

Instructions for Completing the YBOCS Rev. 5/10

Read the choices carefully for each question before answering.

Questions 1 and 6 are a little tricky: For each one, your answer could depend on *the length of time* (duration) you spend worrying or performing compulsions OR *the number of times you do them* (frequency).

For example, on question 1, you might spend “less than 1 hour per day” in total time worrying about something, but if the intrusive thoughts “occurred more than 8 times a day and during most hours of the day,” you should check 3, not 1.

Similarly, one person might spend a total of “1-3 hours per day” cleaning their house, which would score a 2 on question 6, and someone else might have compulsions that could be performed very quickly (like touching their ear), so their total time might be only a minute or two, but if “an hour rarely passed without several compulsions being performed,” they would score a 4.

For questions 6 – 10 (Compulsions):

Keep in mind that there are three kinds of compulsions: physical, mental, and avoidance. (For questions 6 – 10, we’ll count the first two but not the third.)

1. *Physical compulsions* are the easiest to spot (literally: they can usually be seen by other people). These include checking locks, washing hands, arranging things, going on the internet for information, or asking someone for reassurance.

2. *Mental compulsions* are harder to recognize, partly because they are invisible, but also because people can confuse them with obsessions, which of course are also mental. The difference between obsessions and mental compulsions are that mental compulsions are done voluntarily, with the intent of reducing or handling the anxiety brought on by the obsessions. Examples of mental compulsions include thinking a reassuring thought, reviewing an event, interaction, or conversation in one’s head, or silently saying a phrase or prayer. Sometimes it may feel more like researching than reassurance-seeking (as when going on the internet to research an illness or side effects), but it’s still a mental compulsion, because you’re doing it voluntarily to handle the anxiety from the obsession.

3. *Avoidance* is like a preemptive compulsion: You do it to prevent obsessional thoughts or anxiety from coming on in the first place. As such, it’s an extremely effective technique for handling anxiety. Someone who feels anxious in social situations just doesn’t go to the party. Problem solved, without any anxiety! BUT, if you eventually want to get over that particular form of anxiety, it’s the worst possible strategy. You get over fears of social interactions by engaging in them, not avoiding them.

Since it’s hard to measure avoidance (“How many hours yesterday did you avoid touching dirty things?”), DON’T include avoidance when answering questions 6 – 12. But DO include any mental compulsions you identify.