

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

People with Obsessive Compulsive Order (OCD) may have obsessions of various kinds or they might have compulsions or then a combination of obsessions and compulsions. They usually know that their behaviours and thoughts are not normal, but feel powerless to halt them. At its worst, OCD makes living of a normal life difficult and maybe almost impossible.

Obsessions manifest as intrusive and repetitive thoughts and imaginations. For example, a person might constantly worry about committing a crime or doing something embarrassing. Or they may have constant thoughts about a person or group of people. There are very many other forms of obsession too.

Compulsions could include (for example) the classic endless handwashing or excessive checking, though again there are very many other forms of compulsion. Many develop elaborate, time-consuming rituals that have to be performed before they can feel 'safe'. These can disrupt their lives and the lives of those around them. \

Contrary to some common myths about OCD

- *OCD is not a condition you're borne with* and it doesn't need to be a lifetime sentence. People can and do recover completely from it and establish normal healthy patterns.
- *OCD could be hi-jacking a talent.* While sufferers may be more prone to developing the condition because of natural temperament, upbringing or experience, the same tendencies can be used quite differently and effectively when freed from the OCD syndrome. For example, the same fundamental tendencies healthily directed could make a person reliable and conscientious in a job or could lead to success in an art or craft or in playing a musical instrument.
- *OCD is not a disease* in the sense that say a virus is – no organic causes have been identified and people are not infected with it.
- *OCD is a series of associated behaviours that have become automatic* and exaggerated. It may develop as a result of severe trauma, but equally can be established more gradually, for example when people have had their confidence slowly undermined or when there has been excessive stress and anxiety. It is

accentuated when some of the major human psychological needs are inadequately met, and indeed generally makes sufferers less able to meet their needs properly.

Intelligent therapy for OCD

- does not blame sufferers
- does not encourage excessive introspection
- asks sufferers to accept some of the responsibility for managing their condition
- help sufferers to separate who they are in themselves (their identity) from the condition
- allows clients to understand how and why OCD develops and encourages insight into ways their own OCD has worked
- coaches ways to make conscious challenges to automatic OCD thoughts
- teaches ways of creating helpful relaxed and focused states
- draws on positive experiences to create new patterns
- (where necessary) desensitizes memories of any traumatic experiences that may have been involved in establishing the condition
- teaches a fuller understanding of the mind/body system
- draws on positive experiences to create new patterns of behaviour and thought
- uses forms of guided imagination to rehearse ways forward
- moves at a pace acceptable to the client

How long does therapy take?

There is no set pattern for therapy. Sometimes relief from symptoms is experienced very rapidly over 3 to 5 sessions. Sometimes it can take 10 and even more., especially where there are many related issues and the habit is deeply embedded. All clients are encouraged to notice ways in which they are able to make changes from the first session onwards. Clear goals are established and therapy generally ends when these are reached, though clients are able to return for additional coaching sessions from time to time if necessary.

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