting ill - It would be my  
fault

### **Compulsion**

*What do I do to make myself feel better when I get the obsession?*

Clean myself and anything my family might  
touch

## EX/RP Instructions:

1. Expose yourself to the trigger. - Hold a used diaper
2. Resist performing the compulsion. - Not wash my hands
3. Record how distressed you feel over time using the graph below.
4. If you do perform the compulsion, expose yourself to the trigger again.

