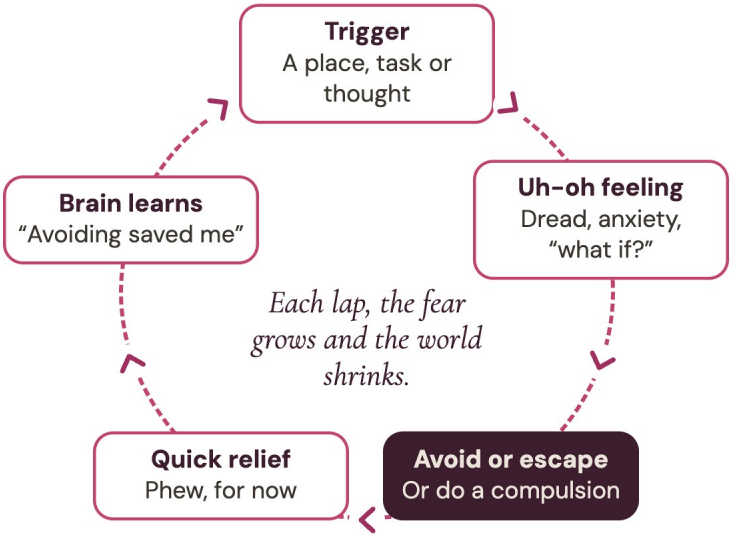
The avoidance *loop.*

Avoiding something scary brings quick relief, so your brain learns to do it again.



When avoidance becomes a compulsion

In OCD and anxiety, avoiding works like a compulsion, to ease fear or doubt.

- Steering clear
- Checking again
- Putting it off
- Reassurance seeking
- Mental reviewing
- Counting or ordering
- Re-doing until it feels "right"

Intrusive thoughts happen to everyone. OCD is when the loop takes over your time and life.

ND BRAINS AND OCD More common in autistic and ADHD people. Stims and special interests are **not** OCD.

2–3% of people overall	1 IN 9 autistic kids and teens	UP TO 1 IN 4 kids with OCD also have ADHD

Estimates vary; autistic adults 9–22% across studies. Sources: NIMH (NCS-R); Brain Sciences meta-analysis, 2024; Frontiers in Psychiatry review, 2019.

Protective, or part of the loop?

Am I protecting a need, or feeding a fear?

Protective avoidance

- Not a problem: it meets a real need like sensory, energy, safety or demand load
- Your life stays about the same size
- You feel relieved, and okay, after

Loop avoidance

- Based on fear or "what if?"
- Relief fades fast, so it needs repeating
- Your life slowly gets smaller

WAYS OUT OF THE LOOP Small and gentle counts. Go at your own pace.

Name it
"Ah, this is the loop."

Take a tiny step
Small and chosen.

Delay it
Wait a few minutes.

Sit with "maybe"
Not knowing, kindly.

Continued on back: go deeper →

Step outside *the loop.*



Take these slowly: on your own, in a session, or with someone you trust. There are no wrong answers, and "I'm not sure yet" counts.

1 *What do I tend to avoid, put off, check or ask about? Which feel most like a loop?*

2 *Think of one time I avoided something this week. What was I afraid might happen?*

3 *Which of my avoiding protects a real need, like sensory comfort, energy or safety?*

4 *Where has the loop made my life feel smaller? What would I like back?*

5 *What is one tiny, chosen step toward something I avoid? Who could support me?*

♡ **If the loop is taking a lot of your time or life,** support can help. ERP (exposure and response prevention) is the most studied therapy for OCD. An ND-affirming clinician can adapt it to you, with room for sensory needs, processing time, clear structure, stims and special interests.