

Trust Headquarters
Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust

Wayside House, Wilsons Lane, Coventry CV6 6NY

Tel: 024 7636 2100 Fax: 024 7636 8949

Written and Produced by Coventry CAMHS

Dr Lisa Summerhill, Child Clinical Psychologist

Jo Ranger, Social Worker

With special thanks to
the parents and young people of Coventry CAMHS
who helped us to develop these booklets

© 2010 Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust.
All rights reserved.

If you require this booklet in a different format
or language please contact the Equality and Diversity Department
on 024 7653 6802

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

A Young Person's Self Help Guide



Contents

About this booklet	2
What is OCD?	3
Obsessions	3
Compulsions	4
What Causes OCD?	5
You are Not Alone.....	6
Famous People with OCD.....	6
How to Treat OCD	7
1 Beating OCD – OCD is like a Bully	8
2 Beating OCD – Pink Elephant and the Wasp	9
3 Beating OCD – OCD Worry measure & Behaviour	10
4 Beating OCD – Being a Scientist	12
Experiment Table	13
5 Beating OCD – Garden of weeds	15
OCD – How can your Family help?	16
OCD – more info!	17

Do you sometimes feel worried, and then have to do something to make the worrying stop?

This booklet will help you to think about some of your worries, and explain how you can begin to stop feeling like you have to do something or act in a certain way to make the worry go away (stop the bad 'thing' from happening).

Reading this booklet will help you to.....

1. Understand what Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is
2. Describe how OCD makes you feel and act
3. Use some different ways to start to challenge your OCD
4. Help your family to understand OCD
5. All work together to beat OCD



What is OCD?

OCD is a problem related to anxiety (worry). There are two main parts of the problem, called **obsessions** and **compulsions**

What are obsessions and compulsions?

Obsessions are worrying thoughts or pictures that happen over and over again in your mind when you don't want them to (many things can cause them to happen). We all have unwanted thoughts but obsessions happen more frequently and cause you to feel very anxious. You can't control them and no matter how much you try to stop them you can't. They can sometimes get so bad that you might worry that you're going mad, **but you are not crazy.**

Some of the thoughts that you have might make you feel guilty or very responsible for things outside of your control.

Obsessions...

Below are just a few examples of some of the different types of worrying thoughts (obsessions) that some people have:

- Fear of contamination (germs)
- Fear that you might harm someone else
e.g. your mum/ dad/ sister/ brother/ friends
- Fear that a harmful event will happen.
e.g. the house being burgled, or being attacked
- Fear that you will be punished by God
- Fear of illness or death
- Unwanted sexual thoughts

Compulsions...

Below are just a few examples of the different types of actions/ behaviours (compulsions) that some people believe they have to do – your compulsions might change over time, although you are unlikely to develop all of the compulsions listed below:

- Hand washing
- Checking things are off or closed e.g. plug sockets/light switches/cookers/doors etc.
- Asking someone else e.g. mum all the time if everything is going to be okay
- Counting
- Re-writing and re-reading school work
- Repeating things e.g. words in your head, or certain activities e.g. walking in and out of the door
- Avoiding certain things

Compulsions are the behaviours (the things you do) to try to get rid of the worrying thoughts, or to try to prevent the bad things that you are worrying about from happening. You will find that you have to keep doing these things over and over again. They might make you feel better at first, but then the worry comes back and you think that you have to do it again. Sometimes it can get so bad it gets in the way of doing your normal activities, like school work, spending time with friends, or looking after yourself.

Many people with OCD feel that they can't control their worrying thoughts (obsessions) or change their behaviour (compulsions), which can feel frightening. Don't worry though – the first stage of beating OCD is realising you have it!

By reading this, you've already come a long way!

Everyone can experience obsessions and compulsions sometimes, but Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is when obsessions and compulsions interfere a lot with your life and prevent you from doing things that you enjoy.

What causes OCD?

