

Let's understand OBSESSIVE Compulsive Disorder (OCD)





What is OCD?

OCD is an anxiety disorder. It is quite common, about 1 or 2 people in every 100 have OCD. Anyone can get it, boys or girls.

People who have OCD get thoughts and pictures popping into their heads over and over again; this can make them feel scared, worried and sometimes embarrassed.

People with OCD can also get urges to do things, even though they don't want to. These are called **obsessions**. Having OCD makes people feel like they have to do something to stop the obsessions coming true or to get rid of the anxiety; these are called **compulsions**. These things can get in the way of normal living and can cause problems if not addressed.



Obsessions

People have many different types of obsessions. It can be very hard to ignore some thoughts which can be annoying and frightening. Obsessions can change as you get older. Having worrying thoughts about something that you might do can be upsetting and can also cause feelings of guilt.

Compulsions

Compulsions are a bit like rituals, they can make a person with OCD feel anxious if they do not do them e.g. touching an object because they believe it is lucky, saying a favourite number or word.

Rituals may be mental or physical. If a person with OCD is interrupted when undertaking rituals they will repeat them.

Reassurance Seeking

When OCD causes worry then the person will continually seek reassurance from another person, by asking the same question over and over until their doubt and anxiety goes away. This can cause annoyance from friends and relatives and make OCD more high profile.

Trying to resist doing compulsions is hard and the fear is that people will notice the strange behaviours. This in turn causes anxiety a bit like a volcano about to explode.

Having OCD can make some people withdrawn as being away from the triggers of obsessions prohibits the need for rituals. It can be hard to get on with life in the same way as peers with so many worries and this can lead to feeling depressed.



5 Ways To Help Your Child With OCD

1. **Get help.** OCD usually only gets worse without treatment. Don't think it's just a phase or it's not that bad, because when it does get bad it will be much harder to work with. But until then....
2. **Don't Rush Him** - A Child With OCD often cannot move on to something else until fixing what he thinks needs fixing.
3. **Don't Say "Can't you just stop!"** - no he can't stop, or he would.
4. **Don't bring attention to it if you can.**
If possible just ignore it, or wait patiently for the moment to pass. If you are in a rush, you can always help.
5. **Don't talk about it like it's a problem.** Don't single him out, or talk about with your friends and family in front of him. Kids with these disorders are at very high risk of developing low self-esteem. Seeing themselves as different from everyone else will only add to a feeling of not belonging.

www.jenkehl.com

Diagnosis

Your GP can refer you to the Child Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who can perform an assessment. A psychologist can also assist with managing compulsions; at Fairfield Primary School we have a trained Counsellor who meets confidentially with children in our designated counselling room to provide support for pupils with OCD and other disorders.

Causes

There is no known cause for OCD and it is treatable. There are some things that might make people more likely to have OCD. Anxiety and mood problems can run in families and people with OCD worry too much if they get unpleasant or bad thoughts.

Triggers

Stressful events can trigger OCD, Sometimes it may be a bereavement or the transfer to Secondary School are common ones.



Coping with OCD at school

Because of the obsessions and trying to undertake rituals, learning can be lost. Sometimes children will not hear questions posed by the teacher because OCD obsessions have filled their heads. Coping with obsessions and compulsions is really tiring and this can make it very hard to focus on learning.



Coping with OCD at home

Arguments can occur when OCD stops people from being able to do things. This can be misinterpreted as being lazy or non-compliant.

Anxiety can often be mis-understood until properly diagnosed.





Treatment

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is a talking and doing treatment for OCD. This treatment has to be undertaken with a qualified therapist.

CBT concentrates on how OCD and anxiety work in order to understand the vicious cycle that takes place with compulsions and rituals.

It is important to resist the rituals in order to learn that worries do not always come true. In this way anxiety is likely to reduce over time.

A **hierarchy** can be developed where a list is drawn up of everything OCD makes a person do and then a rating of how anxious they would become if they did not undertake the ritual. This anxiety rating assists in guiding which rituals to try and tackle step by step, starting with the easiest first. This makes taking control and fighting back easier.

Sometimes people need medication too to help with OCD.

Medication helps reduce the anxiety and together with CBT can be a good way of fighting OCD.



Recommended reading, organisations and websites

- **National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE)**

1st Floor, 10 Spring Gardens, London, SW1A 2BU

<http://guidance.nice.org.uk> Tel: 0845 003 7780

- **OCD Action**

Suite 506-7 Davinia House, 137- 149 Goswell Road, London, EC1V 7ET

www.ocdaction.org.uk Tel: 0845 390 6232

- **OCD UK**

PO Box 8955, Nottingham, NG10 9AU <http://ocduk.org> Tel: 0845 120 3778

Books

- ***Breaking free from OCD: A CBT guide for young people and their families***, (2008)
London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- ***Up and down the Worry Hill***, (2004), New York, Lighthouse Press (book for children)
- ***The Secret Problem***, (1994), Weaver C , New South Wales: Shrink Rap Press (book for children)