

HELP FOR OCD

DURING COVID-19
SUPPORT FOR TEENAGERS



Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) has two main parts: obsessions and compulsions.

Obsessions are unwelcome thoughts, images, urges, worries or doubts that repeatedly appear in your mind. They can make you feel very anxious (although some people describe it as 'mental discomfort' rather than anxiety).

Compulsions are repetitive activities that you do to reduce the anxiety caused by the obsession. It could be something like repeatedly checking a door is locked, repeating a specific phrase in your head or checking how your body feels.



You might find that sometimes your obsessions and compulsions are manageable, and at other times they may make your day-to-day life really difficult. They may be more severe when you are stressed about other things, like life changes, health, money, work or relationships.

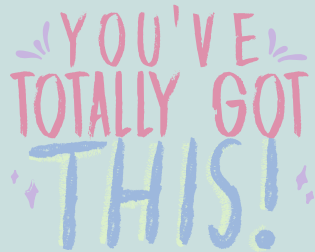
This workbook aims to help you to:

Recognise whether you may be experiencing obsessions and compulsions. Understand what obsessions and compulsions are, what causes them and what keeps them going.

What are obsessions

Obsessions are persistent thoughts, pictures, urges or doubts that appear in your mind again and again. They interrupt your thoughts against your control, and can be really frightening, graphic and disturbing. They may make you feel anxious, disgusted or uncomfortable.

You might feel you can't share them with others or that there is something wrong with you that you have to hide. You might feel upset that you are capable of having such thoughts.



Remember: obsessions are not a reflection of your personality. People with OCD are very unlikely to act on their thoughts.

What are compulsions?

Compulsions are repetitive activities that you feel you have to do. The aim of a compulsion is to try and deal with the distress caused by obsessive thoughts.

You might have to continue doing the compulsion until the anxiety goes away and things feel right again. You might know that it doesn't make sense to carry out a compulsion - but it can still feel too scary not to.

Repeating compulsions is often very time-consuming and the relief they give you doesn't usually last very long.

Compulsions can:

- be physical actions
- be mental rituals (people who only have mental compulsions sometimes refer to their OCD as Pure O)
- involve a number (for example, you might feel you have to complete a compulsion a specific number of times without interruption).

OCD and COVID-19

OCD impacts on people in many shapes and guises, from obsessive fears around germs and contamination to unwanted and distressing intrusive thoughts about harming a loved one. The present global public health crisis around coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to a number of additional worries for those affected by Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. This is a list of some of the main areas of concerns you may be having:

- Contamination fears leading to additional washing/cleaning
- Intrusive thoughts around passing virus on to loved ones / elderly
- Harm related obsessions such as; 'Have I been careless? Does this mean I secretly want people to die?'
- Increase in health anxiety/worrying about being more vulnerable
- Worries about not being able to do exercise for mental well-being if isolated

It's important to highlight that all of the above are normal worries that will cause anxiety for many people even for those without OCD, but of course for people with OCD everyday normal worries can create additional anxiety and anguish.

OCD and Coronavirus Survival Tips

Because of the increased media coverage, much of which is unhelpful, we wanted to share some practical suggestions to help you cope and survive the ongoing situation. Our survival tips are to help you differentiate between the recommended public health advice for this virus and OCD induced behaviours, but also to help you combine therapeutic steps whilst engaging in these recommended behaviours.



20 seconds, and not a second longer!

The advice from health professionals is to be careful not to touch our face and regularly wash our hands for 20 seconds. We know that this gives the OCD monster the perfect motive to come crashing in and try to disrupt all the hard work you have put in during recovery. So here's where you can still stay in control of the bully. You must **ONLY** wash your hands as frequently as the health professionals tell you to, and only for 20 seconds. We know all too well how it feels to hear that bully voice in your brain saying, 'just one more time' or 'just a few seconds longer'. Before we know it, its escalated to five times, 5 minutes per time. Remember the limits and stick to them... you **CAN** do this.

OCD and Coronavirus Survival Tips



Be kind to yourself

Despite our suggestion above, there will be times when OCD gets the better of us. So if 20 seconds does become 30 or even 60 seconds occasionally, don't beat yourself up. It's vitally important that we remember to be kind to ourselves by showing ourselves the same compassion we show to others. Be honest with yourself (about the OCD work needed), but be compassionate. Have your targets (i.e. 20 seconds), aim for them, but don't beat yourself up for the occasional miss.



Don't allow OCD to self-diagnose

This is where it gets tricky for OCD sufferers, because as we know all too well OCD likes to play tricks on us. It is no secret that when someone with OCD is fixating on an obsession, it can cause physical sensations in the body. You might notice harmless physical sensations, worry what they are and before we know it, we are panicked. That inevitably causes shortness of breath which convinces us we have coronavirus.

