



ERP: DELAY

What does Delaying OCD Compulsions mean?

Delay means slowing down our response to OCD urges instead of acting immediately. OCD tries to create a sense of urgency, but even pausing for a few seconds or minutes lets us take back some control. We may still do the compulsion later, but on our own terms, not at OCD's command.

Instead of...

- Washing: *"I touched something gross and need to use sanitiser right now"*
- Thought replacement: *"I've had a sinful thought, I must pray to fix things now!"*
- Checking: *"I need to check baby again right now! I may have missed something"*
- Avoidance: *"I need to leave this party now, everyone can see I am being weird because of my OCD"*

We can learn to...

- Use the sanitiser but I will wait 30 seconds and in the meantime I am learning to tolerate this icky feeling for a little while. I can do 30 seconds.
- Pray, but not straight away. Save your prayer for your usual prayer time.
- Check on baby, but after I have finished writing this email.
- Leave the party early, but not when the OCD wants. See if you can stay an extra 5 minutes. Try engage in another activity or conversation and see how many extra minutes you can stay.

Even a short delay is a win because it interrupts the automatic OCD cycle.

Every fleeting moment that we stand strong against OCD, we are getting stronger and OCD is getting weaker. What might start off as a delay of a few seconds can build to minutes, hours, and then days.

No mental compulsions during delay

As we practice delaying the urge to do a compulsion, it is normal for our mind to try to make a deal (e.g., "just 30 more seconds and then I can make everything safe again"). This is another form of compulsion and it takes away from the purpose of the delay.

Instead, during the delay, try to focus on "learning to tolerate the feeling without trying to change it". The Refocus Information Sheet explains more.

When the delay time is up?

After the delay, try not to go straight into doing the compulsion; See if you can wait just a little longer, and then a little bit longer still (e.g., "I've done 5 minutes, I am going to try another 5").

If you get to a point where you feel like you need to do the compulsion, you can keep the ERP going! Do the compulsion but reduce *how* you do it.

Follow the Reduce Information Sheet for guidance.

