



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD is an anxiety disorder where people suffer from obsessions, compulsions or both.

Obsessions are intrusive thoughts or images which the person finds disturbing and return despite attempts to suppress them. Most people have persistent thoughts yet we forget them and are able to go about our lives. Pathological obsessions do not pass no matter how much the person tries to suppress them. The most common obsessions are related to aggressive impulses, fears of contamination, the need for symmetry and order, hoarding possessions, religious and sexual themes.

Compulsions are actions which the person feels forced to carry out and which are repeated in a rigid and repetitive manner despite the individual having no conscious desire to carry these actions out. The most common compulsions are cleaning and checking rituals, arranging, counting and hoarding.

Persons with OCD tend to have multiple types of obsessions and compulsions and they tend to be related e.g. individuals with contamination obsessions tend to have cleaning compulsions.

All individuals report having intrusive thoughts and compulsive rituals; the difference lies in degree. Persons with OCD have more frequent, intense and disturbing thoughts and behaviours.

OCD is estimated to affect 2-3% of the world's population with men and women being at an equal risk.

Famous people with OCD:

- Cameron Diaz (actress)
- Albet Einstein (physicist)
- David Beckham (footballer)
- Leonardo DiCaprio (actor)

Treatment: A combination of psychosocial interventions and medication are used to help individuals become in control of their conditions.

Medication: Antidepressants, antipsychotics or a combination of both are commonly prescribed.

Cognitive Behavioural therapy: It is a very effective therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy involves retraining thought patterns and routines so that compulsive behaviors are no longer necessary. One CBT approach in particular is called exposure and response prevention. This therapy involves gradually exposing the individual to a feared object or obsession, such as dirt, and teaching healthy ways to cope with anxiety.