

Pocket Practice Card

For the anxious mind — keep it close, use it in the moment

Around **94% of people** have intrusive thoughts — having one means nothing about you or your relationship. This is the short version: the two moves you need when a thought hits. **It's a skill to learn, not a button to press for relief.** Read it a few times to learn the moves, then practise them from memory — don't re-open it every time the anxiety spikes, because that's the reassurance loop wearing a new disguise.

WHEN A THOUGHT HITS

The 4-Step Practice

Notice none of them is "answer the thought."

1. Name it as a thought, not a truth.

When it hits, label it: "that's an intrusive thought." Naming creates a sliver of distance — you are the one noticing the thought, which means you are not the thought.

2. Let it be there. Don't argue, don't reassure.

Resist the two big compulsions: don't try to prove it false, and don't go seeking reassurance. Let the thought sit in the room like background noise. It's allowed to be there. You're just not going to serve it.

3. Let the uncertainty be uncomfortable.

You'll feel the pull to resolve it, to get certain. That discomfort is the loop's withdrawal — and riding it without acting is exactly how the loop starves. You're practising being okay without certainty.

4. Return to your actual life.

Gently move your attention back to what you were doing — not to suppress the thought, but to stop orbiting it. The thought can come along in the background. This is how the groove fills back in.

BEFORE YOU DISMISS IT

Anxiety, or Information?

“Let it float by” is right for intrusive DOUBT — but not every uneasy feeling is anxiety. Sometimes doubt is information. Use this to tell them apart, and never talk yourself out of a genuine red flag.

LIKELY ANXIETY (let it pass)	LIKELY INFORMATION (listen)
Repetitive — the same loop on repeat	Consistent — points to a real, specific pattern
About everything, vague, endless what-ifs	Specific — points to actual behaviour
Craves reassurance; calms briefly, returns	Doesn't crave reassurance to hold steady
Gets LOUDER the more you examine it	Gets CLEARER and calmer as you look directly
Lives in your head	Points to something happening in reality

If what you're feeling is a response to real mistreatment — if your partner is controlling, dishonest, cruel, or you're not safe — that is NOT an intrusive thought to let float by. That is your gut reporting something real, and it deserves to be heard. Use this card to quiet anxious noise, never to silence a genuine alarm.

The full toolkit

This card is the short version. The complete Intrusive Thought Toolkit — the four lies, the loop, and the full practice — is on our website. Work through it once to learn the moves.

therelationshipsblueprint.com

To understand why your mind does this, it can help to know your attachment style.

Attachment style quiz → therelationshipsblueprint.com/quiz

You are not your thoughts. You're the one who notices them.

If these thoughts are constant, steal hours of your day, or the checking feels truly compulsive, there's a name for it — relationship OCD (ROCD) — and it is real, common, and very treatable. A therapist trained in OCD and anxiety, using approaches like exposure and response prevention (ERP), is the gold standard. This isn't weakness. It's a brain doing a fixable thing.

THE RELATIONSHIP BLUEPRINT

Building stronger relationships. Together.

This card is educational and not a substitute for therapy or a diagnosis. Find a therapist: psychologytoday.com/us/therapists · Lower-cost options: openpathcollective.org. If you are in crisis or unsafe, please reach out to a local crisis line or, in the US, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233.