

Jon and Shala's Top 10 Tips For Coping with OCD and Relapse Prevention

A relapse occurs when your symptoms go back to the level they were at their worst for an extended period. A lapse occurs when OCD symptoms temporarily flare up, and you might find yourself giving in to a compulsion or two. Another word for a "lapse" is a slip.

1. **Expect it.** One thing we can be certain of: slips are going to happen. And they'll happen more frequently during times of stress and life transitions.
2. **Want it.** "Bring it on, baby!" Treat recovery like a game.
3. **Act like what OCD is saying doesn't matter.** And use humor to poke fun at the OCD. Remember, there are ~70 categories of content, but 1 type of therapy (ERP). If content mattered we'd have 70+ types of therapy.
4. **Know there's not much distance between a little slip and a big problem.** Give OCD an inch, it will take a mile.
5. **But don't expect to be perfect.** Try to strike a balance between keeping yourself from doing compulsions and recognizing that sometimes OCD will trick you and you'll do one (or more). Being self-compassionate will help you accept your slips and stick to your recovery plan.
6. **Use "may or may not" often.** Mental compulsions are insidious. Don't let them get started. Think about how you'd cope in a positive way if the worst happened.
7. **Taking your life back from OCD is about living with uncertainty and being happy anyway.** When you're early in recovery, do structured exposures often. Taper them down as you are feeling better, but if OCD is starting to bother you more and more, it's time for structured ERP again. But trust me...you can't do a proactive exposure on everything OCD will come up with.
8. **Learn mindfulness.** It's all it's cracked up to be. Break the connection between past thoughts/feelings and OCD. And be here in your life.
9. **Build a support network.** It can be a group, a friend(s), or family. And helping others will help you!
10. **Remember your Greater Good and build a life you want to live.** Make your life in recovery better than one with OCD!

Please see these resources to learn more about these topics:

- *When in Doubt, Make Belief: An OCD-Inspired Approach to Living with Uncertainty* by Jeff Bell
- *Daring to Challenge OCD: Overcome Your Fear of Treatment and Take Control of Your Life Using Exposure and Response Prevention* by Joan Davidson, Ph.D.
- *Freedom from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: A Personalized Recovery Program for Living with Uncertainty, Updated Edition* by Jonathan Grayson, Ph.D.
- *The Mindfulness Workbook for OCD* by Jonathan Hershfield, MFT and Tom Corboy, MFT
- *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.
- *Don't Panic, Third Edition* by Reid Wilson, Ph.D.