

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder. The ways in which symptoms of OCD are experienced varies widely from person to person. You will have obsessions, compulsion or both if you have OCD.

Obsessions

An unwelcome thought or image that you keep thinking about and is largely out of your control. These can be difficult to ignore. These thoughts can be disturbing, which can make you **feel** distressed and anxious.

Compulsion

Something you think about or do repeatedly to relieve anxiety. This can be hidden or obvious. Such as saying a phrase in your head to calm yourself. Or checking that the front door is locked.

What We Think - Obsessions

Fearful thoughts or pictures in your mind about being contaminated by dangerous substances, e.g. germs, dirt, AIDS.



What We Do - Compulsions

- ✓ Check body for signs of contamination.
- ✓ Wash/disinfect frequently.
- ✓ Avoid going to places, touching objects that you fear may contaminate you.

Frightening thoughts/images that some serious harmful events will occur because of your carelessness, e.g. a gas explosion in the house because the cooker is left on or that the house will be burgled because the door is left unlocked.



- ✓ Check feared situation/appliances or journey route many times.
- ✓ Avoid being the last person to leave the house.
- ✓ Avoid responsibility. Seek reassurance from others.
- ✓ Seek reassurance regularly from another person that everything is alright.

Pictures or words in your head that suggest you will harm or have harmed others, particularly those you care for and would never harm, e.g. that you may harm your child or knock someone over in your car.

Pictures come into your mind of your loved ones dead.

- ✓ Avoid situations which you feel put you at risk of harming others, e.g. hiding kitchen knives.
- ✓ Think something to yourself to put right frightening thoughts – these are called neutralising thoughts because they seem to take away the power of the thoughts.

Things in your life are not in the correct order or not symmetrical enough or in the right place, e.g. ornaments are not aligned, and you feel distress due to this.



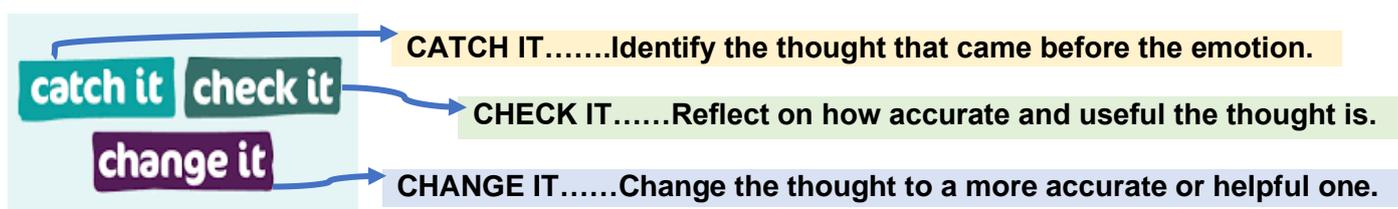
- ✓ You put things right or make them symmetrical many times until they feel right.
- ✓ Excessive time spent on tasks.

Unpleasant thoughts/pictures and doubts about things come into your head regularly.

- ✓ Carry out some task that will neutralise the thoughts, e.g. counting or saying a special word.

Acceptance of thoughts, feelings and uncertainty can be the first step in breaking free from OCD. **YOU ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS!** Challenge these thoughts and try changing them.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY



Click on the following link for learning this new skill: [Learning the 3 C's](#) (*catch it, check it, change it*)

An example of someone with OCD leaving the house:

The Thought?	The Emotion?	The Behaviour?	The Accuracy?
I think I left the oven on or the door unlocked.	Anxiety	Check excessively	Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?
The house will burn down or be burgled. I am responsible if something happens.	Apprehension	Return home and check again.	Remember due to obsessions/compulsions it is common for me to overestimate the danger involved in certain situations. I am also more likely to be particularly anxious. I checked once and this should suffice.
	Fear	Counting/tapping while turning off.	I do not need to believe the intrusive thoughts.
	Shame		I do not need to act on these thoughts.

Useful Information and Workbooks (double click for access):



[Further Understanding OCD \(video link included\)](#)

[Obsessions and Compulsions. Learn New Coping Skills](#)

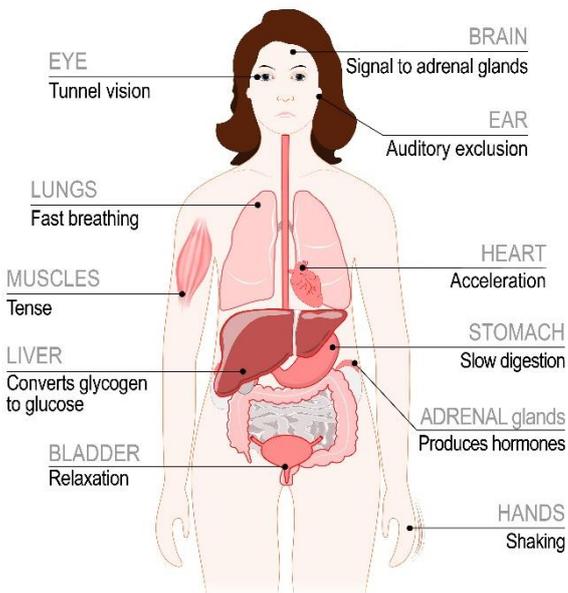
[OCD Diary \(printable pdf version or fill it online using word\)](#)

[TEDx Talks: Starving the OCD Monster \(listening resource\)](#)

Having suicidal thoughts? Discuss with a loved one, call Samaritans on **116 123** or access your **G.P.** or **Crisis Service** via **NHS** on **111**.

