

Ordinary Magic

OCD

Fact Sheet and Top Tips

Compulsions

Compulsions are things you think about or do repeatedly to relieve the anxiety from your obsessive thoughts. You might believe that you, or someone close to you, might come to harm if you don't do these things. You may realise that your thinking and behaviour isn't logical but still find it difficult to stop. When you carry out a compulsion, your relief usually doesn't last long. This makes your original obsession stronger. You may then feel you need to carry out your compulsion again to feel better.

Examples of compulsions can be:

- Checking things repeatedly - for example, whether an appliance has been switched off.
- Washing or cleaning excessively,
- Carrying something out in a particular order, in a repeated pattern or a certain number of times or
- Counting to a particular number, carrying out an act in a certain way to ensure the number of actions match up each time or going through a standard sequence of numbers, repeatedly.
- Fear of contamination. This means you might constantly feel the need to make sure that something is clean and free from germs or dirt.
- The compulsive need to hoard. Hoarding is where you find it difficult to get rid of items in your home even when space is becoming limited. Or when most people would see the items as not being useful. You may find that you buy, collect and store items even when you don't need them.

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What is it ?

OCD stands for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. When living with OCD you will have obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. These are categorised as a disorder when they become time-consuming (occur for more than 1 hour per day), interfere in your day to day life and cause your anxiety or distress.

Obsessive Thoughts

An obsessive thought is a thought or image that repeatedly comes into your head. These thoughts are unwanted, and you can't control them. They can be hard to ignore. You may not want these thoughts and they can be upsetting. They can make you feel distressed, anxious or guilty.

Examples of obsessions can be:

- Significant concern that you, or something like your food, might be contaminated.
- Fear that something bad might happen if things are not in order or symmetrical.
- Being worried about harm coming to yourself or other people.
- Sexually disturbing images or thoughts.
- Religious beliefs – focusing on the importance and significance of religion and religious matters.
- Relationships – obsessive thinking about your relationship, your sexuality, your partner, or that your relationship will end.
- Magical thoughts – these are thoughts that if you do certain things you will stop bad things from happening. Or that imagining bad events will increase the possibility they will happen.
- Violent thoughts – thoughts of being violent to a loved one or other people.



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What Causes OCD

There isn't one exact reason why someone may develop OCD, but the following things could all play a part on why a person may develop OCD:

Personal experience

Personality

Biology

OCD until recently was listed as an anxiety disorder. Most recently however this has been changed as medical professionals are learning more about the disorder, Research now suggests that there is a stronger link to biological changes being the cause of OCD.

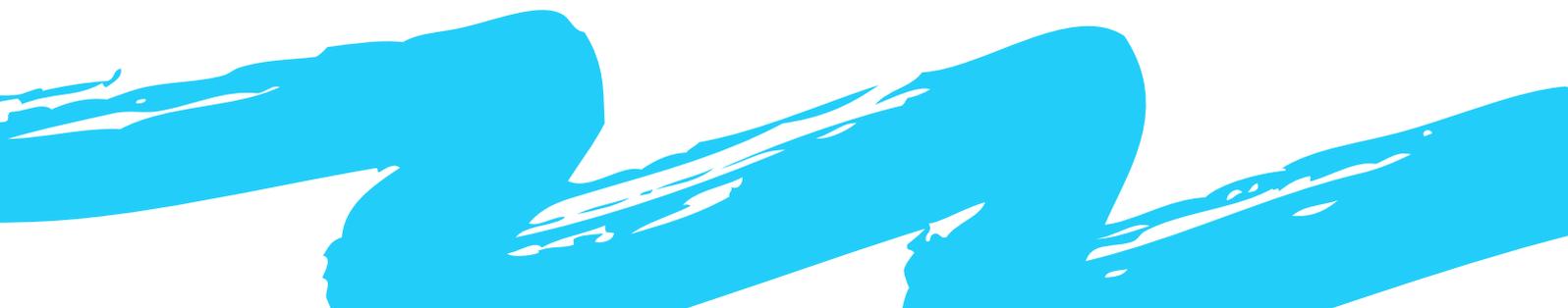
How is OCD Treated

The ways OCD is normally treated is by:

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

Exposure and response prevention (ERP)

