



OCD

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a mental illness and anxiety disorder, characterised by obsessive thoughts that cause the sufferer high levels of stress and worry.

These thoughts or images, are often irrational and very intrusive – they just won't leave the sufferers mind! The thoughts can feel very real to the sufferer and can range from worrying about cleanliness and organisation to sexual, violent or blasphemous, religious thoughts that can cause extreme distress. Even though the sufferer would never harm another person or themselves, the thought itself is so powerful it feels like reality.

In order to reduce the anxiety caused by these horrible thoughts, a sufferer may perform a behaviour to stop themselves from worrying. This is the 'compulsive' side of OCD and could consist of repetitive behaviours such as going over (ruminating) events, checking, counting or washing. Sufferers may avoid meeting certain people and going to certain places if it triggers their obsessive thoughts, or may complete rituals – doing actions or behaviours in a specific order in order to combat the anxious barrage of thoughts.

Although the condition can be extremely debilitating to the sufferer, it is reassuring to know that OCD is a common condition in the UK, affecting 1-2% of the population, and effective treatments such as 'Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy' (CBT) and medication have been developed to help treat the problems that come with the illness.

If you feel that you may be suffering from OCD symptoms, it would be wise to visit your GP and explain the problems that you are facing. They may refer you to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) or AMHS (Adult Mental Health Services), where you can get support from counsellors and trained therapists.

As a young person, having OCD can be a difficult condition to cope with. If you're having difficulties around education, you might want to notify your school or college about the problem, so extra support can be put in place.

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Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) can take a number of different forms, and can manifest in many different ways. Here are a few scenarios ...

- Fred's OCD got bad after he had learnt to drive. He kept getting nasty thoughts that he would run someone over and injure or kill them. This thought caused him so much distress that he would repetitively check his car mirrors, to make sure that everyone was safe.
- In the case of Sally, her OCD developed whilst on holiday in the countryside. When walking through a field, she accidentally walked in some animal mess. She immediately thought she would get ill from this encounter, and so repeatedly washed her feet and hands, in the hope that she wouldn't fall sick. Since the incident, Sally washes her hands every time she sees any animal mess and avoids walking through fields and touching any animals, even her pets!
- After the death of his grandfather, Bob started to get nasty thoughts that he was somehow to blame for what had happened. A great fan of music, Bob would avoid listening to any music that was somehow associated with his grandfather in the case that it might cause someone else to die. A lesser known symptom of OCD, Bob was experiencing magical thinking, believing that his actions would affect other people. His problems later manifested as he believed seeing aeroplanes in the sky would cause them to blow up or crash into the ground.

'The key is to realise the thought is happening in spite of your will, NOT because of it!'

(Brain Lock, J.Schwartz)

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Resources on

OCD

If you're looking for more confidential information, below you will find useful and credible resources that will give you extra information on the condition.

Useful Links:

OCD Action: <http://www.ocdaction.org.uk/>

OCD UK: <http://www.ocduk.org/>

Mind: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Samaritans: <http://www.samaritans.org/>

Useful Books:

'Brain Lock' by Jeffrey Schwartz

'Break Free From OCD' by Fiona Challacombe

'Touch and Go Joe' by Joe Wells

'Can I Tell You About OCD' by Amita Jassi

*Our OCD Factsheet was written by Jonathan Davies,
volunteer at The Project. Thanks Jon! 😊*

