

Spotlight on OCD

Worried you've forgotten to switch off the oven? 'Touched wood' to prevent bad things from happening or had disturbing thoughts pop randomly into your head? Most people think nothing of such thoughts, but for the 2.5% of the population suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), they can cause deep distress.

People with OCD may worry that not being able to control their thoughts means they are losing control, going crazy or a bad person.

Most OCD sufferers experience obsessions and compulsions and many realise these are irrational, which further distresses them. The problem is, the harder they try to ignore them, the more attention they pay to them and so the vicious circle continues.

OCD usually develops gradually around late adolescence and can be persistent if not treated. The cause is unknown although it's thought to be triggered by stressful life events and is found to pose a greater risk to those with a family history of OCD. The frequency and severity of symptoms can be treated using psychological therapies, traditional medicine or a combination of both.

Drug-free therapies, such as cognitivebehaviour therapy, aim to change the behaviours and thoughts associated with obsessions and compulsions and such therapies have been proven to be extremely effective for sufferers of OCD.

Obsessions: take the form of thoughts, ideas or urges, and can cause extreme anxiety. Their intrusive and recurring nature can be frightening, particularly as they often involve thoughts about harming others ('what if I hurt my baby?').

Compulsions: repetitive behaviours you feel obliged to carry out to 'put right' the distress caused by obsessive thoughts and to relieve the anxiety you feel, e.g. if you are obsessed with being contaminated, you may feel compelled to wash your hands repeatedly.

MORE INFORMATION

For more about OCD, visit the 'advice and resources' section of our websites. For more details about drug-free therapies available to help OCD sufferers at our counselling and psychology centres, please call or email your local centre.

ABERDEEN: info@aberdeenpsychology.co.uk,
tel: 01224-452848, www.aberdeenpsychology.co.uk

BORDERS: info@borderspsychology.co.uk,
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2. Alternatively you may wish to speak to your GP who should be able to refer you to someone suitable.
3. See our links on our websites for details of organisations who may be able to provide assistance or information.