We don't really know what causes OCD. However, some examples of possible triggers can be:

- Staying overnight away from home for the first time
- Exams
- Health problems
- Bereavement
- Bullying
- Change in family circumstances e.g. a parent or sibling leaving home, illness, problems with work or money (any change that results in loss or change in how the family works)

You are not alone

OCD happens in about 1.9 - 3% of the teenage population. This equals about one in every hundred teenagers, meaning there are probably several people in your school who have OCD. You may not see it because some people are able to hide their OCD at school.

Even famous people suffer from OCD. We did an internet search and found that the following celebrities were reported to have some OCD symptoms...

Famous People with OCD symptoms

• **Cameron Diaz**
Reportedly has to rub door knobs before opening them and opens doors with her elbows.

• **David Beckham**
Reportedly has to have everything in pairs and needs everything to be very clean.

• **Jessica Alba**
Reportedly also suffered from OCD when she was a young person.

• **Leonardo DiCaprio**
Reportedly has to try hard not to walk through the doorway several times before going through it.

• **Justin Timberlake**
Reportedly will only have certain foods in the house and has to have everything in a certain order.

How to treat OCD

The following pages give you some basic information that will help you to start to beat OCD. Once you have a diagnosis you should be referred for specialist help in beating OCD within your local Chid and Adolescent Mental Health Team Service (CAMHS). Don't panic that it mentions mental health in the title, **you are not going mad!**

The recommended treatment for OCD is something called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This looks at how we can help you to stop your upsetting thoughts, change how bad you feel and help you to stop doing your compulsions. This can be offered one-to-one with a worker from CAMHS or in a group for young people with OCD, where you can hear all about other people's experiences. Your parents will also need to work with you on this.

In some circumstances if things get so bad that it is very difficult for you to function and use CBT, you may be offered the choice of starting on some medication. This would help you to reduce how anxious you feel and make it easier for you to use CBT.

Your appointments would normally be an hour long and we will always do our best to offer appointment times that don't affect your school life too much.

1. Beating OCD

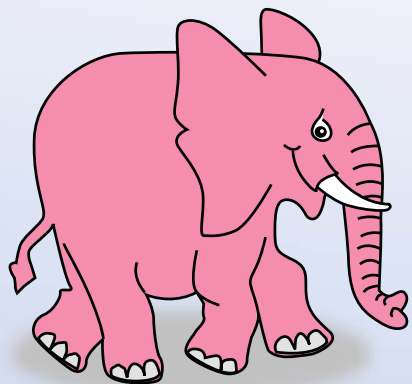
OCD is very secretive and does not like to be talked about
SO the best way to start to beat OCD is to go against it and talk about it!

OCD is Like a bully!

It is important not to give into it!

Sometimes when things get really difficult it might be hard to see that it's OCD and not you doing these things. A way to help see it as OCD's fault is to give OCD a nickname and call it by that name when you're talking about it e.g. "worry wart told me something bad might happen if I don't wash my hands".

It may be difficult to talk to others about the thoughts and behaviours that you have because you may feel embarrassed. However, the more that you talk about OCD the braver you will become. Make sure you tell people who you trust and are comfortable with because some people may not understand. The more people that help you the faster you will beat OCD.



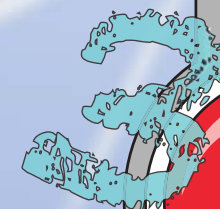
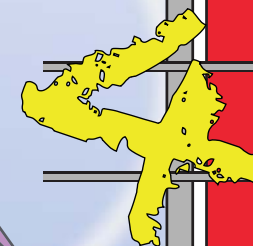
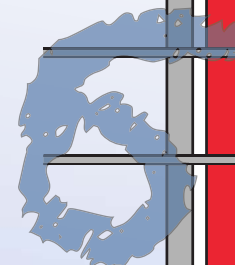
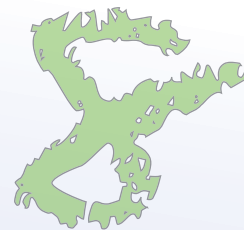
2. Beating OCD

Everyone has strange thoughts, and the more you fight them the more they stay! For example if we tell you not to think about a **PINK ELEPHANT**, what do you think about?

