

Living With Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Self-Help Tips



Brought to you by Value Behavioral Health of PA

DIFFERENT PEOPLE LEARN TO LIVE WITH OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD) in different ways. What works for others may or may not work for you. Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a chronic condition, which means it may always be part of your life. While you can't treat OCD on your own, you can do some things for yourself that will build on your treatment plan. **This is self-help.**

Refocus Your Attention

When you're experiencing OCD thoughts and urges, try shifting your attention to something else.

- You could exercise, jog, walk, listen to music, read, surf the Web, play a video game, or make a phone call. The important thing is to do something you enjoy for 15 minutes in order to delay your response to the obsessive thoughts or compulsion.
- At the end of the delaying period, reassess the urge. In many cases, the urge may no longer be quite as intense. Try delaying for a longer period. The longer you can delay the urge, the more it will likely change.

Write Down Obsessive Thoughts and Worries

- Keep a pad and pencil on you or type on a laptop, a smartphone, or tablet. When you begin to obsess, write down all your thoughts or compulsions.
- Keep writing as the urge continues, aiming to record exactly what you're thinking, even if you're repeating the same phrases or the same urges over and over.
- Writing it all down will allow you to see just how repetitive your obsessions are, and writing it over and over will help it lose its power.
- Writing thoughts down is much harder than simply thinking of them, so your obsessive thoughts are likely to disappear sooner.
- Make a checklist of obsessive behaviors and check items off the list as you do them. That way you will not be urged to repeat them. Also, saying the obsessive behavior out loud helps.

Take Care of Yourself

- Practice relaxation techniques. Mindful meditation, yoga, deep breathing, and other relaxation techniques may help reduce the symptoms of anxiety brought on by OCD. Try to practice relaxation techniques 30 minutes a day.
- Adopt healthy eating habits. Eat plenty of complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Not only do complex carbohydrates stabilize blood sugar, they also boost serotonin, a neurotransmitter with calming effects.
- Exercise regularly. For maximum benefit, try to get 30 minutes or more of aerobic activity a day. Aerobic exercise relieves tension and stress, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well being with the release of endorphins, the brain's "feel good" chemicals.

Avoid Alcohol and Nicotine

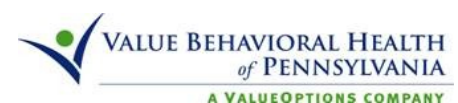
- Alcohol temporarily reduces anxiety and worry, but actually causes anxiety symptoms as it wears off. Smoking leads to higher levels of anxiety as nicotine is a very powerful stimulant.

Get Enough Sleep

- Not only can anxiety and worry cause insomnia, but lack of sleep can also exacerbate anxious thoughts and feelings. When you are well rested, it is much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with OCD.

Taking care of yourself is essential!

Call or visit Value Behavioral Health of PA today :
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