

OCD Treatment

The IOCDF provides fantastic information about treatment. To find OCD treatment providers in Georgia, please go to the IOCDF's [treatment provider database](#).

Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, is an effective treatment for OCD, according to the IOCDF. Specifically, in treating OCD, a particular type of CBT is used; this type of therapy is called Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP). Here is a short Q&A about ERP written by an individual with OCD who participated in ERP therapy:

What is ERP?

Exposure and response prevention means that you expose yourself to something that is the focus of an OCD obsession, but then prevent yourself from doing the compulsion or ritual afterwards. Here's an example: Let's say that I obsess about whether I have locked the front door of my house. The compulsion or ritual that I do because of this obsession is to check the door multiple times to try to make sure it is locked. An ERP exercise for this obsession might be for me to lock the door, check one time to make sure it is locked (this is the exposure), walk away (this is the response prevention) and consciously experience the anxiety that follows until it diminishes in strength. (Keep reading to learn more about why we would want to create anxiety.)

Why is it beneficial to do ERP?

People who suffer from OCD do rituals to reduce the anxiety associated with a particular obsession. However, doing rituals reinforces the OCD and makes the disorder worse over time, which actually increases the amount of anxiety the sufferer faces.

Professionals who treat OCD have found that one of the best ways to combat the disorder is to help the sufferer do the opposite of what the OCD wants the sufferer to do—namely, to face the feared obsession and the anxiety that goes along with it, without doing the ritual.

Why would I want to do ERP if it is going to make me anxious? Isn't getting rid of the anxiety the goal?

This is the paradox of ERP, in that exposing yourself to anxiety will help to make it go away over time. When we expose ourselves to a feared obsession,

we will feel anxious because our body has kicked off the age old “fight or flight” response. The body has geared up physically to protect us from the harm that the obsession says is coming if we don’t do our ritual. But we can’t hold onto that extreme level of anxiety forever—eventually it starts to lessen as the brain realizes that harm is not imminent. As you practice an ERP exercise, the brain associates the obsession with less and less fear until the brain just doesn’t see it as scary anymore. But the paradox is: to get rid of the anxiety, we as OCD sufferers first have to face it.

What will I feel like when I do ERP?

You will feel anxious, and how anxious you feel will depend upon the type of ERP goal you choose—but feeling anxiety is actually one of the first steps to getting better. People who do ERP exercises typically create a hierarchy of their obsessions—the obsessions that are the least anxiety-provoking all the way to the scariest obsessions. It is recommended that you start with goals that are focused on obsessions that are lower on the hierarchy first in order to experience success and build confidence.

Who can help me do ERP?

There are many treatment providers in Georgia who specialize in helping people with OCD get better through CBT and ERP.

Visit <http://iocdf.org/about-ocd/finding-help/> to learn more and to find a treatment provider near you.