

Women's Health

Vol. 13 No. 8 April, 2009

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DidYouKnow?

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OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE BEHAVIORS

Did you know OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) is a *medical condition* that affects the biochemistry of the brain? Did you know **changing your behavior can change your brain** over time and with effort, even when you have OCD?

Did you know classic symptoms of OCD include compulsive washing or checking, irrational thoughts that might include unwanted violent or sexual content, feelings of tension and impending doom if you don't carry out your urges?

Did you know that at some point during the course of this disorder, a person realizes the obsessions and compulsions are unreasonable or excessive but may feel unable to control them?

Obsessions:

- ❖ Recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that feel intrusive and inappropriate and that cause anxiety or distress are present and at times intense.
- ❖ The thoughts are not simply excessive worries about real life problems. They can take up hours every day and interfere with social lives and functioning, including academic success.
- ❖ A person may attempt to ignore or suppress the thoughts and impulses and images with some other thought or action.

Compulsions:

- ❖ Repetitive behaviors that a person feels driven to perform can include hand washing, checking, hoarding, placing items in certain order and making sure they stay the same, or mental acts they feel pressured to repeat excessively such as praying, counting, or repeating words silently.
- ❖ Behaviors and mental acts are aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing an unlikely, but dreaded event or situation.
- ❖ The brain sends false messages when OCD is present. The brain gets stuck in a groove of thought.

Outside of a medical diagnosis and treatment which are important, the first step to overcoming OCD is relabeling the OCD thoughts for what they are—obsessive thoughts and compulsive urges. When you notice the thoughts and urges, tell yourself “It’s not me, it’s the OCD.” Remind yourself the OCD sends *false messages* that you can identify and challenge.

An excellent resource for more helpful behavioral changes is the book *Brain Lock* by Jeffrey M. Schwartz, M.D.
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