



## Mindful Conversations

When you are hanging out with friends and family members, how often do you get “hooked” by something they say? Do you get lost worrying about the past or the future? How strong is the urge to go back in time and dig out your actions in that very moment? Are you aware this is happening? Are your friends aware you’ve gone missing? The following practice can help you stay in the present moment.

Your close friends and family members most likely know you struggle with OCD. Invite one of them to help you with this exercise. Practice as often as you and they are available.

### Round one:

Ask your loved one or friend to share a factual and neutral story that you haven’t heard before. It can be something they’ve read, heard, or experienced. Have them tell you about it for two to three minutes. Do your best to pay attention to what they are saying.

Then, repeat the story back to them, and both of you can rate how focused you were on the story, the environment, and your thoughts or other internal experiences as follows:

The story	_____	%
The environment	_____	%
Thoughts or other internal experiences	_____	%

Invite them to share their perspective regarding your attention to the story. If your scores are different, don’t worry. That doesn’t matter as much as your ability to increase your awareness of how you get hooked by your thoughts or other internal or external events.

### Round two:

Ask your loved one or friend to tell you another factual story you haven’t heard before. This time the story needs to include words related to a topic that may hook you (get you stuck and fused). The story needs to last two to three minutes. Do your best to pay attention, as you will repeat the story back to them and both of you can rate your focus as follows.

### Rate how focused you were on:

The story	_____	%
The environment	_____	%
Thoughts or other internal experiences	_____	%

### Round three:

Ask your loved one or friend to tell you a third factual story, different from the previous ones, that you have not heard before. Like the second story, this story needs to be related to a topic that may hook you, and it needs to last two to three minutes.

Listen to the story and notice when you get hooked. This time around, see whether you can catch yourself being hooked. When this happens, softly and quickly acknowledge it by using a short cognitive-defusion phrase (e.g., “I hear you.” “Maybe.”) as taught in chapters 5 and 6. Then gently reconnect with the present moment. Continue to pay attention to your loved one’s story.

Do this as often as needed within micro seconds so you can keep track of the story. Then you and your loved one or friend can rate your attention as follows:

#### Rate how focused you were on:

The story	_____	%
The environment	_____	%
Thoughts or other internal experiences	_____	%

As you practice this exercise regularly, your awareness of when your attention drifts will increase. You’ll be able to stay connected to the present moment during the conversations you have with others. The main goal of this exercise is to work on practicing brief cognitive-defusing skills during a conversation that hooks you and quickly get back to the present conversation.