Identifying Your Intrusive Thoughts and OCD Subtypes: A Quick Guide Worksheet

Introduction: Identifying your intrusive thoughts is like shining a flashlight on those sneaky brain gremlins—it boosts your awareness and mindfulness, making it easier to tackle OCD. This skill supercharges other treatments, like ACT's cognitive defusion (where you detach from thoughts like they're just quirky suggestions, not commands). By pinpointing what's really bugging you, you'll feel more in control and ready to build healthier habits. Let's dive in!

Key Insight

Not every intrusive thought you have comes with a compulsion you may do; however, every compulsion is linked to an intrusive thought. You can uncover your intrusive thoughts by working backward from your behaviors.

Step-by-Step: How to Identify Your Intrusive Thought

1. **Identify the Compulsion:** Think of a repetitive behavior or mental ritual you do (e.g., washing hands with soap 3 times).
2. **Ask Yourself the Threat/Fear:** What bad thing is this compulsion trying to prevent? (e.g., getting sick or getting someone else sick).
3. **Turn It into an "If...Then..." Statement:** Frame it as: IF I don't [compulsion], THEN [threat/fear] (e.g., IF I don't wash my hands with soap 3 times, THEN I will get myself or someone else sick).

Now you've discovered your intrusive thought: "I will get sick or get someone else sick if I don't wash my hands with soap 3 times."

Your Turn: Try it with one of your behaviors!
1. Compulsion: _____
2. Threat/Fear: _____
3. If...Then... Statement: _____

Intrusive Thought: _____

OCD Subtypes Checklist: Connect Your Intrusive Thought

Once you've identified your intrusive thought, see which subtype it might fit. Check off any that resonate—OCD can overlap! This is a starting point; symptoms vary.

- **Contamination OCD:** Fears of germs, dirt, or illness (e.g., "If I touch that doorknob without washing, I'll get deathly sick or spread it to others.").
- **Checking OCD:** Doubts about safety or mistakes (e.g., "If I don't check the stove 5 times, the house will burn down and it'll be my fault.").

- **Harm OCD:** Intrusive thoughts of harming yourself or others (e.g., ”What if I lose control and hurt someone? I must be a bad person.”).
- **Sexual Orientation OCD (SO-OCD):** Unwanted doubts about your sexuality (e.g., ”What if I’m not really straight/gay? I need to check my attractions constantly.”).
- **Relationship OCD (ROCD):** Obsessive doubts about relationships (e.g., ”What if I don’t really love my partner? I must analyze every feeling.”).
- **Pedophilia OCD (POCD):** Fear of being a pedophile despite no desire (e.g., ”That innocent thought means I’m a monster—I must avoid kids.”).
- **Religious/Scrupulosity OCD:** Fears of sinning or offending God (e.g., ”If I don’t pray perfectly, I’ll be damned forever.”).
- **Just Right OCD:** Need for things to feel ”just right” (e.g., ”If I don’t arrange this exactly, something terrible will happen.”).
- **Symmetry/Ordering OCD:** Urges for perfect order (e.g., ”If items aren’t aligned, my day will go wrong and it’ll be chaos.”).
- **Hoarding OCD:** Difficulty discarding items (e.g., ”If I throw this away, I’ll need it later and regret it deeply.”).
- **Pure Obsessional OCD (Pure O):** Mostly mental intrusions without visible compulsions (e.g., endless rumination on ”What if I’m a bad person?”).
- **Perfectionism OCD:** Fears of not being perfect, often tied to people-pleasing (e.g., ”If this email isn’t flawless, everyone will see I’m incompetent and worthless.”).

Refer to the OCD Subtype Checklist Worksheet for more help in identifying which subtypes you may have now.

Reflection Space

How does naming this feel? Any ”aha” moments? _____

Pro Tip: Share with a therapist—they can help refine this and tailor treatments like ACT, ERP, or I-CBT!