

Breaking the rules of OCD

To break the patterns of compulsions/rituals:

- **Delay** the ritual for longer and longer periods until you can eventually wait it out.
- **Shorten** the ritual until you no longer need to do it.
- Do the ritual **differently**.
- Do the ritual very **slowly**, while paying attention to each detail. Do this until it gets too long and boring.

To stop intrusive thoughts/images:

- **Label** the thought/image as just OCD “acting up again”
- **Recognize** them for what they are – simply thoughts or pictures, not reality
- **Try not to avoid** the thoughts/images, since that gives them more power and they will keep coming back. Instead, practice allowing them to be present and the anxiety will begin to decrease
- Practice **relaxation** techniques (e.g., deep breathing, muscle relaxation, visualization, etc.) to help yourself feel calm
- **Redirect** your attention to something else
- Remember that **exposure** helps to desensitize you to the thought/image. In other words, the more you practice, the less anxious you will feel over time