



4th Global Conference on Psychology

21 - 23 August 2026

Oxford, United Kingdom

The Body Under Surveillance: Self-Monitoring as a Transdiagnostic Mechanism in Panic, Sexual Performance Anxiety, and Performance Blocks

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Abstract

This paper proposes a brief strategic conceptualization of excessive bodily self-monitoring as a transdiagnostic maintaining mechanism in panic, avoidance, sexual performance anxiety, and performance-related blocks. Across these clinical presentations, individuals frequently shift from embodied experience to evaluative surveillance: heartbeat, breathing, dizziness, muscle tension, erection, orgasmic response, desire, or technical execution are monitored as possible signs of danger, inadequacy, or failure.

Drawing on qualitative clinical observations from psychotherapeutic and sexological practice, the paper examines the perceptive-reactive system through which attempted solutions sustain the problem. The individual anticipates losing control, increases self-observation, attempts to regulate or suppress the feared response, and thereby amplifies the salience of bodily cues. In panic, ordinary sensations become evidence of imminent collapse; in agoraphobic avoidance, protected spaces progressively shrink; in sexual performance anxiety, erotic encounter becomes an evaluative task; and in sport or public performance, spontaneous action is inhibited by excessive technical control.

From a brief strategic therapy perspective, clinical assessment should therefore identify not only symptoms, but also redundant attempted solutions: checking, reassurance-seeking, avoidance, over-preparation, protective rituals, and forced control. The paper discusses intervention pathways aimed at interrupting this surveillance system through paradoxical prescriptions, ritualized exposure, symptom scheduling, attention-redirection tasks, and corrective emotional experiences. The model offers an integrative clinical framework relevant to psychological disorder therapy, sports psychology, and the psychology of intimacy and performance.

Keywords: self-monitoring; panic; sexual performance anxiety; brief strategic therapy; performance blocks