

EXERCISE: The Mental-Control Strategies Questionnaire

Consider your experiences with distressing intrusive thoughts and feelings. Then on a scale of 0 to 2, where 0 is never, 1 is occasionally, and 2 is frequent, rate how often you used each strategy listed here. Also rate how you perceived the effectiveness of each strategy, where 0 is not effective, 1 is somewhat effective, and 2 is very effective.

Control Strategy	Estimated Frequency	Estimated Effectiveness
1. Replace with another thought.	0 1 2	0 1 2
2. Try to reason with yourself.	0 1 2	0 1 2
3. Criticize yourself for thinking this way.	0 1 2	0 1 2
4. Seek reassurance from others.	0 1 2	0 1 2
5. Tell yourself to stop thinking this way.	0 1 2	0 1 2
6. Engage in an activity to distract yourself.	0 1 2	0 1 2
7. Analyze the meaning, why you are thinking like this.	0 1 2	0 1 2
8. Look for evidence that refutes the intrusive thought.	0 1 2	0 1 2
9. Repeat a phrase or action (for example, checking something) that counters (neutralizes) the thought or reduces distress.	0 1 2	0 1 2

10. Actively suppress thinking about the intrusion.	0	1	2	0	1	2
11. Just accept the thought, let it float through your mind without engaging the intrusion.	0	1	2	0	1	2
12. Try to reinterpret the intrusion as a more positive, helpful thought.	0	1	2	0	1	2
13. Try to relax, meditate, or breathe slowly.	0	1	2	0	1	2
14. Make fun of or humour the intrusion.	0	1	2	0	1	2
15. Pray or focus on a comforting phrase or idea.	0	1	2	0	1	2
16. Try to reassure yourself that everything will be fine.	0	1	2	0	1	2
17. Perform a compulsive ritual (repeatedly wash hands, check, redo, or repeat actions).	0	1	2	0	1	2
18. Avoid things that might trigger the unwanted intrusion.	0	1	2	0	1	2

Based on your questionnaire responses, which mental-control strategies are you using most to deal with unwanted thoughts and feelings? Are you relying on effective or ineffective strategies? Are you surprised at the limited extent of your mental-control skills? If you previously concluded that you tend to put a lot of effort into mental control and now you realize your actual control strategies are not very effective, do you now understand why the paradox of mental control is working against you?