
S4C10. The compulsion matrix

In this chapter, we shall further understand the importance of acceptance and mindfulness in your recovery journey. Sometimes you may think that your compulsions come without obsessions. Sometimes, the rituals become habits and you do not even remember why you do them anymore. Maybe if you think about them, you may remember what a ritual is supposed to prevent but often, the ritual is performed even without you realizing it, out of habit.

At times, you may not need to do your compulsions but you still do them. Sometimes, it is to make sure that there are no obsessions. You could stop them if you wanted, but you don't. When you are expected to face your fears, it means getting to a point where you do not do any of your compulsions - the ones you do not realize doing and the ones you do not care to stop. But facing your fears may have at least two types of roadblocks for you.

Unwillingness Vs Inability to Stop: Often your rituals may seem like you are *unable to stop* them. Whenever there is an urge, or even a feeling that this is the right time to do a ritual, you may just end up doing it and then believe that you are *unable to stop*. If you observe your rituals closely, only some of them you may be *unable to stop* doing, because they may seem automatic. But the other rituals, you may be *unwilling to stop*. You may realize that there are some rituals to which you may say '*I can't stop doing this*' but what you may really mean is, '*I don't want to stop doing this*'. Those are your *unwilling to stop* rituals. Those are the rituals that you do realize you do when you do them or even before doing them. For example, checking and researching may fall under *unwilling to stop*, whereas neutralizing your thoughts may fall under *unable to stop*.

Unwillingness suggests awareness but reluctance. The state of unwillingness is a more mindful state where we are aware that the ritual needs to be stopped but we don't stop it, more out of choice rather than inability. The unwilling to stop belief is a more mindful state. Inability on the other hand suggests a total lack of awareness. The state of inability is a less mindful state where we are not even aware of the rituals we need to stop. The unable to stop belief is a state of not being mindful. The key skill that will help you navigate this quagmire, and will take you from unable to unwilling is mindfulness.

Transfer the compulsions identified in Worksheet 12 in the 'pre-classification of compulsions' table in Worksheet 13. Write down UA against all compulsions that you are unable to stop and write down UW against all compulsions that you are unwilling to stop. An example has been provided in table 4.10.1a to make it easier to understand.

Uncomfortable Vs Risky: The second roadblock that you may encounter in

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facing your compulsions is that your mind might tell you that it is *risky* to face

Table 4.10.1a: Pre-classification of compulsions (part one)

Example for filling in the Compulsion Matrix (Table A)		
Compulsions	Unwilling / Unable	Unpleasant / Risky
Monitoring your own feelings and sensations	UA	
Researching and checking	UW	
Comparison	UW	
Reassurance Seeking	UA	
Neutralizing your thoughts	UA	
Post facto rumination	UW	
Attempt to change your partner	UW	
Avoidance	UA	
Distraction	UA	
Confession	UW	

them. But when you objectively evaluate the rituals, you may realize that facing some of them is more *uncomfortable* than *risky*. For example, if you do not compare your partner to another good-looking person, it may be merely *uncomfortable*, but not seeking reassurance may seem *risky*.

The word *uncomfortable* suggests that you could stop the rituals if you wanted but do not stop them because of the discomfort. Thus, you are aware that stopping this ritual may not result in harm, that is, you are more accepting of the situation. On the other hand, the word *risky* suggests that you think stopping the ritual may result in actual physical harm of some kind and may not accept that the ritual can be stopped. Thus, you are less accepting of the situation. If you think a ritual is *uncomfortable* to stop, you are more accepting of it than if you think it is *risky* to stop. In this case, the key skill that is important to develop and strengthen is acceptance. Acceptance will help you understand that what seems *risky* is in fact just *uncomfortable* and provide you the courage to face it.

In the ‘pre-classification of compulsions’ table in Worksheet 13, write down R against all compulsions that seem *risky*, and write down U against all compulsions that are merely *uncomfortable*. An example has been provided in table 4.10.1b to make it easier to understand. Having completed the above exercise, make the Compulsion Matrix as shown in the example in Worksheet 13.

Based on the intersection of U and UW, write down the compulsions in the top left quadrant. These compulsions are just uncomfortable and you are unwilling to stop them. So, in your mind they are neither dangerous nor automatic. From the point

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of view of facing them, these may be the easiest to face. You have both the acceptance and the mindfulness to stop them.

Next, based on the intersection of U and UA, fill in those compulsions

Table 4.10.1b: Pre-classification of compulsions (part two)

Example for filling in the Compulsion Matrix (Table A)		
Compulsions	Unwilling / Unable	Unpleasant / Risky
Monitoring your own feelings and sensations	UA	U
Researching and checking	UW	R
Comparison	UW	U
Reassurance Seeking	UA	R
Neutralizing your thoughts	UA	U
Post facto rumination	UW	U
Attempt to change your partner	UW	U
Avoidance	UA	R
Distraction	UA	R
Confession	UW	R

that are uncomfortable and you are unable to stop, in the top right quadrant. Since these are merely uncomfortable, there is no risk in stopping them and you may not mind stopping them. You therefore, have the acceptance. However, since you are unable to stop them as they seem automatic to you, you lack the mindfulness to stop these compulsions. Hence, for the compulsions in this quadrant, you need to develop more mindfulness to be able to stop them.

Then, based on the intersection of R and UW, fill in those compulsions that seem *risky* and you are *unwilling to stop*, in the bottom left quadrant. *Unwillingness to stop* indicates that you are aware that you need to stop them and could stop them if you wished to. Thus, you do have the mindfulness to recognize that these compulsions need to be stopped. However, since they seem *risky* to you, you are not able to believe that stopping them will not result in a disaster. Hence, acceptance of the irrationality and of the ability to handle the consequences of facing the fears is missing. This means that for the compulsions in this quadrant, you are mindful enough to recognize them when you are doing them but need to build the acceptance to be able to stop them.

Finally, based on the intersection of R and UA, in the bottom right quadrant, fill in those compulsions that seem *risky* and you are *unable to stop*. See example in table 4.10.2.

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In the case of these compulsions, you will need to develop both the acceptance and the mindfulness to stop them. Understanding which compulsions require more acceptance and which ones require more mindfulness may help make the process a little easier.

Table 4.10.2: The Compulsion Matrix

Example for filling in the Compulsion Matrix (Table B)		
The Compulsion Matrix		
	UW	UA
U	Comparison	Monitoring
	Post-Facto Rumination	Neutralizing
	Attempt to Change	Self-Criticism
R	Researching and Checking	Reassurance Seeking
	Confession	Avoidance
		Distraction

Table 4.10.3 is to provide the inferences about which compulsions would require more mindfulness, which would require more acceptance and which would require both to be dealt with. Fill in WS 13 on the basis of the example, customized to your own list.

Table 4.10.3: The Table of Inferences

Inferences		
U+UW (Uncomfortable + Unwilling to Change)	High mindfulness, high acceptance	Easiest to face
U+UA (Uncomfortable + Unable to Change)	High mindfulness, low acceptance	Build acceptance to change perspective on inability to change
R+UW (Risky + Unwilling to Change)	Low mindfulness, high acceptance	Build mindfulness to change perspective on the potential danger
R+UA (Risky + Unable to Change)	Low mindfulness, low acceptance	Work on both mindfulness and acceptance to be able to face

In the next chapter, we shall see one peculiarity of ROCD.

To-Do:

Fill WS13 - the compulsion matrix