OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

WHAT IS OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER?

OCD is an anxiety disorder. OCD results in recurring unwanted thoughts, images, or impulses, as well as obsessions and repetitive rituals. People with OCD are usually aware of the irrational and excessive nature of their obsessions and compulsions. However, they feel unable to control their obsessions or resist their compulsions.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

OBSESSION
- fear of contamination from germs, dirt or poison
- excessive concerns about illness, religion issues or morality
- intrusive thoughts and images about sex, violence or other issues
- fear of harm from illness/death/accidents

COMPULSIONS
- excessive cleaning and washing of house, household items, food, car and other areas
- excessive hand washing, showering and tooth brushing
- needing to constantly ask questions or confess to seek reassurance
- excessive checking of locks, electrical and gas appliances, and other things associated with safety
- touching, tapping or moving in a particular way or a certain number of times
- replacing a ‘bad thought’ with a ‘good thought’
- needing to know and remember things

Compulsions and obsessions may take up many hours of a person’s day and can interfere with family and social relationships. They can also have a negative effect on education and employment.
THE CAUSES OF OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Compulsion are learned behaviours, which becomes recursive and habitual when they are associated with relief from anxiety.

Due to genetic factors

Chemical, structural and functional abnormalities in the brain are the cause.

GETTING HELP

Anxiety management techniques for OCD

Anxiety management techniques include relaxation training, slow breathing techniques, mindfulness meditation and hyperventilation control.

OCD Support Group and Education

Support groups allow people with OCD and their families to meet in comfort and safety, and give and receive support. The group also provide the opportunity to learn more about the disorder and to develop social networks.

Cognitive behaviour therapy

Cognitive behaviour therapy aims to change patterns of thinking, beliefs and behaviours that may trigger anxiety and obsessive-compulsive symptoms. This therapy uses education to promote control over symptoms.

Medication

Medications, especially antidepressants that affect the serotonin system, have been found to reduce the symptoms of OCD. This medication can only be prescribed by a medical practitioner.

Self-help tips

Refocus your attention like doing a hobby or exercising.

Write down the obsessive thoughts or worries, this can help in identify the repetitive patterns.

Try to practice relaxation such as mindfulness meditation or deep breathing techniques for at least 30 minutes a day.

For more information on depression, contact:
Mental Health Foundation Australia
www.mhfa.org.au
1300 643 287
supportgroup@mhfa.org.au