# Are You Too Rigid About Routines and Schedules?

## **Objective**

To identify your rigid habits, patterns, routines, and schedules and explore strategies for less rigidity and more spontaneity in your life.

#### **You Should Know**

Routines, schedules, and daily plans are a great way for you to meet your obligations, fulfill your responsibilities, and pave the way for success and creativity. Following certain patterns of behavior over and over again can contribute to establishing a healthy lifestyle for a lifetime. For instance, if you never miss your 6:00 a.m. workout before school, you're performing a routine that contributes to your health and happiness.

But if you feel you must stick to your routines and schedules such that you experience anxiety or distress at the thought of interrupting or changing them, this can be a problem. You might be trying to control emotionally challenging situations that make you anxious or upset.

In this worksheet, you'll explore what your routines and habits are, as well as their consequences, and review some strategies for making changes.

#### What to Do

Describe your regular routines you feel you <i>must</i> follow, or it will cause problems for you. Write whatever comes to mind, no matter how minor or insignificant it might seem; for instance, brushing your teeth at a certain time, organizing your clothes or other items in a certain way, and so on.							

vould not	want to change or be asked to change <i>no matter what</i> :	
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What are t	ne positive gains of your rigid adherence to those routines?	
What are t	ne negative consequences of your rigid adherence to those routines?	
What do yo	ou feel might happen if you interrupt the routines you listed? Be specific.	
	a reel might happen if you interrupt the routines you listed: be specific.	

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Here are some things you can try:

- If routines and habits are an attempt to manage your distress, such as anxiety or fear, learn deep breathing or relaxation exercises to help you calm your body and mind.
- Tell yourself that nothing bad will happen if you break a routine, and you can let go, slowly, over time, of the need to be so rigid. Make a plan to limit your repetitive or habitual behaviors (e.g., cut back the time spent doing the behavior 5-10 minutes at a time).
- Adjust anything in the environment, such as intrusive lighting or sounds, which might trigger repetitive behaviors.
- Write in a journal about what feelings come up if you cut back on your routines or habits.
- Set up a reward system for achieving small goals of changing your routines.
- Explore alternatives—join a group or start a fun activity. This could be a finding a hobby, engaging in a sport, or joining an art class, hiking group, rowing club, and so on. Push yourself out of your comfort zone, within reason. The more you experience a positive outcome to breaking routine, the more flexible you'll be.
- Practice meditation to manage your emotions.

### **Reflections on This Exercise**

What is the first step you'd like to take to eliminate your need for rigid routines?
What might get in the way of taking action right now? Be specific.
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What activities and interests can you pursue to shift your focus away from any obsessive or repetitive behaviors or patterns that are bothering you or interfering with your life?

1 = not very l	nelpful, 5 = moder	ately helpful, 10	= extremely hel	oful)	
What can you	do to make addit	ional progress ir	this area?		