Supporting a Child With OCD

A parent worksheet for reducing accommodation while staying supportive

Purpose: This handout helps parents recognize reassurance, accommodation, and participation in OCD rituals, then plan warmer and more treatment-consistent responses.

1. How Families Get Pulled Into OCD

When a child is distressed, helping them feel better is a natural parental response. With OCD, however, repeated reassurance, accommodation, and participation in rituals can unintentionally teach the brain that the feared situation really did require special protection.

OCD asks the family to...	Examples
Reassure	Promise that nothing bad will happen, repeatedly answer the same question, confirm that the child is not sick/bad/dangerous.
Accommodate	Change routines, avoid places, prepare special items, remove triggers, or let OCD determine family plans.
Participate	Check, clean, repeat, confess, answer rituals, or perform tasks in a particular way.
Rescue from distress	End an exposure or difficult situation mainly because anxiety increased.

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3. Support the Child Without Supporting OCD

Instead of...	Try...
Repeated reassurance	Acknowledge the distress and remind them of the treatment plan without answering the OCD question again.
Doing the ritual for them	Stay nearby and supportive while allowing the ritual to remain undone.
Arguing with the fear	Help them notice that OCD wants certainty and practice carrying the uncertainty.
Praising only low anxiety	Notice courage, effort, honesty, flexibility, and willingness to practice even when anxiety remains.

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4. Plan One Accommodation to Reduce

Accommodation or reassurance pattern we want to change:

What we will say or do instead:

How we expect our child may react at first:

How we can stay warm and steady without giving OCD what it asks for:

5. Parent Reflection

What is hardest for me about seeing my child anxious or uncertain?

What helps me remember that supporting treatment may look different from immediately reducing distress?

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2. What Does OCD Ask of Our Family?

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Entry 1 · Situation

What my child asks for

How we usually respond

Entry 2 · Situation

What my child asks for

How we usually respond