

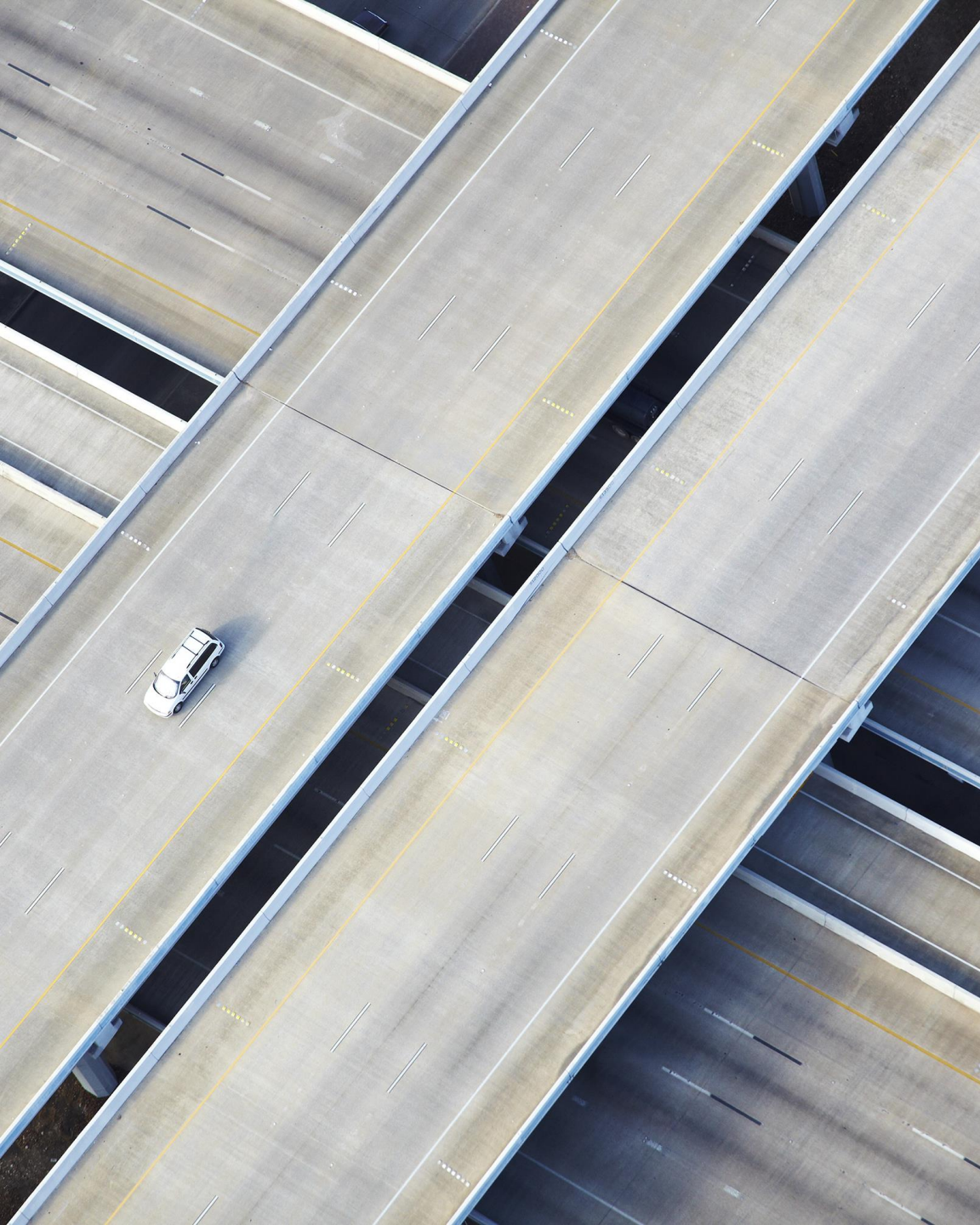
ERP Pitfalls



ERP Pitfalls

1. Not going far enough in exposures
2. Wrong forms of exposure
3. Distraction during exposure
4. Reassurance!
5. Not treating the core fear
6. Not addressing mental compulsions
7. Not working with supports
8. Not including response prevention with exposures



