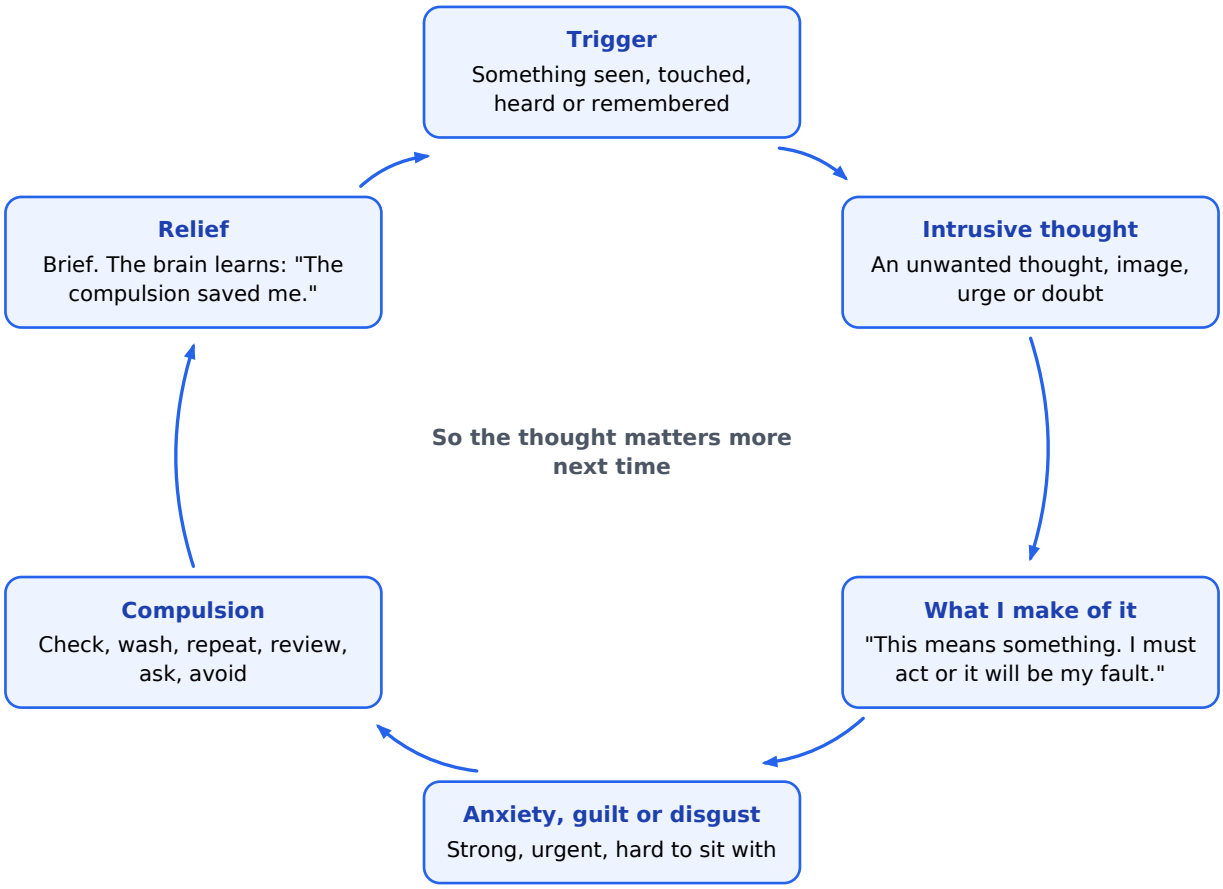
The OCD cycle

Why doing the compulsion makes the next obsession stronger.



The step that drives the cycle

The intrusive thought is not the problem. Everyone has them. The trouble starts with what you make of it: that it is a warning, that having it makes you responsible, that you have to be certain. Once a thought is treated as dangerous, anxiety follows and a compulsion feels essential.

Why the relief is a problem

Each time a compulsion brings relief, three things are learned. None is true, but there is never a chance to find that out.

1. The thought really was dangerous.
2. The compulsion is the only reason nothing bad happened.
3. You could not have coped with the feeling otherwise.

Breaking it

- **Change the meaning.** "This is an OCD thought. It does not mean anything."
- **Leave out the compulsion.** Feel the anxiety rise, peak and fall without it.
- **Stop avoiding.** Go back to the things OCD has ruled out.

> **Note**
> The thought does not have to go away. What changes is that you stop acting on it.

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