

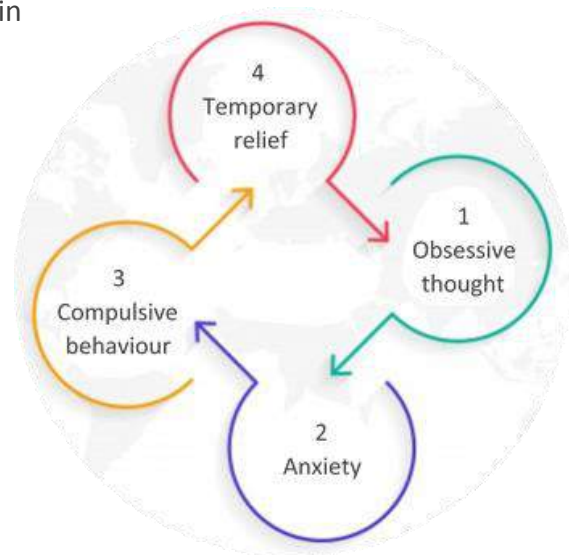


**THE MATER**  
WELLBEING CENTRE

# COPING WITH OCD (OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER)

**Obsessive compulsion disorder (OCD)** is within the larger anxiety disorders group. OCD is the name given to the condition where people experience distressing and repetitive thoughts and/or behaviours. OCD can be broken up into two main components; obsessive thoughts and compulsions.

- ▶ The obsession is an unwanted thought and is usually the first symptom that persists.
- ▶ This obsessive thought causes a spike in anxiety levels. In an effort to lower these anxiety levels, a person with OCD might take part in a compulsion.
- ▶ The completing of a compulsive act only offers temporary relief from anxiety.
- ▶ This is a short-term solution until the obsessive thought begins again and this process can turn into a vicious cycle



It is normal, on occasion, for people to double-check if they have left an appliance on but with people who suffer from OCD, obsessive thoughts are so time-consuming it seriously interferes with their everyday lives. An obsession is an unwanted and often distressing thought or image that takes over the mind against the person's will, repeatedly. These thoughts are persistent and intrusive, and this, as a result, can hinder a person's ability to take part in their daily activities. These thoughts may be unpleasant; common obsessions include intentional harming yourself or others, a need to have everything in a particular order or an intense fear of catching a disease.



Secondly, these thoughts are often accompanied with compulsion. Compulsions are repetitive behaviours or rituals that a person can feel forced to perform in response to an obsession. These rituals are performed repeatedly in order to reduce the anxiety caused by the compulsion. In the short term, the compulsion reduces the initial distress caused by the obsession.

Unfortunately, in the longer term, it can be very difficult to try to resist these compulsions. Although most people with OCD are aware that the compulsions are 'silly' and irrational, these urges are still difficult to resist. Carrying out the compulsion reduces the anxiety but increases the urge to perform the compulsion each time. Compulsions can also come in the form of mental rituals such as counting or repeating words or phrases. Compulsions can be very time consuming and only add to the vicious circle of OCD.



Some common compulsions include excessive hoarding, handwashing, checking or counting.

A person with OCD may have an obsession or a compulsion individually, or both elements together. Anxiety tends to be the most common mood state, followed by depression as the next most common. People with OCD often avoid situations, places, objects that may trigger their obsession or distress. People with OCD do not get pleasure by completing the compulsion; it is more of relief of discomfort.

**Self Help Tips** There are many CBT models that are designed to help form coping strategies to help manage OCD symptoms.

- ▶ Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Obsessive-compulsive Disorder by Bream, Challacombe, Palmer & Salkovskis. (0198703260) (Book)
- ▶ Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (The Facts) by Rachman. (019956177X) (Book)
- ▶ Building your social network, confide in friends and family that you trust
- ▶ Sharing obsessive thoughts makes them less powerful - [mind.org.uk](http://mind.org.uk)
- ▶ Looking after your physical health
- ▶ Getting enough sleep.
- ▶ Exercise is a real mood booster, even if it's just a walk, you will feel better after it.
- ▶ Eating healthy foods improves your mood and is good for your body.

If you think you have OCD symptoms and it is having a negative impact on your life, do not hesitate to contact your GP to get the help you need.



## Useful websites

Psychology Tools offers a great resource for people suffering with OCD

- ▶ <https://www.psychologytools.com/professional/problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/>
- ▶ The Obsessive Compulsive Foundation has recently set up a website dedicated to hoarding. The site can be accessed at <http://www.ocfoundation.org/hoarding/>
- ▶ <https://www.ocdireland.org/>
- ▶ HSE information and support <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/mental-health/obsessive-compulsive-disorder/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd-symptoms.html>
- ▶ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/self-care-for-ocd/>
- ▶ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd.htm>
- ▶ <https://www.ocduk.org/overcoming-ocd/self-help/>
- ▶ Exposure Therapy PDF [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.papsy.org/resource/collection/3BB998DF-0641-434F-B985-593DDD53DC1D/54\\_-\\_Exposure\\_Therapy\\_for\\_OCD.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.papsy.org/resource/collection/3BB998DF-0641-434F-B985-593DDD53DC1D/54_-_Exposure_Therapy_for_OCD.pdf)



## Useful Books

- ▶ **Break Free from OCD** by Challacombe, Oldfield and Salkovskis
- ▶ **The Beating OCD Workbook** by Fitzgerald
- ▶ **Overcoming Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder** by Veale & Willson
- ▶ **Pulling the trigger – OCD, Anxiety, Panic Attacks and Related Depression** by Shaw & Callaghan
- ▶ **Brain Lock** by Schwartz



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