



# ERP: REFOCUS *Part 1*

## What does Refocus from OCD Compulsions mean?

Refocus means redirecting our attention *away* from compelling OCD narratives. OCD dictates that we must give all our attention on what it considers to be important. When we refocus, we notice OCD without giving it our full attention, and intentionally shift our main focus onto something more meaningful or important.

**How?!** You already have this skill! Our brain runs two attention processes at the same time: primary attention (our main focus) and secondary attention (what runs in the background). What comes into primary attention can happen automatically, but we also have some conscious control over it.

*For example, if we feel a mild urge to go to the toilet at an inconvenient time, we might notice the urge is there but put our main focus onto something of our choosing. If you give the urge a lot of attention, it can feel stronger and more urgent, but when you gently shift your focus back to something else, the sensation often fades into the background again.*

<p><b>Notice our experience</b></p> <p>We are not engaging with OCD, but taking a brief moment to acknowledge what thoughts/sensations are coming up.</p> <p><i>“Hi OCD, I see that you are worried about being a bad person...”</i></p>	→	<p><b>Let it be</b></p> <p>Don’t avoid or suppress or control the OCD experience. Let it be part of your experience, but <i>in the background</i>.</p> <p><i>“you can worry about that in the background...”</i></p>	→	<p><b>Refocus main attention</b></p> <p>Invite your mind to engage your main focus onto something that is more meaningful or important to the present moment.</p> <p><i>“while I put my main attention onto what’s I need to do in the next 5 minutes.”</i></p>
--	---	--	---	---

## What do we Refocus towards?

Anything that helps build your quality of life. Any activity is better than more time spent engaging with OCD. Activities that are meaningful, enjoyable, or connected to your goals and wellbeing can be especially helpful, as they add to your life as you learn to disengage from OCD. Below is a short list for inspiration.

- **Daily life and responsibilities** (e.g., cooking, cleaning, emails, admin, errands)
- **Connection with others** (e.g., attend group class, talk to shopkeeper, call a friend)
- **Movement and physical wellbeing** (e.g., strength/stretching, ball games, dance)
- **Learning or personal growth** (e.g., reading, studying, learning a skill)
- **Creativity and hobbies** (e.g., crafts, gardening, drawing, music, building things)
- **Rest and self-care** (e.g., take a long bath, listening to music, spending time outdoors)

**There is a bit more to refocussing, so there is Part 2 to this info sheet...**





# ERP: REFOCUS Part 2

## Isn't this the same as Distraction?

No. Distraction is a way to purposefully avoid our experience. Refocussing allows us to notice the experience, without engaging with it.

### Distraction VS Refocus

An attempt to suppress your current experience by putting all your attention onto something else. This is a form of compulsion.

*e.g., scrolling phone to block out uncomfortable thoughts/feelings*

Short-term relief but maintains unhelpful rigid beliefs (e.g., "I can't cope" or "I need to control this").

Allowing our experience to be present in the background, while you put your main attention onto the present moment.

*e.g., "I will let this thought be there in the background, and come back to the reel my friend sent"*

Builds tolerance, breaks the OCD compulsive cycle, and builds self-efficacy.

### Instead of...

Trying to control our experience

- Avoidance: *"I will bring my phone to the beach so I can scroll and take my mind off any POCD my obsessions"*
- Thought Suppression: *"I need to figure this out to make sure everything is ok"*
- Checking: *"I have to check my kids lunchbox again, I might have accidentally put poison in"*

### We can learn to...

Notice our experience, Let it be, and Refocus main attention

- Go to the beach. When OCD comes into your main attention, notice it, let it be part of your experience while you bring your main attention back to the present moment *"Hi OCD, I see you are worrying about this obsession. Ok you worry about that, but I am going to get back to listening to the water"*
- Refocus away from urge to figure it out and toward important task *"Hi OCD, I see you want me to figure this out. Instead, I am going to leave this messy in the background and come back to my email"*
- Refocus while Resist/Reduce/Delay any checking. While not checking notice OCD and shift your main attention *"Hi OCD, you can worry about not checking. I might check again later but for now I am getting on with getting the kids ready for school"*

### Refocusing is not a one-and-done process.

Just like our brain is persistent in telling us to get food when we're hungry, OCD is persistent in pulling our attention back to the intrusive thought, urge, or doubt.

But there is an important difference; Hunger is a survival signal, OCD is not. So while hunger cues will keep getting louder until we eat, OCD will learn to take a back seat as our refocusing muscle gets stronger.

Every time we try to refocus, we are training our brain to stop treating OCD as urgent or important.

