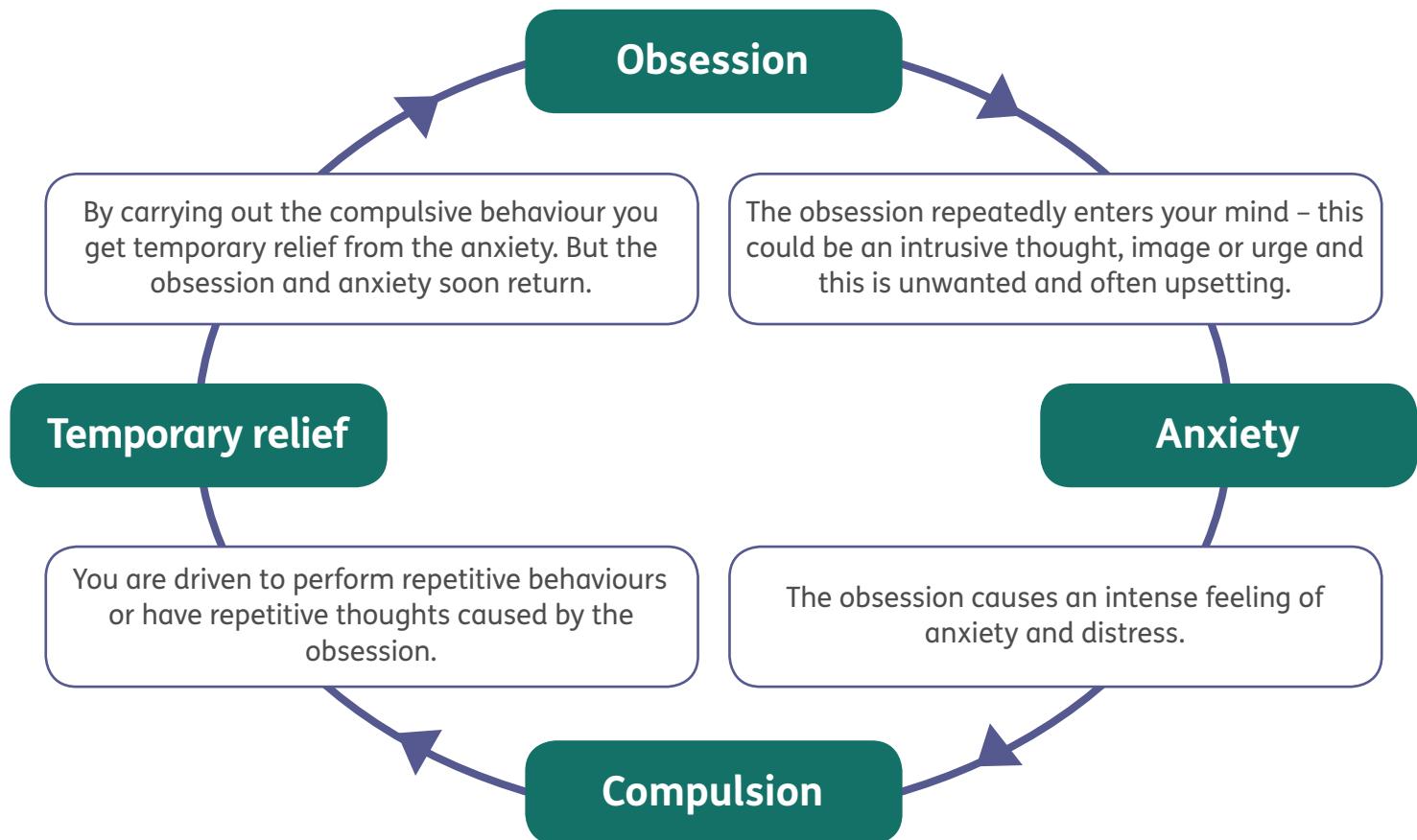


Disability awareness

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD is one of several conditions that come under the umbrella term of Anxiety Disorders. Although it affects people in many ways there is likely be a similar pattern of thought and behaviour.



Obsessive thoughts are persistent, unwelcome and often unpleasant which dominate your thinking. Some common obsessions that affect people with OCD include:

- ◎ Fear you may do something violent or deliberately harm yourself or others eg. lose your temper and lash out
- ◎ Fear you may accidentally harm yourself or others eg. setting the house on fire by accidentally leaving the cooker on
- ◎ Fear of being contaminated by disease or an unpleasant substance
- ◎ Fear that something bad will happen if things are not right – clean, in order or symmetrical eg. all the labels on the tins in your cupboard face the same way.

People may be very uncomfortable about sharing their obsessive thoughts especially if they are disturbing. Obsessions can be completely unrelated to the person's real beliefs and character and there is no evidence that people will ever carry out their obsession.

Compulsions come about as a way of managing the obsessive thought or stopping the harm it might cause. People feel that if they do not carry out the compulsion something bad will happen. This behaviour often becomes excessive (such as repeated hand washing) or develops so it doesn't seem connected at all to original obsession. Most people with OCD realise that such compulsive behaviour is irrational and makes no logical sense, but they cannot stop acting on their compulsion.

Compulsions can be physical actions or mental rituals such as:

Rituals

- ◎ Cleaning repeatedly
- ◎ Washing your hands or body
- ◎ Touching things in a particular order or at a certain time
- ◎ Arranging objects in a particular way.

Correcting thoughts

- ◎ Repeating a word, name or phrase in your head or out loud
- ◎ Counting to a certain number
- ◎ Replacing an intrusive thought with a different image.

Checking

- ◎ Doors and windows to make sure they are locked
- ◎ Your body or clothes for contamination
- ◎ Your memory to make sure an intrusive thought didn't actually happen
- ◎ Your route to work to make sure you didn't cause an accident.

Other

- ◎ Repeatedly asking other people to tell you that everything is alright
- ◎ Avoiding activities, objects or experiences which make your obsessions or compulsions worse
- ◎ Hoarding - a need to keep items others would throw away.

Effects on daily life

Sometimes obsessions and compulsions are manageable but sometimes, particularly when people are stressed they become intrusive and difficult to live with. Below are some of the effects:

- ◎ Repeating compulsions can take up a lot of time
- ◎ Avoiding trigger places and situations
- ◎ Trouble concentrating
- ◎ Exhaustion from the obsessive thoughts and/or related compulsions
- ◎ Difficulty getting close to people as you feel you have to hide your OCD
- ◎ Loneliness and social isolation
- ◎ Doubts and anxieties about relationships
- ◎ Feeling ashamed about your obsessive thoughts
- ◎ Impact of anxiety on physical health.

Contact us:

If you would like further information on how we can help you, please get in touch with us:

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