RP Rules

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Rules for Ritual Prevention

In the coming weeks and throughout treatment, you are asked to abstain from all rituals, which is necessary to get the most from this therapy. You will practice noticing urges and choosing not to ritualize. This may be challenging at first but, as with other skills, we expect that it will get easier with time. On occasions when you find yourself unable to resist the urge, please record the ritual you performed on the self-monitoring forms and spoil the ritual.

Please observe the following rules for ritual prevention.

*Decontamination Rituals:*

* Do not use water (i.e., washing) or other cleaning agents (e.g., hand gels, wet wipes, hand sanitizer) on your body. Water may be drunk or used for brushing teeth, but not to clean the face or hands.
* Shaving should therefore be done with an electric razor.
* One daily 10-minute shower is allowed. But ritualistic washing of specific body parts is not allowed (unless this has been prescribed by a physician as needed for a medical condition).
* Following the shower, you will re-contaminate from earlier exposures.
* Creams, make-up, bath powder, and deodorants are allowed as long as they are not used to reduce contamination fears.

*Checking, Counting, Arranging, and Repeating Rituals:*

* Do not engage in any repetitive behavior. For example, one brief glance in the rearview mirror when driving, one quick check of the door when leaving the home, one rapid proof for errors when completing paperwork are permitted, except when a particular exposure requires you not to check at all.
* Checking and counting are not allowed for items normally not checked (e.g., appliances) or counted (e.g., steps). Counting rituals may be foiled by counting incorrectly.
* Actions repeated because of the presence of "bad thoughts" (e.g., going through a doorway) must not be repeated.
* Arranging items that appear imperfect (e.g., books) is not allowed.

*Reassurance-seeking Rituals:*

* Compulsive reassurance-seeking from family members, "experts" (e.g., doctors, priests), or from the therapist is not permitted.
* People from whom you habitually seek reassurance should be informed to refrain from answering such questions during treatment. They should be instructed to respond in a supportive way yet refer you back to your therapist. (For example, "I'm sorry but I can't answer your question because I agreed to help you with treatment. What else could I do to help you manage your discomfort? Would you like to call your therapist about this?")

*Mental Rituals:*

* Refrain from mental strategies for canceling/neutralizing or "putting right" unacceptable thoughts.
* These rituals include mentally counting, repeating words or phrases, replacing "bad" thoughts with "good" ones, reassuring yourself (e.g., that things will be alright), and mentally reviewing details, facts or events in order to determine the likeliness that a feared outcome occurred.
* Prayers are prohibited except as dictated by religious authorities.
* Permissible prayers are not to be repeated or used to deal with obsessional fear.
* You should get in the habit of spoiling mental rituals, for example by (a) thinking of an upsetting thought instead; or performing the mental ritual in error (e.g., instead of reassuring yourself, say "I probably will get sick").