That's right you think about what you're not supposed to think about!

OCD is like a wasp; if you try to fight the wasp away it will keep coming back. So to get rid of the wasp you must let it buzz around, stay calm and eventually it will get bored and leave.

SO.....if you get worrying thoughts – just let them buzz around and eventually they will leave (don't try and force them out of your mind).



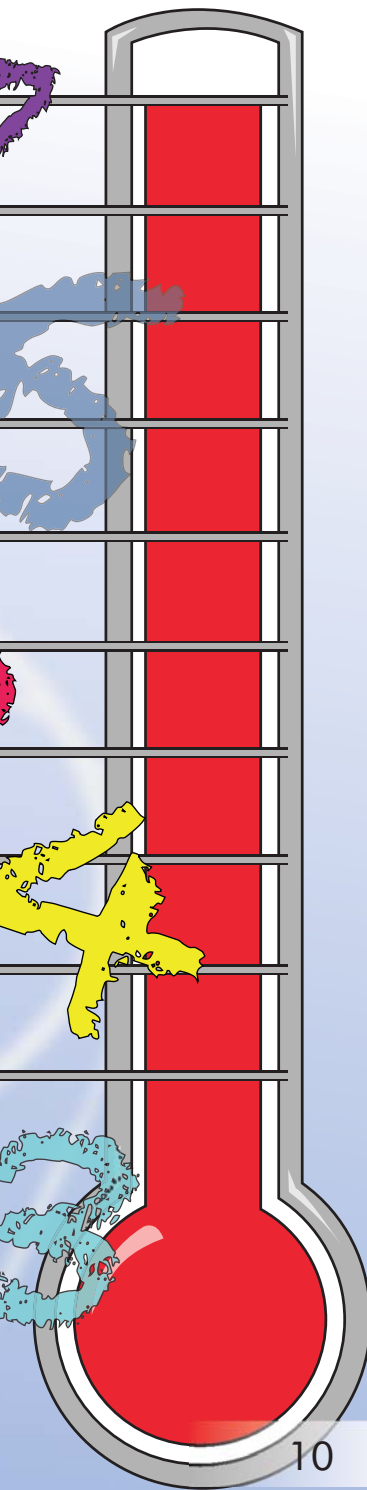
3. Beating OCD

OCD Works like a Worry Measure.

A thought pops into your mind and the worry starts to grow.

The worry may go up to a number **10**.

You may feel you need to do your behaviour (compulsion) to make the worry go away. This makes the worry shoot back down; it may go to **zero**.





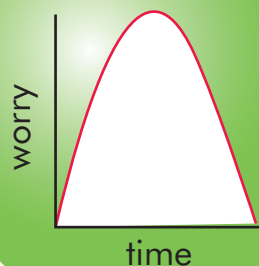
BUT.....The next time the worry comes back it comes back **BIGGER**, so that you need to do the same behaviour again!

The behaviour becomes addictive!

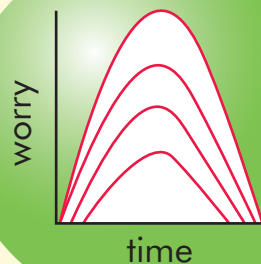
If you can stop yourself from doing the behaviour then you will be able to start to fight back against OCD!

So.....

The next time you feel worried and can stop yourself from doing the behaviour – the worry will go up as before. It may go higher than normal the first time you try it, but it does come back down over time.



Don't forget to practise!



Each time you **PRACTISE** ignoring the worry and stop yourself from doing the behaviour – the worry will get **SMALLER** and take less time to go away!

4. Beating OCD

Being a SCIENTIST!

You might feel you can't stop your behaviours as we've advised, because something bad might happen and you can't take that risk.

This is where being a Scientist is helpful! Try the experiment below...