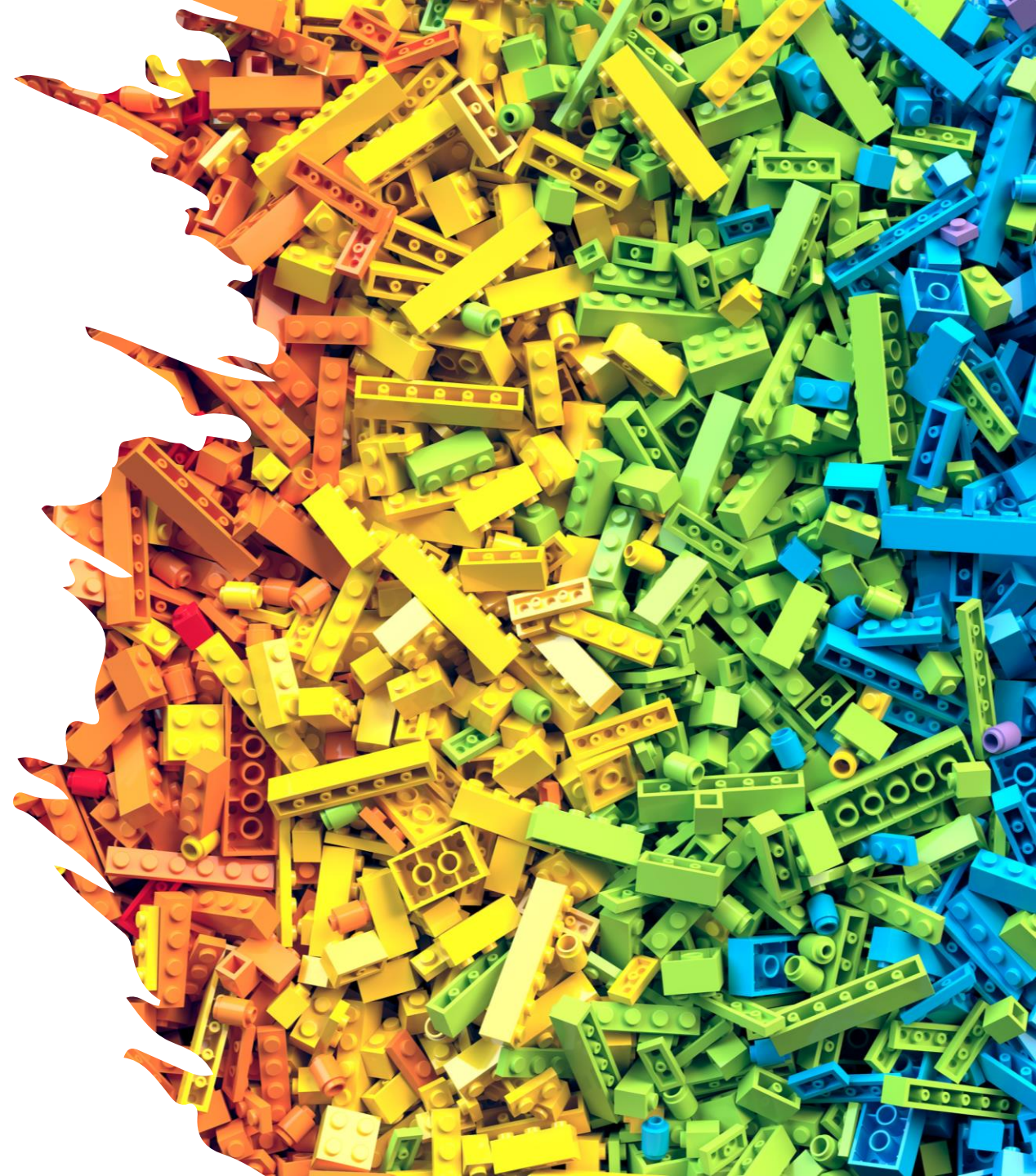


Not going far enough in exposures

- Going above what “normal” people will do is part of ERP to ensure effectiveness in disconfirming beliefs; not going far enough can lead to relapse
- Not going far enough is allowing a patient to avoid discomfort; instead, a therapist should help coach a patient through discomfort

Distraction during exposure

- Distraction from the exposure/fear/distress likely interferes with the exposure
 - Distraction during an exposure can teach a patient that they are unable to tolerate high levels of anxiety
 - Conversation should not take away from the exposure
 - Distraction may be attributed to the success of the exposure (the feared outcome did not occur because I was distracted)



Reassurance during exposure

- Providing reassurance during an exposure prevents contact to the feared outcome, and creates the “certainty” that OCD is looking for
- Reassurance seeking is a compulsion
- Education at the start of treatment should include explanation of assurance vs reassurance, and the role of learning to accept uncertainty



Not treating the core fear

- OCD can lead to multiple paths of avoidance/rituals/routines
- Identify the core fear and create hierarchy around that
 - Exposures that are completed on the periphery vs core fear can be helpful, but can slow treatment
- Addressing the core fear helps to reduce multiple forms of compulsions

