

Battling OCD

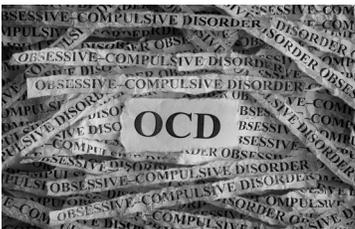
During COVID-19

COVID-19 has made many of us germaphobes, but if your anxiety has dramatically increased it is time to get the help you need.



If you have recovered from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder but are having a relapse of symptoms, or think you are experiencing symptoms now – here are a few CBT tips to help.

Knowing what OCD is

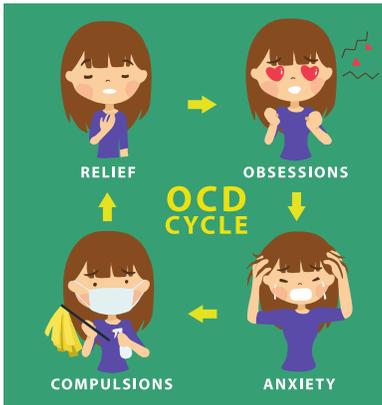


Many people have jokingly said “I have a bit of OCD”, perhaps when sharing they like things to be organized or neat and tidy. Those who have suffered from the real and emotionally painful symptoms of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, know all too well that it is much more than wanting to be neat and tidy.

More specifically, during a global pandemic, those who have suffered with OCD symptoms in the past may be reliving their worst moments of emotional suffering from previous times in their lives. Those who have not experienced OCD may now be experiencing an onset of these symptoms or mild to severe reactions to their new germ related thoughts.

During this time, it is especially important to protect your mental health and monitor if you are experiencing OCD symptoms. These would include:

- **Obsessive intrusive thoughts related to COVID-19 danger, threat or worries.** *Intrusive thoughts* are unwanted, repeated and highly anxiety producing thoughts or images. During COVID-19 these could include images or thoughts about getting the virus, you or loved ones becoming ill from the virus, repeated dreams or images from the media rehearsing in your mind of sick individuals, hospitals or other fears related to the virus. Important to note are:



Are these thoughts unwanted and repeated? Are these thoughts associated with high degrees of anxiety/stress?

- **Compulsions related to the obsessive thoughts include a behaviour or action paired with the obsessive thought that in the moment makes you feel better but becomes necessary for you to manage your anxiety and worries.** Compulsions can range from realistic safety-oriented tasks to less realistic but calming reassurance strategies. Examples might be: repeatedly washing hands, clothes, your body, or items (like groceries or things purchased).
- **Compulsions also come in the form of Checking and Reassurance Seeking.** Checking behaviours might be checking your or loved ones' temperatures, bodily symptoms, cleaning items, news announcements etc. Reassurance Seeking might include asking questions repeatedly of loved ones, regarding health and safety at work, repeatedly calling or contacting your doctor's office and other specialists to ask questions, or repeatedly checking online news and medical updates.

Tips to Overcome the Obsession Anxiety

1. **If you are already experiencing moderate to severe levels of anxiety (at or above a level of 6/10), contact a health or mental health professional for support.** You do not need to suffer in silence or alone and deserve to receive the support and care you need.
2. **Know what your compulsive behaviours are.** You will need to know what behaviours most follow your intrusive thoughts. After worrying do you engage in more handwashing? Checking? Panic buying? Some other behaviour? List your behaviours and tackle them one at a time.
3. **Limit the compulsive behaviour.** If you check the news or medical updates ten times a day, decide to begin limiting yourself towards eliminating the behaviour altogether or to what would be a typical number. For example, only check news three times a day for a few days, then once a day, then once a week. Begin containment of the behaviour and notice that as you do so your anxiety overall will decrease.
4. **Sit with the fear to face it and then let it go.** This technique is very effective but may require more help from a mental health specialist for you to master. With this you will gradually face the fears you have the most and face them until your anxiety decreases. An example might be, if you worry about contracting the virus from un-sanitized items coming in your home... you may want to sit outside a socially distanced amount away from an un-sanitized item and simply face it until your anxiety decreases at least half of what it was. Another example would be to only wash your hands one time and sit with your anxiety until it decreases to half, and not go wash your hands more. If you would like to tackle this more, contact a CBT specialist today or email us at Qualia Counselling Services for tips on how to do this in the most beneficial way.



Contributed by
Charity Fleming
Registered Social Worker &
Cognitive Behaviour
Therapist