Medication



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Treatment Options

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

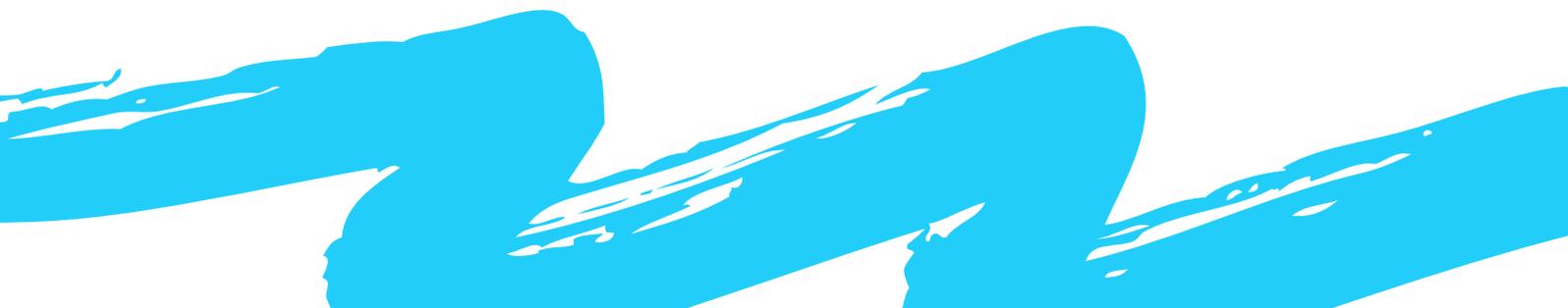
CBT is a type of a talking treatment which focuses on how your thoughts, beliefs and attitudes affect your feelings and behaviour. CBT teaches you coping skills when dealing with different problems. It combines cognitive therapy (examining the things you think) and behaviour therapy (examining the things you do). In CBT you work with a therapist to identify and challenge and negative thinking patterns and behaviour which may be causing you difficulties. For OCD this may be working with your obsessions and compulsions to help you change the way you feel about situations and enable you to change the way you respond so that it does not have such a negative impact on your life.

Exposure and response prevention (ERP)

ERP is specifically designed for OCD. It encourages you to confront your obsession and resist the urge to carry out compulsions. During ERP, your therapist will support you to place yourself in a situation that would usually stimulate compulsive behaviours. Instead of performing your usual compulsion you will be supported and encouraged to try to tolerate the anxiety the obsessions and compulsions create. This type of therapy can be challenging and make you feel a lot more anxious at first but over time it has been proven to be effective in treating OCD.

Medication

The main type of medication that your doctor or psychiatrist may offer you is a type of antidepressant called SSRI. SSRI stands for selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor. The main types of SSRIs doctors use for OCD are fluoxetine, Fluvoxamine, Paroxetine and Citalopram. If SSRIs doesn't work doctors may offer a different drug treatment such as Clomipramine which is a Tricyclic antidepressant.



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Care and Support

Self-care

Obsessions and compulsions can take over your life and make you feel hopeless however there are some things you can try to help manage your OCD and improve your wellbeing. Different things work for different people, so some of these may not work for you and others will.

1. Build a support network

A lot of people find it hard to talk about OCD. You might worry that the people around you won't understand but strengthening the relationships around you may help you feel less lonely and more able to cope. If you don't feel ready to talk openly about your OCD yet, spending time with friends and family may help you feel less alone and more comfortable around them.

2. Try peer support

Making connections with people that have similar or shared experiences can be really helpful and make you feel less alone. For example, you could contact Mind's Infoline or local mind to see what support there is in your area or try an online peer support community such as Elefriends or OCD action's online forums.

3. Look after your physical health

- a. Get enough sleep – sleep can give you the energy to cope with the difficult feelings and experiences
- b. Think about your diet – eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
- c. Try to do some physical activity – activities such as yoga, swimming and walking can help improve your mood.



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Useful Resources

OCD-UK

Supports children and adults with OCD. Their phone line is staffed by volunteers and may not always be answered but if not, they advise you to email.

Phone: 03332 127 890

Email via website: www.ocduk.org/contact-us

Website: www.ocduk.org

OCD Action

National charity focusing on OCD.

Phone: 0845 390 6232

Email: support@ocdaction.org.uk

Website: www.ocdaction.org.uk

Triumph Over Phobia (TOP UK)

A UK registered

charity which aims to help people who experience phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder and other related anxiety. They do this by running a network of self-help therapy groups.

Phone: 01225 571740

Email: info@topuk.org

Website: www.topuk.org

