

UNDERSTANDING OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

This pamphlet has been produced by Clyst Vale Community College's Counselling Service and is intended to provide useful information to a young person experiencing OCD. It is not a definitive guide.

An obsession is a thought that happens over and over again. It is often annoying and very difficult to stop thinking about. A compulsion is a piece of behaviour that a person feels they have to do again and again. Obsessive compulsive disorder is a condition that involves a person having a thought and acting on it over and over again, even if it interferes with their life, or makes their life a misery.

Do you have OCD?

OCD is not rare. Many people have OCD, as many as 1 person in 100. Often it is not easy to tell if a person has OCD, this can make getting help difficult.

The following questions may help you to decide if you have OCD or not.

- Do you have thoughts or habits that upset you?
- Do you have these for more than an hour a day?
- Do these thoughts and habits interfere with your life?

If the answer to all these questions is yes, then there is a chance you may have OCD. If this is true for you, please see the counsellors and we will be happy to offer our help.

OCD in families

There is evidence OCD can occur in families. This does not mean if a parent has OCD you will, but often if a young person has OCD someone else in the family may also have it. There is no evidence that OCD can be caught, like a cold, or is the result of how you are brought up. There may be a genetic link.

What causes OCD?

There is no clear cause of OCD. However, a combination of genetics and stress is thought to play an important role. There may also be an imbalance of chemicals in your brain.

Battling OCD

Overcoming OCD is going to be a battle. It's a battle you can win! Just starting to battle OCD is the start of getting better. You might want to think of OCD as being a piece of computer code that needs to be changed, but every time you try to re-write it, it pops up again. Each time you try to over write the programme you are taking a step in the right direction. It may take a while, but it really does help.

Beating OCD

OCD prefers to keep itself a secret. So sharing that you think you may have OCD with someone who can help is a good thing to do. Not giving in to the thoughts and behaviour is also a good way to fight OCD. This is best done with support from one of the counsellors.

OCD's weapons

OCD tends to control people through fear, worry and anxiety.

What OCD doesn't want you to know...

OCD seems to make you fear if you don't do what it wants you will feel very worried and anxious. But, the anxiety you feel when you don't give in to OCD doesn't actually last very long (perhaps an hour at most)! The counsellors can help you deal with your worrying and anxiety and this can help you fight OCD.

Seeing a doctor

If you think you have OCD see your doctor. Your doctor may decide to prescribe a medicine to help you fight OCD, to sort out any imbalance of chemicals in the brain.

Learning about *your* OCD

The more you can learn about *your* OCD, the easier it will be to fight it. You can start by making a list of all the things OCD makes you want to do, all the ways it tries to control you. Now, choose the best number out of 100 that relates to how stressed or worried you feel if you ignore OCD and write it down next to it.

An experiment to try...

Choose something from your list. The next time you start to feel the need to do it you are not going to give in. Have a watch or a clock with you. Write down the time your thoughts start, and a number out of 100 that matches how anxious you feel when you refuse to 'obey' your OCD. Ten minutes later check your feelings again and write the new number down next to the time.

Do this for about an hour.

Now, check your numbers. Look at the number you started with, and the number you ended with. Has it changed?

See! It goes away!

You have just won your first battle – well done.

Please see a counsellor before you try this test, they can help support you.

Useful websites:

<http://www.ocdyouth.info/default.aspx>

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>
(MIND)