

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

FACT SHEET



Did you know that Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Is a brain disorder that causes intense anxiety? Persons with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder often have continuous, upsetting thoughts (obsessions) and use repetitive behaviors (compulsions) to prevent the obsessive thoughts or try to make them go away. The compulsive behaviors provide only temporary relief.

Could be caused by

- A family history of the disorder
- An imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain

Quick tips for helping people with these symptoms of Mental Illness

- Always acknowledge what the person is saying. Do not discount their emotions. On the other hand, do not enter into a “therapy session.” Keep the boundaries firm and the purpose of the conversation clear for persons who are anxious and continually repeating sentences or words.
- Help focus the person on the topic of the counseling session. (If it is possible), try to gently bring the topic of conversation back to the purpose of the counseling session if a person is distracted and talking about another topic.
- Find a quiet room to talk with the person who may be easily distracted, anxious, has difficulty speaking, and has impaired attention.
- Try to understand the feelings of others and be patient, speak slowly and clearly for persons who are easily distracted and not concentrating. Speak in a calm and positive tone to decrease anxiety.
- Convey interest and concern towards the person. Reassure the person that you are there to help and you care. You could say, “You are not alone in this. I am here for you.”
- When explaining complex topics, speak in short, simple and logical sentences. For example, use concise and concrete words and introduce one topic at a time if the person is easily distracted, repeating sentences or words, anxious and has impaired attention.
- Write down important facts in logical order and repeat important facts to the person. Give the person a list of the important facts that were discussed and the decisions that were made.
- To conclude, summarize what you discussed with the person during the session. Ask if there are questions. If there are no questions, gently but firmly tell the person the session is ended. You can also stand up as a signal to the beneficiary that the session is ended.



Symptoms

Obsessive Behavior – Persistent thoughts and feelings

- Fear of getting germs by shaking hands or by touching objects others have touched
- Doubting that he or she has locked the door when away from home
- Feeling distressed when objects are not orderly, lined up properly or facing the right way

Compulsive Behavior – Repetitive actions

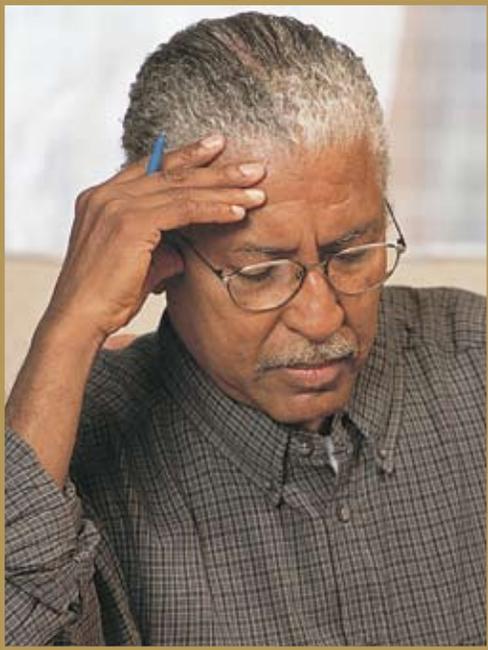
- Washing hands until the skin becomes raw
- Checking doors repeatedly to make sure they are locked
- Continually picking at skin
- Continually rocking
- Repeating sentences or words when talking
- Counting in certain patterns and changing objects to be lined up in orderly way



Additional tips for helping people with symptoms of Mental Illness

If the person is starting to exhibit unusual behavior (such as, continually getting up to go to the bathroom or picking at his/her skin) speak softly and calmly. Reassure the person that together you can work through the issues. If the person does not stop the unusual behavior or threatens to take his/her life or hurt him/herself or others do the following:

- Use your own judgment regarding your personal safety.
- Stop the session using established protocol your office has developed. You can call your supervisor immediately without alarming the person.
- Give some distance between the person and yourself.
- Do not leave the person alone until someone has arrived in the room.
- Do not criticize or threaten the person.



Resources

Web Sources:

- Obsessive Compulsive Foundations webpage - www.ocfoundation.org
- The National Institute of Mental Health - www.nimh.nih.gov
- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) - www.nami.org

Articles:

- Obsessive-Compulsive disorder - www.mayoclinic.com
- Obsessive-Compulsive disorder tips - www.mdguide.net

Publications:

- Medical News Today - www.medicalnewstoday.com
- eMedicineHealth - www.emedicinehealth.com
- Medline Plus - <http://medlineplus.gov>