

SEND Bulletin NO. 16

OCD - Obsessive Compulsive Disorders

About one in fifty people suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) at some time in their life and it affects males and females alike. OCD is characterised by three main parts:

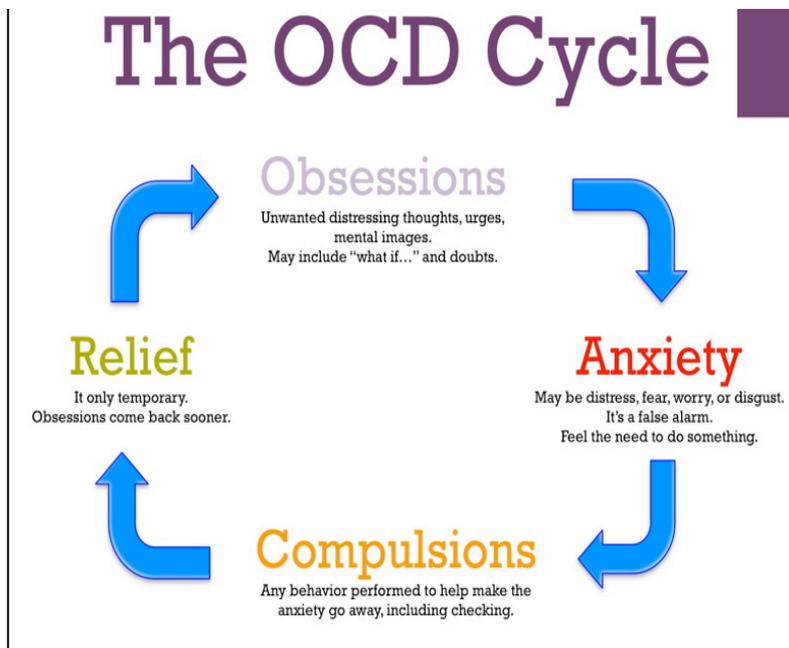
- Obsessions - thoughts that make you anxious
- Anxiety - the way you feel
- Compulsions - the rituals you need to go through to help reduce your anxiety.

Although younger pupils may have mild compulsions, it is in the teens and 20s when adult OCD is more likely to begin. The condition may run in the family. It can sometimes be brought on by stress, life changes, or changes in brain function. People who are neat and meticulous may be more likely to develop OCD. Treatment is usually a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and medication, depending on the severity of the condition.

Key characteristics

A young person with OCD may:

- have intense fears of dirt and diseases
- feel the need to wash frequently
- have anxieties about actions or non-actions that could cause harm (causing a road accident, leaving gas on, etc.)
- have thoughts of violence affecting friends and family



- need to have things in the 'right' place and in the 'right' order
- often feel guilty, tense, fearful, depressed
- need to perform certain rituals before going anywhere or doing anything
- avoid certain places that have elements of perceived danger
- need constant reassurance that all is well.

Support strategies

You may need to:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the characteristics of OCD
- check with parents and young people that they are actively seeking help
- liaise regularly with parents and professionals who are supporting pupils
- follow guidelines and support strategies suggested by professionals (these should be drawn up for each individual)
- ensure that there is a trusted adult available to deal with any difficulties
- provide learning environments and opportunities that allow students to come to terms with their anxieties gradually.

Support agencies

- Anxiety Care: www.anxietycare.org.uk
- Anxiety Disorders Association of America: www.adaa.org
- No Panic: www.nopanic.org.uk
- OCD UK: www.ocduk.org

If you have any interesting information or resources which you would like to share with your colleagues via this fortnightly bulletin, please e-mail them to me:

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Many thanks

Anne