

Now list five routines from the above list that you feel are especially important—ones that you would not want to change or be asked to change *no matter what*:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What are the positive gains of your rigid adherence to those routines?

What are the negative consequences of your rigid adherence to those routines?

What do you feel might happen if you interrupt the routines you listed? Be specific.

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.

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?

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What can you do to make additional progress in this area?