Not addressing mental compulsions

- It is important to determine if something is an obsession (causes anxiety) or compulsions (reduces anxiety)
- Mental compulsions can feel involuntary, and it can be difficult to interrupt or block these
- Some ways to help with mental compulsions are to lean into uncertainty with maybe, or to use other exposure statements

Not working with supports

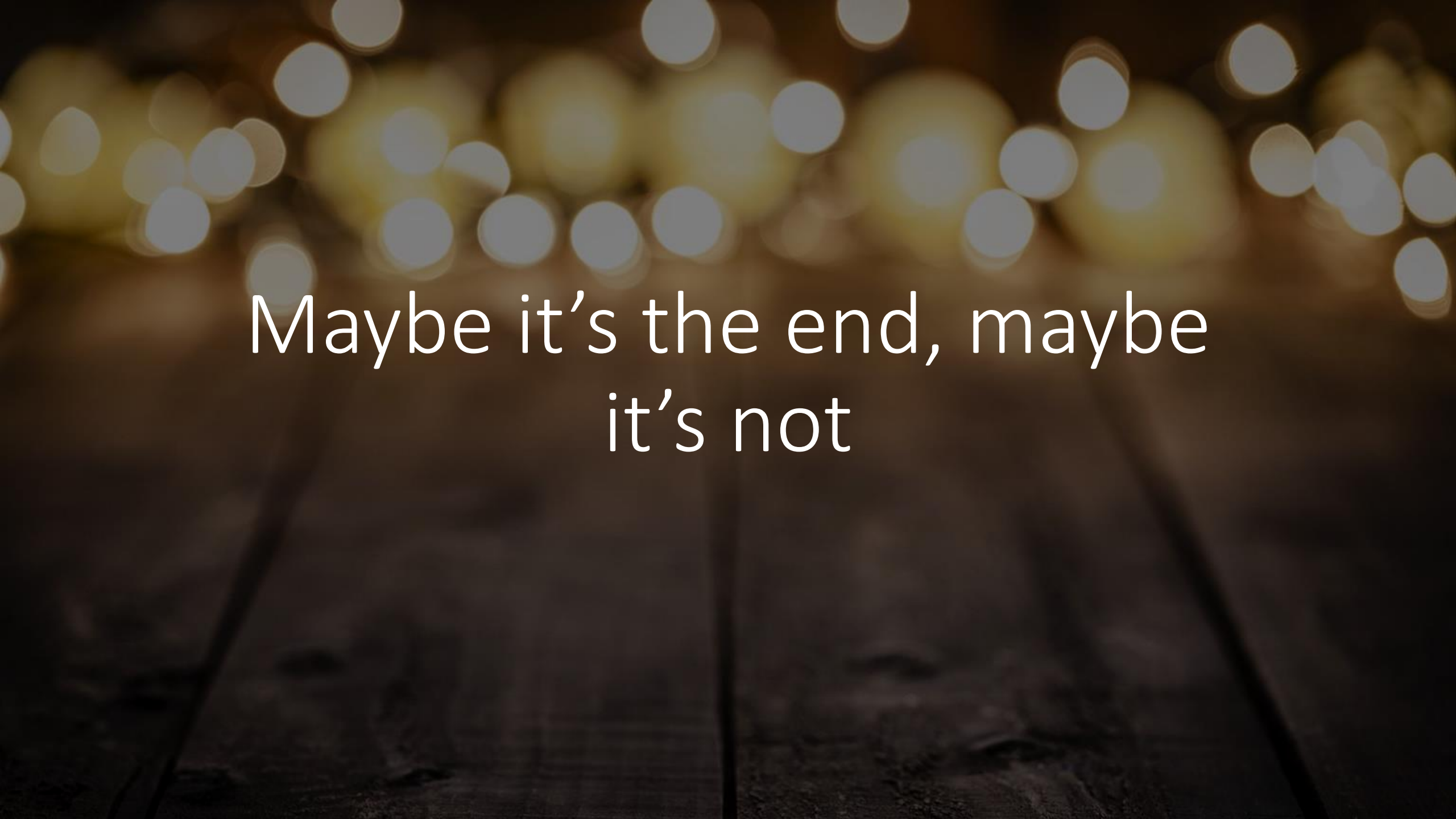
- Supports are often recruited into engaging with OCD or helping with compulsions (accommodation)
- It is important to teach supports how to be supportive vs accommodating



Exposures without response prevention

- Exposures that do not have response prevention do not adequately reduce the engagement in safety behaviors, can lead to white-knuckling, and reinforce needing compulsions to alleviate distress





Maybe it's the end, maybe
it's not