

Journal Prompts

FOR INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

Intrusive thoughts are unwanted, distressing, and repetitive thoughts that enter a person's mind involuntarily. These thoughts can be distressing due to their often disturbing, violent, or taboo content. Intrusive thoughts are a common human experience, but they can become a concern when they are persistent, distressing, and interfere with daily functioning. It's important to recognize that having intrusive thoughts does not mean a person will act on them, and having such thoughts does not make someone a bad person. Overcoming intrusive thoughts is vital for promoting mental health, enhancing daily functioning, and fostering a more positive and fulfilling life.

Identification and Reflection:

Describe the intrusive thoughts you've been experiencing. What triggers them, and how do they manifest in your mind?	Explore the emotions associated with these intrusive thoughts. How do they make you feel, and how do these emotions affect your daily life?
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Patterns and Triggers:

Identify any patterns or common triggers for your intrusive thoughts.	Are there specific situations, environments, or stressors that tend to increase the frequency of these thoughts?
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Cognitive Distortions:

Examine if there are cognitive distortions associated with your intrusive thoughts (e.g., catastrophizing, black-and-white thinking. See cognitive distortion handout).	How might challenging these distortions impact your thoughts?
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Mindfulness and Self-Compassion:

Write about mindfulness or grounding techniques you can use when intrusive thoughts arise. How can you anchor yourself in the present moment to reduce the impact of these thoughts?	Practice self-compassion in your journal by writing words of understanding and kindness to yourself when dealing with intrusive thoughts. How can you be gentle with yourself during these moments?
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Responses:

Reflect on how you typically respond behaviorally to intrusive thoughts.	Are there patterns of avoidance or compulsive behaviors? What healthier alternatives can you explore?
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Values, Goals, and Coping:

Connect your coping strategies to your values and long-term goals. How do you want to respond to intrusive thoughts in a way that aligns with the person you aspire to be?	Brainstorm and plan future coping strategies for when intrusive thoughts arise. How can you build a toolkit of techniques that work best for you?
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Support Systems:

Write about the people in your support system who can offer understanding and assistance when you're struggling with intrusive thoughts.	How can you communicate your needs to them?
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“Thoughts are only thoughts. They are not you. You do belong to yourself, even when your thoughts don’t.” -John Green

Beyond Your Mask