THEORY A - something bad might happen if I don't do my OCD behaviours

THEORY B - nothing bad is going to happen - I am worrying **TOO** much. The way to test out your theories is to **NOT** do your behaviour and see what happens!

You can use the example table on the next page to put the results of your experiments in:



THEORY A	THEORY B	EXPERIMENT	OUTCOME	WORRY (0-10) 0 = No worry and 10 = worst ever worry	
				BEFORE EXPERIMENT	AFTER EXPERIMENT
If I don't text my mum throughout the day something bad will happen to her	Nothing bad will happen if I don't text, I'm worrying too much	Not texting for one day	Nothing bad happened	10	4

5. Beating OCD

Just like weeds, unless
you get rid of all your
compulsions, they
eventually grow back.

We know it's hard, but you need to try, over time, to get rid of all of your compulsions so that OCD cannot grow back!

Try and make a list of all of your compulsions with the easiest one to stop at the bottom of the list and the hardest one to stop at the top.

When you have your list, try to work through each compulsion, starting with the easiest, doing the experiment to stop the behaviour until you have been able to stop doing all of them.

You may need to get a parent to help you decide how to tackle your compulsions. And remember, when the bad thing didn't happen, you'll need to change how you think about it.

When you try to do this, OCD may try to create new compulsions. If this happens try to stop the new ones as soon as they start so you will have fewer compulsions to try and stop.

OCD - How can your Family help?



1. Ask your family to help you by NOT saying or doing things that make you feel better e.g. ask them to stop telling you that you are going to be okay. Although this may feel cruel for them to do, it means they are helping you to get rid of all the OCD weeds! (Remember the worry thermometer).
2. It may help if your family agrees a plan with you when you start fighting OCD to have some days when they answer you and some days when they don't and gradually increase the number of days when they don't tell you things to make you feel better. Before you know it you will have managed a whole week, then a month and a year.....
3. Ask your family to praise you for not carrying out the compulsion that you are trying to stop.
4. Remember OCD likes to be kept a secret – so keep talking to your family about it so it CAN'T hide! This is really important to stop OCD from creating new compulsions and trying to hide them from your family, which is what OCD will try to do.

OCD - More Info!

There are some great websites that you can look at to find out more information and read other young people's stories about OCD...

www.ocdyouth.info • www.ocduk.org

...and there are some good books that you could read too!



Up and Down The Worry Hill.
Aureen Pinto Wagner (2004)
Lighthouse Press, ISBN
0967734762



Worried No More: Help and Hope
for Anxious Children (Plastic Comb)
by Aureen Pinto Wagner, 2002,
Lighthouse Press, ISBN-10:
0967734738



The OCD Workbook:
Your Guide to
Breaking Free from
Obsessive-compulsive
Disorder by Cherry
Pedrick, 2000, New
Harbinger Publications,
ISBN-10: 1572241691

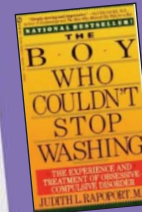
Mr. Worry: A Story
about OCD by Holly L.
Niner (Author), Greg
Swearingen (Illustrator)
(2004) Albert Whitman
& Company, ISBN-13:
978-0807551820



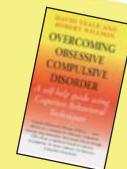
Touch and Go Joe. Joe
Wells (2006) Jessica
Kingsley Publishers, ISBN
1843103915 (An honest
account of an adolescent
boy's journey to
overcome his OCD)



The Secret Problem by Chris
Weaver. Published by Shrink-Rap
Press, USA (Excellent cartoon-based
book for young people)



The Boy Who Couldn't
Stop Washing: The
Experience and
Treatment of Obsessive-
Compulsive Disorder by
Judith L., M.D. Rapoport,
1997, Signet Book;
Reissue edition, ISBN-
10: 0451172027



Overcoming Obsessive Compulsive
Disorder. David Veale (2005)
Constable and Robinson, ISBN
1841199362 (For older adolescents
and adults)