# Mental compulsions

Compulsions that happen in your head, and how to spot them.

Some people with OCD do very little that others could see. Their compulsions happen in the mind. Because these feel like "just thinking", they are easy to miss, and they keep OCD going as surely as hand washing.

## Common mental compulsions

- [ ] Going over events to check nothing bad happened
- [ ] Arguing with the thought or trying to prove it wrong
- [ ] Reassuring myself ("I would never do that")
- [ ] Replacing a bad thought with a good one
- [ ] Praying or repeating phrases to cancel a thought
- [ ] Counting, or thinking in a set pattern
- [ ] Checking how I feel ("Did I feel anything then?")
- [ ] Analysing why I had the thought
- [ ] Mentally rehearsing or planning to be sure
- [ ] Scanning my memory for evidence

## Obsession or compulsion?

| Obsession | Mental compulsion |
|---|---|
| **Arrives uninvited** | Something I do on purpose |
| **Raises anxiety** | Aims to lower anxiety, or get certainty |
| **I cannot choose whether it comes** | I can choose whether to continue |

## What to do

1. **Catch it.** "I am reviewing again."
2. **Stop mid-ritual.** You do not need to finish, reach an answer or feel sure.
3. **Leave the question open.** "I do not know, and I am not going to work it out."
4. **Go back to what is in front of you.** The thought can come along.

> **The aim**
> To stop arguing with OCD, not to win the argument.

**My notes and questions**

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