



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD

What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)? Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a type of mental illness that plagues the sufferer in an endless cycle of repeated unwanted thoughts and actions. People with OCD do not experience normal worries because their brains do not filter perceived threats properly and misinterpret all fears as extremely dangerous. In an attempt to alleviate the anxiety from these recurring upsetting thoughts called **obsessions**, a person with OCD performs the same tasks or rituals over and over. These actions are called **compulsions** and can seriously disrupt normal living.

Symptoms of OCD:

- ❖ Have repeated distressing thoughts or images
- ❖ Spend at least one hour daily on unwanted thoughts and rituals (ie. Continual washing of hands, unlocking and locking doors, repeating the same sequence of steps again, excessive showering, etc.)
- ❖ Have severe fear of dirt, germs, causing harm to others, making a mistake, behaving in a socially inappropriate manner, or sinful thoughts, etc.
- ❖ Have a high need for order, or symmetry (ie. Eating food in a particular order, hoarding items with no significant value, constantly arranging things in a specific way, etc.)
- ❖ Negatively impacts self-esteem and self-worth, family/social life, academic and work performance, etc.
- ❖ Develops depression, anxiety, unhealthy coping strategies, etc.

Other Information: There are no exact causes of OCD, but recent research suggests that abnormal chemical levels in the brain produces an overreaction to the brain's alarm system that misinterprets danger. Evidence is also strong that OCD has a genetic component. The most effective treatment for OCD is often cognitive-behavioral therapy. Anti-depressants are sometimes used in conjunction with therapy, although medication alone is rarely effective in relieving symptoms of OCD. Because OCD severely impacts family and social adjustment, having supportive friends is extremely beneficial. As a trusted friend, you could:

- ❖ Educate yourself about the disorder
- ❖ Be aware of signs and symptoms; Do not enable the behaviors and help with distractions;
- ❖ Avoid criticisms, teasing or insults about their peculiar behaviors and habits
- ❖ Be kind, patient, understanding and generously listen to your friend's frustrations

For more information, check out the following recommended websites:

<http://iocdf.org>

http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/ocd.html

www.teenmentalhealth.org