

Behavioural experiment

Finding out, rather than reasoning about it

An experiment is a way of getting information that argument cannot give you. It works best when the belief is stated plainly enough that the result could contradict it.

For OCD, use the exposure planner instead. In OCD the main learning is that you can handle the anxiety and the doubt without the compulsion, and trying to settle the doubt with a test can become another compulsion.

The belief

What I believe will happen

How much do I believe it, 0 to 100

What would I expect to see if it were true

What would I expect to see if it were not

The experiment

What I am going to do, exactly

When and where

What I am not going to do while I do it

The result

What happened

What I learned about handling the anxiety

How much do I believe the original prediction now, 0 to 100

What I would need to test next to be sure

A worksheet, not treatment, advice about your situation or a diagnosis. It is best used alongside a qualified clinician. If using it makes things worse, stop and speak to your GP or clinician, and in an emergency call 999. Written by Anxiety CBT Ltd and free to print for personal or clinical use, unchanged and with this footer left on. Not for sale. © 2026 Anxiety CBT Ltd · Dr Daniel O'Rourke · anxietycbt.co.uk/resources/behavioural-experiment