OCD Therapy Worksheet: Building Your ERP Hierarchy

Intro: What's ERP and the Hierarchy? Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) is a powerhouse for OCD, where you face your fears (exposures) without giving in to compulsions. The hierarchy is your roadmap: a list of intrusive thoughts (the brain's "threat" if you skip the compulsion) paired with compulsions, rated by Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) from 1-10 (10 = max anxiety). Think of the intrusive thought as the scary "what if" your brain poses—like "If I don't avoid that meeting, I'll say something stupid and be seen as incompetent!" Compulsions can be actions (e.g., checking) or avoidance (e.g., skipping emotional triggers). Rate SUD based on predicted distress IF you don't do the compulsion (e.g., if avoidance is the compulsion, rate how anxious you'd feel if you DID face it). Start exposures with SUD 5 and below weekly to build tolerance. Value: More exposure = lower SUD over time! Ex: If a level 5 drops to 1, higher ones often decrease too, as your brain learns the threat isn't real.

Instructions

- List 5-10 triggers: Intrusive thought (threat) + compulsion.
- Rate SUD (1-10) for not doing the compulsion.
- Sort from lowest to highest SUD.
- Plan weekly exposures starting low; track in reflection.
- Work with a therapist—don't go solo on high SUDs!

Your OCD Hierarchy

Fill in the table below. Example row provided.

Intrusive Thought (Threat)	**Compulsion (Action/Avoidance)**	**Predicted SUD (1-10 if NOT doing compulsion)**	**Post-Exposure SUD (After trying)**
Ex: "If I send this email without triple-checking, it'll have errors and I'll look like a fraud."	Avoid sending or over-edit endlessly.	6	2 (after exposure)

Exposure Reflection Space

After an exposure (start with SUD 5 or below):
Chosen Item from Hierarchy: _____
Was it easy or hard? Why? _____

New SUD Rating: ____
Insights (e.g., "Anxiety peaked then dropped—no disaster!"): _____

Pro Tip: If it was too easy, something probably didn't trigger the intrusive thought fully—tweak the exposure to hit closer to the fear. Repeat to watch those SUDs melt away!