OCD takes over your body's alarm system, a system that should be there to protect you and one that triggers the flight or fight response. But instead of only warning you of real danger, that alarm system begins to respond to any trigger (no matter how small) as an absolute, terrifying, catastrophic threat.

Fight-or-flight response



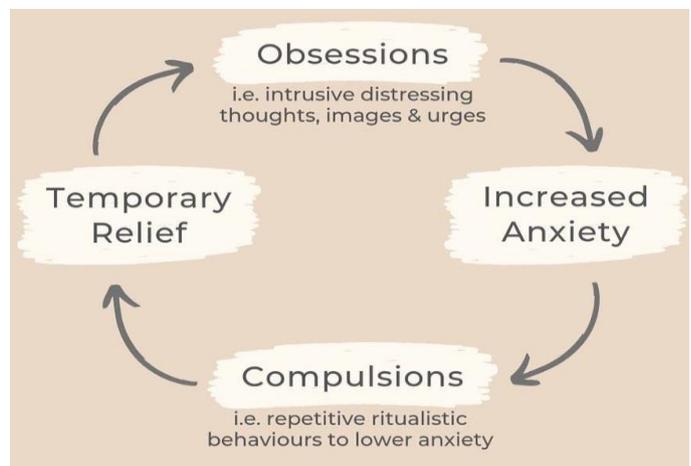
Top Tips to Manage Stress

- Exercise. This is a high priority for **managing** stress....
- Know that you are safe....
- Trigger the **relaxation response**: 10 to 20 minutes sitting in a comfortable position, quiet or silence, eyes closed or fixed on an object and deep, consistent, slow breathing.



Can you identify the link?

When a person has uncontrollable and recurring obsessions that are relieved by engaging in compulsions to manage the anxiety associated with them. Over time, this learned behavioural pattern becomes a vicious cycle, which is difficult to break and can encroach on all aspects of a person's life.



Compulsions (rituals) tend to persist because they provide temporary relief from your obsessions. But the solution can be as bad as the problem. Rituals can begin to take more and more of your time, and eventually dominate your life. We need to be self-aware in order to challenge these!

Top Tips

1. Make a list of situations where your symptoms occur, e.g. when leaving the house.
2. Next, list all the thoughts, images, or impulses that come to your mind in each situations (obsessions), e.g. the cooker might still be on.
3. Write down all the things you do in these situations to avoid danger or take away the thoughts (compulsions), e.g. excessively checking the cooker is off.
4. Finally list any activities or situations you avoid because of your obsessions.



5. Go through this list and rate your anxiety would be should you resist carrying out the compulsions.
6. Choose one thing on the list that you think you could resist with only mild to moderate anxiety. Next time you are in that situation try as hard as you can to resist the compulsion. Pay attention to how anxious you feel at the start and to the way this anxiety reduces over time.
7. Repeat the same activity, resisting the compulsion every time you are in that situation (at least once per day), you should notice that with practice it gets easier and easier to resist as your anxiety fades.
8. Once you are comfortable with this activity choose another slightly harder compulsion to challenge. Be careful you do not start developing new compulsions once you have stopped the old ones.
9. Remember that in OCD as the doubts become stronger the more you will give in to them, and the weaker the more you will resist them.



It is important you try to understand your OCD better in order to combat it!

Here are some useful resources to plan for challenging your OCD

- [What triggers your anxiety and compulsions?](#)
- [What is your healthy balance?](#)
- [Do you want to identify your OCD rituals?](#)

Our recommended resources (click for direct access):

NHS Inform	Offers the most up-to-date advice on dealing varying mental health difficulties, including the 5 Steps to Mental Wellbeing. Please visit: NHS Inform
Wellbeing	Our website offers a variety of self-help materials, groups, and courses for all sorts of problems that you may be facing. Anyone can download the self- help materials. Please visit: Wellbeing Website Glasgow
Mental Health Foundation	A range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health. Please visit: Your Mental Health - Mental Health Foundation
NHS Every Mind Matters	Interactive website providing you the opportunity to complete a short quiz which creates a Mind Plan of what you can do to improve your mental health. Please visit: Every Mind Matters
Psych Central	Run by mental health professionals offering reliable, trusted information to individuals struggling with a mental health. There is also an excellent quiz section allowing you to find out more about your symptoms and how to manage these. Please visit: PsychCentral for Mental Health
MIND	Information hub provides advice on how to support your mental wellbeing. Please visit: MIND Information Hub
SAMH	Hub of information and guidance about looking after mental health. Please visit: SAMH Guidance for Mental Health

Useful Apps:

	Mind Shift	Rather than trying to avoid anxious feelings, Mind Shift stresses the importance of changing how you think about anxiety. It can encourage you to take charge of your life, ride out intense emotions, and face challenging situations
	SAM	SAM might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behaviour over time and learn 25 different self-help techniques.
	Happify	Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts
	Headspace	The Headspace app makes meditation simple. Learn the skills of mindfulness and meditation by using this app for just a few minutes per day. You gain access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus.
	Calm	Calm provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music.
	Smiling Mind	Smiling mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. This is helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind.