



What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)?

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (commonly referred to as OCD) affects between 2-3% of children and young people. It's characterised by two main features:

Obsessions which are unwanted thoughts, images or urges which keep coming into your mind repeatedly. Everyone has worrying thoughts occasionally, but they usually appear briefly before another thought comes along to take their place. If you have OCD, you'll have repetitive, worrying thoughts which are difficult to stop thinking about. Common obsessions include fears of contamination from dirt, germs and viruses; fear of coming to harm, excessive concern with how things are arranged, superstitions such as fears of 'bad' numbers; aggressive thoughts related to harming yourself or others and sexual obsessions related to unwanted or aggressive sexual thoughts

Compulsions are repetitive behaviours or mental acts which you feel driven to carry out in order to manage the obsessive thoughts or images. They can be physical acts which other people may notice (e.g. repeatedly checking locks, light switches; excessively washing hands or body; arranging or touching objects in a particular way; hoarding or collecting things). Compulsions can also be mental acts which others don't see (such as having to repeat certain numbers, words or phrases or saying prayers in a set order or manner).

If you have OCD, you may have either of these features, but it's common to have both. They are likely to cause you a lot of anxiety and distress which may interfere with your day to day life such as managing school / University, social activities and day to day tasks. Left untreated, OCD can have a significant impact on both you and your family and over time can lead to low mood.

Can treatment help?

The evidence-based psychological treatment for OCD is Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). An important component of the CBT includes something called Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), which is the most effective intervention for OCD.

CBT Assessment and Key Treatment Strategies

As part of the assessment, Bristol CBT Clinic invites young people (and if helpful, their parents / carers) to complete some questionnaires that assess the severity of the OCD, how it impacts on daily life, what thoughts and beliefs are associated with the problem, and an assessment of other difficulties. Following the assessment, sessions focus on the following:

- Developing a shared understanding of the OCD and what is keeping it going
- Working together to agree goals for treatment
- Identifying the specific meaning related to the intrusive thoughts and images
- Developing less threatening and more helpful beliefs about the intrusive thoughts.
- With the support of the therapist, gradually facing avoided or difficult situations and finding out what happens when not engaging in the usual behaviours & habits (ERP)
- Agreeing a coping plan focused on how to maintain progress once the CBT sessions have ended.