

A description of obsessive- compulsive disorder



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Obsessive-compulsive disorder is defined as a type of anxiety disorder that contains two different categories. The first of the two categories is having unreasonable thoughts and fears, phobias, or obsessions. These lead to repetitive behaviors, also known as compulsions, which are the second category. A person has to fall into at least one of the two categories, both categories do not have to be present, to be considered for OCD testing and diagnosis. Other than having obsessions or compulsions there are two other general criteria that one must meet before a diagnosis can be made.

These criteria are realizing how excessive or unreasonable your obsessions or compulsions are, and how they interfere with your everyday life. These are the criteria set out in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association, which are necessary for a diagnosis of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Aside from the general criteria, there are several specific sub-criteria in each of the categories that one must meet as well. Let's start with the obsessions. First, stress causing and intrusive impulses or images, recurrent and persistent thoughts.

Second, suppressing or hiding from these thoughts, images, or impulses. Third, these thoughts are not worries about real problems in your life. Fourth, knowing that your mind produces these thoughts, images, and impulses. Compulsions have only two specific criteria to be met. First is the repetitive behavior such as hand washing to an extreme by washing over and over to the point the skin is raw. Repetitive mental acts, for example checking to see if you turned off the stove, are along the same lines as counting silently and are the second criteria for compulsions.

Many people may think they meet the criteria for OCD, but that is what makes diagnosing this disorder so difficult. There is a fine line between wanting your belongings to look nice or being a perfectionist, and keeping things spotless, but it is another to get down on your hands and knees to scrub the coating off of your hardwood floors because you are stressed out over the thought that there may be dirt in the cracks. The symptoms are also similar to depression, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorder among other disorders so even if you think you have the symptoms of OCD, it may be something different.

There are five main types of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder that commonly appear in sufferers. Washers and cleaners, or germaphobics, are described as people who have contamination obsessions. These obsessions can lead to many precautions such as, repetitive hand washing, showering, and clothes washing. It is also the cause of repetitive house cleaning. A person with this type feels that no matter how many times they perform these actions they just can't get rid of the germs. This type of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder has become more widely known or accepted by the mainstream public because of the sitcom, " Monk".

The main character of this sitcom brings a humorous light to a serious condition and is actually educating the public in the process. " Oh no! I forgot to turn the stove off! Did I lock the door? " These are just a few things people with the OCD checkers live with and fear every moment of their lives. Fear of leaving windows or doors unlocked, or not turning off an appliance causes fear that their actions may harm themselves or others, so they are constantly checking on these items. A lot of people walk out of their home

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thinking they forgot to turn something off, but individuals who suffer from this type of OCD do so to an extreme.

Checking to make sure the iron or the lights are off becomes such a problem that they eventually cannot even hold a job or function in “ normal” society. When you think of OCD you think of being afraid to get dirty, constantly washing yourself, and always making sure your house is totally spotless, but did you know that hoarding is a type of OCD? A hoarder will collect items that most people would consider garbage. If you think about it, collecting a lot of junk and cluttering your dwelling with these useless things is not something you typically relate with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Hoarders will collect more useless things than they will be able to use in their lifetime, and in many cases this causes hazardous or chaotic living conditions. An example of this might be collecting the daily newspaper to the point that a person is physically unable to walk in their own home. Another example of hoarding, although not as common as other types, is when people hoard animals. They may believe they are actually rescuing the animals or giving them a better life, but in reality they are just taking them out of one bad situation and putting them into a worse situation.

Just the total opposite of hoarding, ordering is another type of OCD. Ordering is exactly what you think it is, but on a more intense scale. Orderers not only make sure things are in a certain place or spot, but they must have everything perfect. They do things like facing all of their canned food labels outward and placing them in alphabetical order. Everything must be perfectly placed and in order or they are not satisfied and cannot function or

even think straight until this is done. The last type of OCD to cover is obsesessers.

Obsesessers are different from the previously described categories because they rarely show any outward signs of the disorder. Their problems are focused on thoughts of them causing harm to others. As stated earlier, they do not show the outward signs, but have repetitive mental thoughts and images. An example of an Obsesesser would be actually visualizing harming your family in a traffic accident to the point that the person was unable to drive, being worried about leaving a door to the house unlocked, or a mother being terrified of harming her child.

These mental worries are so intrusive and intense that they could cause other phobias and the person would end up unable to leave their own home or a mother who is too scared to give her child medicine. Now that we have discussed the divisions and symptoms, we can talk about obtaining a diagnosis, getting treatment and the types of treatment. The first step of being diagnosed with OCD is seeing your family physician. Typically he or she will run the standard tests such as taking your vital signs and taking blood samples to rule out any other problems.

After these tests come back normal, your doctor would refer you to a mental health provider for a psychological evaluation. Getting the correct diagnosis of OCD is fairly difficult because of its similarities to other psychiatric disorders like depression or anxiety. Once a patient receives a diagnosis of OCD, while there is no end-all cure, there are several treatment options for sufferers. One type of treatment option is cognitive behavioral therapy

(CBT). CBT combines the willpower of retraining the patient's thoughts with typical "talk therapy".

This therapy would consist of a patient recognizing when he or she is exhibiting OCD thoughts or actions and stepping back to regroup themselves. Another part of CBT is exposure therapy. Exposure therapy is exactly what it seems. This is exposing the patient to what they fear the most. For example, a washer/cleaner would be exposed to touching a bathroom floor or a dirty dish. A checker might be exposed to having to walk away from a door without checking to make sure it was locked. Another type of treatment for OCD is medication. When using medication to attempt to control OCD behaviors, treatment is typically a "try it and see" approach.

A person may have to try several different medications before any improvement is seen in their obsessive or compulsive behaviors. Most of the medications used to treat OCD are antidepressants such as Prozac, Paxil and Zoloft. Medications are used to try and reign in the symptoms of the disorder. Some of the lesser used treatment options for OCD are hospitalization, shock therapy, and deep brain stimulation. In conclusion, while OCD is a very interesting disorder, it is also very disruptive to the lives of people who suffer from the condition.

For people who are afflicted with the condition, no matter how severe their symptoms are there are several support options such as support groups, finding ways to relax and manage stressful situations, and staying focused on a daily schedule. Several television shows such as "Monk" and "Hoarders" have brought new light to this disorder and hopefully more

understanding from the general public. People who suffer from OCD do not ask for their condition and cannot be cured. However, they can learn to cope with daily life and still have some type of a normal existence.

Works Cited

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