

# Hierarchy of Fears

When dealing with OCD, it's normal to feel overwhelmed by obsessions and the compulsions that follow. One way to begin managing this is by creating a hierarchy of fears. Think of it as a roadmap that helps you identify and rank your fears—from those that cause a little anxiety to those that feel really intense. This worksheet will guide you through the process of gradually working through each fear, starting with the least challenging. **By taking small steps, you can begin to weaken the grip of obsessions and compulsions and feel more in control over time.**

## STEP 1: What is your primary fear?

*Example: Fear of becoming contaminated.*

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## STEP 2: List smaller fears that are related to your primary fear.

1. *Touching a doorknob.*

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2. *Using a public restroom.*

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3. *Shaking hands with someone.*

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4. *Eating without washing hands.*

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5. *Sitting on a public bench.*

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## STEP 3: Rank these fears from 1 (low anxiety) to 10 (high anxiety).

Situation That Triggers Your Fear	Anxiety Level
1. <i>Touching a doorknob.</i>	4
2. <i>Using a public restroom.</i>	9
3. <i>Shaking hands with someone.</i>	6
4. <i>Eating without washing hands.</i>	10
5. <i>Sitting on a public bench.</i>	5



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**STEP 4:** Plan your exposures, starting with the least anxiety-provoking step.

Fear Being Conquered	Coping Skills I Will Use	Due Date	Anxiety Before	Anxiety After
<i>Touching a doorknob.</i>	<i>Counting backwards</i>	<i>5/1 entering work</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Sitting on a public bench.</i>	<i>Listen to music, progressive muscle relaxation</i>	<i>5/7 walking home</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Shaking hands with someone.</i>	<i>Focus on conversation, visualization</i>	<i>5/11 at work</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Using a public restroom.</i>	<i>Positive self-talk, listen to music</i>	<i>5/17 @ the park</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Eating without washing hands.</i>	<i>54321 method, positive self-talk</i>	<i>5/21 before lunch</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>8</i>
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**Journal:** Here are some questions to ask yourself throughout the exposure process.

**What was my experience with this step?**

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**Were the coping skills I used effective?**

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**Do I need to break down any steps further or add new steps?**

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**STEP 1:** What is your primary fear?

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**STEP 2:** List smaller fears that are related to your primary fear.

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**STEP 3:** Rank these fears from 1 (low anxiety) to 10 (high anxiety).

Situation That Triggers Your Fear	Anxiety Level
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# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



**300+**  
Companies Reviewed



**2,350+**  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



**1,150+**  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

