

# PSYCHOEDUCATION

## OCD



### What is OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a mental health issue that involves two connected parts: obsessions and compulsions.

### What are obsessions and compulsions?

**Obsessions** are unwanted thoughts, feelings, images, or urges that keep coming back, even if you don't want them. These thoughts might feel stuck in your head and be really hard to ignore. They can make you feel worried, confused, or upset because you might wonder why you're having them or why they won't go away. These thoughts can feel like they take over and make daily life hard.

You might also feel like you can't talk about them or worry that something is wrong with you because of these thoughts.

**Compulsions** are things you feel you have to do to calm down the stress or uncertainty caused by your obsessions. These can be actions like checking if the door is locked over and over, or mental habits like repeating a word to yourself. Sometimes, it involves asking others for reassurance.

It's normal to have obsessive thoughts or feel the need to repeat actions sometimes, but for people with OCD, these thoughts and actions cause a lot of distress and interfere with their life.

Even though you might know that your compulsions don't make sense, you might still feel like you have to do them to make things feel "right." While doing them might help you feel better for a moment, the need to keep doing them can make things worse over time, leading to a cycle that's hard to break.

#### Compulsions can include:

- **Physical actions**, like washing your hands or checking if things are in the right order.
- **Mental habits**, like repeating words or numbers in your head.
- **Involving others**, like constantly asking someone if everything is okay.

### Some examples of compulsions are:

- **Rituals**, like touching things in a certain order or washing your hands a lot.
- **Checking**, like making sure doors are locked or that you didn't make a mistake.
- **Correcting thoughts**, like repeating certain words or numbers in your head to try and cancel out a bad thought.
- **Reassurance**, like asking others over and over if things are okay.
- **Rumination**, which is when you keep thinking about the same thing, trying to fix or understand it.
- **Avoidance**, like staying away from situations that might trigger your obsessions.

## Self-Care for OCD

### Managing intrusive thoughts and uncertainty

If we have thoughts that make us feel worried, scared, or confused, it's natural to want to make these thoughts go away. But often, the more we try to push them away, the more they stick around. It's important to know that lots of people have thoughts like these, and it doesn't mean something is wrong with you.

Instead of trying to get rid of a thought, try to accept that it's just a thought. You can even name it! For example, you can say, "Oh, there's that scary thought again." This helps take away some of its power. Some people find it helps to make fun of the thought or exaggerate it to make it less scary. You can also use something to help ground you, like a small object to hold, like a toy or a stone, to help distract you when the thoughts feel overwhelming.

Remember, just because you think something doesn't make it true. For example, if you think, "I'm a bad person," it doesn't mean you are! It's just a thought.

## **Learning to Accept Doubts**

It's normal to have doubts or feel unsure about things. No one can be 100% certain all the time, and that's okay. The more we try to be sure about everything, the more we think about what worries us, which can make us feel more anxious.

Instead of focusing on what you can't control, try thinking about what you can control. For example, you can control how you react to a situation or a thought, but you can't control everything that happens in the world.

## **Managing Unhelpful Actions (Compulsions)**

Sometimes, when we feel scared or worried, we do things to try and feel better, even if they don't always make sense. These actions are called "compulsions." It might feel like you have to do something, even if it doesn't help in the long run. Over time, you may feel like you have to do it again and again.

If you notice yourself doing a compulsion, try to resist it. It may feel hard at first, but with practice, it will get easier. Try distracting yourself with something you enjoy, like a game or going outside.

## **Be Kind to Yourself**

Dealing with scary thoughts and feelings can be tough. It's okay to have good days and bad days. Try to focus on small wins and things that make you feel happy. Celebrate the little victories, like being able to handle a thought without getting upset.

Take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating well, and doing things that help you relax. It's also okay to talk to someone you trust about how you're feeling. They can help you feel less alone and understand what you're going through.

## Useful websites and apps:

### For further information about OCD:

Young Minds is a UK charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.



<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

OCD UK provide advice, information and support services for those affected by



[www.ocduk.org/teens/](http://www.ocduk.org/teens/)

### For OCD online support groups:

OCD Action's Online Support Groups provide a safe and welcoming environment where you can connect with others with similar experiences and offer mutual support without judgement. All support groups are peer led and facilitated by a dedicated team of trained volunteers.



[www.ocdaction.org.uk/online-support-groups/](http://www.ocdaction.org.uk/online-support-groups/)

The Every Mind Matters website has a specific section on mental health and self-care for young people:

**Self-care tips videos for young people - Every Mind Matters - NHS**  
([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

