Noticing Mental Rituals Without Getting Stuck Tracking Them

Bring one example of an internal ritual to therapy so you can work on your response to uncertainty. The aim is not to inspect every thought or decide what a thought proves about you.

Adults | Clinician-guided, then agreed home practice.

Complete this once for one recent, ordinary example. Use brief phrases. Stop if writing turns into repeated checking, rewriting, or searching for a perfectly accurate account. Your clinician can help you use the page differently. Write by hand, or type and save a copy.

Some compulsions happen inside the mind: replaying an event, repeatedly testing feelings, trying to cancel a thought, or rehearsing a convincing answer. A thought arriving is different from deliberately trying to settle it. You do not need to prevent thoughts from appearing.

1. A brief snapshot

What was I doing when I got pulled away?

What question did my mind insist I settle? A short label is enough; no graphic details are needed.

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2. What I did next

What did I repeatedly do in my mind or seek from another person, a website, or an AI tool?

What was I trying to obtain: certainty, a particular feeling, proof, relief, or something else?

3. The cost

What did this response interrupt or crowd out?

Example: I was writing an ordinary email. I kept replaying a conversation to establish whether I sounded rude. I wanted a definite answer and lost time I had set aside for work.

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4. Our agreed practice

A safe, everyday activity I want to return to:

One mental ritual we will work on reducing:

What I will do when I notice I am already doing it:

Example: Notice that I am replaying the conversation, leave the question unfinished, and continue the next sentence of the email. If I get pulled back into replaying, return again without restarting the task.

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5. Watch for a replacement ritual

Could I start repeating a coping phrase, checking whether I feel calmer, or grading whether I resisted correctly? What will our plan be if that happens?

6. One brief review at the agreed time

What activity did I return to, even partly?

What obstacle should I discuss at the next session?

Agreed review time:

Do not use this page to prove that you are safe, moral, attracted to the right person, or free of OCD. It is not a risk assessment. Discuss genuinely new safety concerns directly with your clinician. Do not repeatedly complete the page until it feels right.