OCD and Coronavirus Survival Tips



Limit yourself to time spent on social media

We are all guilty of it. Whenever you get a spare second you flick through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. However, at the moment there's more scaremongering than ever. The general media are also not helping, they are desperately relying on clickbait to sell headlines and it's working. Limit yourself on how long you spend on social media, delete notifications if you need to and focus on the real facts.

Information can be (non-OCD) reassuring provided it's rooted in facts. Educate yourselves with real factual evidence and ignore articles with fake news. Good examples for factual information are gov.uk, NHS and the BBC News.

OCD and Coronavirus Survival Tips

You can still....

Social media and the newspapers are full of what you can't do, so it may be helpful to remember what is still possible, even if you have to self-isolate.



You can still: Listen to your favourite music

You can still: Talk and Skype family and friends



You can still: Read your favourite book/s

You can still: Enjoy the outdoors, even if it's your own garden
in the short term



You can still: Sing or dance at home (even if both are best
behind closed doors!)

You can still: Smile and laugh (don't let OCD stop either, it
will try, we don't have to let it stop us smiling or laughing)

You can still: Watch your favourite TV or films (we
recommend the fun, laugh out loud variety!)



You can still: Have HOPE for a life without OCD (even if that
comes after this public health crisis)

1. Stay connected with people

Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important for our mental wellbeing, so think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family while needing to stay at home.

2. Talk about your worries

It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too.

3. Support and help others

Helping someone else can benefit you as well as them, so try to be a little more understanding of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours at this time.

4. Look after your body

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking or drugs, and try not to drink too much alcohol.

You can leave your house, alone or with members of your household, for 1 form of exercise a day – like a walk, run or bike ride. But ensure you keep a safe 2-metre distance from others. Or you could try one of our easy 10-minute home workouts.

5. Stick to the facts

Find a credible source you can trust – such as GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.

6. Stay on top of difficult feelings

Concern about the coronavirus outbreak is perfectly normal. However, some people may experience intense anxiety that can affect their daily life.

Try to focus on the things you can control, such as your behaviour, who you speak to, and where and how often you get information.

7. Do things you enjoy

If we are feeling worried, anxious or low, we might stop doing things we usually enjoy. Focusing on your favourite hobby, relaxing indoors or connecting with others can help with anxious thoughts and feelings.

If you cannot do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, think about how you could adapt them, or try something new.

There are lots of free tutorials and courses online, and people are coming up with inventive new ways to do things, like hosting online pub quizzes and music concerts.

8. Focus on the present

Focusing on the present, rather than worrying about the future, can help with difficult emotions and improve our wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people deal with feelings of anxiety, or you could try our mindful breathing video.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques can often be a very helpful strategy to use when you are sitting with uncertainty. It can be helpful to identify some relaxation strategies to use when you are trying to accept the feeling of uncertainty.

These could be

Do some exercise (e.g. go for a walk, cycle, do some yoga)

Read a book

Watch your favourite TV show/film

Listen to some music

Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)

Talk to a friend or family member

Have a bath

Cook

Add some of your own ideas to this list. It can also be useful to review any mindful strategies as you try them out and see what is helpful about each strategy and what is unhelpful. You can then tailor the strategy to make it as helpful as possible.

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger
provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health
crisis – just text YM to 85258
all texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical
supervisors
texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile
and Telecom Plus

OCD Action
www.ocdaction.org.uk
a place for support and information to anybody affected by OCD
helpline: 0845 390 6232 (Mon-Fri, 9:30am – 5pm)
office: 020 7253 5272 (Mon-Fri, 9:30am – 5pm)
email: support@ocdaction.org.uk

No Panic
www.nopanic.org.uk
No Panic are the people to call if you are suffering from panic attacks, OCD, phobias, and
other related anxiety disorders.
helpline: 0844 967 4848 (Daily 10am – 10pm; charges apply)
youth helpline for 13 – 20 yr olds: 0330 606 1174 (Mon – Fri 3pm – 6pm; charges apply)
having a panic attack? Crisis number with recording of a breathing technique: 01952
680835 (24 hr)
email: admin@nopanic.org.uk

childline
www.childline.org.uk
if you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email or chat online about any problem big or
small
freephone 24/7 helpline: 0800 1111
sign up for a childline account on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime
without using your email address
chat 1:1 with an online advisor

The Mix
<https://www.themix.org.uk/>
if you're under 25 you can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their
webchat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on
support services you might need.
freephone: 0808 808 4994 (1pm – 11pm daily)

Local support:
<https://www.ghll.org.uk/>
<https://ticplus.org.uk/>
<https://www.onyourmindglos.nhs.uk/>

This booklet was created by Young Minds Matter Gloucestershire, part of the School's Mental Health Support Team.

