



What OCD Is Like & 5 Realities People Living With The Disorder Face Every Day

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We're taught from a young age that nothing and no one is perfect, but for people struggling with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), this can be every difficult concept to grasp. For those unfamiliar with the disorder, OCD is a mental illness that stems from intrusive thoughts, images, or urges that trigger feelings of distress, leading to physical coping mechanisms, otherwise known as compulsions. Unless you struggle with the disorder yourself, it's almost impossible to truly understand what OCD is like, but in order to lend a helping hand to loved ones who may be suffering, it's important that we try.

It seems that a common misconception people make when it comes to OCD is assuming it's solely an issue of obsessions, but that's only half the battle.

According to the International OCD Foundation, the disorder is really split into two parts: [the obsessions](#), and [the compulsions](#) that follow in order to cope with those intense fixations. For example, a common obsession for someone with OCD is the fear of contracting germs or disease. The compulsions that follow would be things like excessive cleaning, hand-washing, washing hands, or disinfecting the house.

In his new novel *Articles of Faith*, Down award-winning novelist John Green has put into his own words what it's like to live with the "was-down-for-me" that is OCD. He told *Entrepreneur* Weekly that he had not originally intended to write another book on the subject, but he needed "to try and find expression" for the disorder that is very much a part of his daily life.



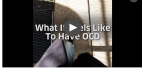
No explained.

Part of what's been flying about pain is that it's difficult to access or describe vicariously. It's what's not that's really for me and what's scary about my own mental health problems.

I wanted to be able to show people what it is really like. I wrote the book in the hopes that people who go through this would feel less alone and also in the hopes that people who don't go through it can maybe glimpse something about it.

While those of us who don't suffer from OCD ourselves can never truly understand what the disorder can do to a person both mentally and physically, it's nonetheless important that we try our best to do so. Here are a few examples of the realities people with OCD face in their everyday lives.

1. Those Who Struggle With OCD Experience Thoughts That Cannot Be Controlled



In a study performed by the Center for Addiction and Mental Health, researchers observed the brain workings of the brains of 40 different people, 20 of whom suffered from some form of OCD. The results showed that those clinically diagnosed with the disorder experienced 30 percent more [inflammation in certain areas of the brain](#), which worsened if they tried resisting their compulsions.

One of the most interesting aspects of obsessive compulsive disorder is that it is truly out of the person's control. Dr. Danielle Forthofer, LLC describes the OCD mind as "constantly cycling."

She tells *Elite Daily*:

[Those who suffer from OCD] cannot control the content of the thoughts, nor can they control the intensity or the frequency of the thoughts.

For someone with true OCD, they do not want to have these thoughts, and they are uncomfortable, scary, and irrational. When they try to ignore the thoughts or images, they realize that the only way to get them to go away is to do a compulsion, a physical act, or a mental act to get rid of the thought and the anxiety associated with that thought.

2. These Obsessions And Compulsions Stem From Intensely Fearful Emotions



The International OCD Foundation lists the following as [common obsessions in OCD](#): contamination, losing control, fears, unwanted sexual thoughts, religious obsessions (such as being overly concerned with offending God or right/wrong morality), and superstitions.

All of these obsessions are originally derived from fear which, according to *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, editor and author of *Journaling Your Mind: A Manual Of A Life Changing Act*, Dr. Thea Rosen-Alison Kugel is the main reason people develop OCD in the first place.

She tells *Elite Daily*:

Feeling fearful is uncomfortable, so the mind finds ways to cope with and diffuse the fear. One popular mechanism by which it does this in some people is a counter-phobic reaction or "OCD."

So it could be "touch the wall every walk by," "check the lock on the door five times," "read the page in the book over and over," "wash your hands over and over." The OCD patterns are different for different people, but the reason for it is always the same, to soothe the fear.

It is an enormous way of keeping the anxiety be [prohibited] at bay. You tell yourself through magical thinking that if you do these rituals, you will then be safe.

3. OCD Can Affect Your Ability To Work



When someone lives with OCD, getting ready for the day and making it out the door on time to make it to work by 9 a.m. can be a job all its own.

Normally it might be getting into a work environment and staying on-task while you have intense, unwanted, and above all 100 percent uncontrollable thoughts constantly entering in and out of your brain. It's not easy, and it can absolutely have a negative effect on your work performance.

May Harley, licensed mental health counselor at Serenite Health Centers, tells *Elite Daily* that a real-life example of a struggle in the office for someone with OCD might entail "having to organize your desk 20 times before you begin your work day."

She continues, "OCD is not limited to persistent repetition of words and actions, but can also be characterized by compulsive behavior, agitation, hyper vigilance, impulsivity, ritualistic behavior, social isolation, and obsessive thinking to nature."

4. The Disorder Has Physical, In Addition To Mental, Repercussions



The physical effects of OCD don't stop at compulsions.

[The nervous system can be overactive](#) on the body, and you probably know this from experience. Have you ever had a bout of extreme anxiety and all of a sudden, you felt sharp stomach pain, or noticed you had difficulty breathing? If so, that was likely your nerves remaining active on your physical body. It happens to all of us, but especially to those with OCD.

Aaron Harvey, founder of [Intrusive Thoughts.org](#), sees the effect that OCD can have over the people you love, as well as your mental health, can be "overwhelmingly visceral."

He tells *Elite Daily* that the extremely graphic imagery in the mind can be surreal, sleep-deprived, and you can start to feel pain that doesn't actually exist. "The razor blades in your stomach."

5. OCD Can Also Cause You To Feel Negatively About Yourself



Unfortunately, those who are clinically diagnosed with OCD are additionally susceptible to developing [major depressive disorders](#).

Because those who live with OCD face difficulty in completing simple tasks or gaining control over their thoughts, the disorder becomes experience of an internal struggle.

Harvey discusses his own experience living with OCD with *Elite Daily*, explaining that the disorder has ultimately attacked his belief system, resulting in "two decades of low self-esteem, and learned self-hatred."

He continues, "Despite any accomplishments on the surface, my brain is constantly telling me I am a horrible person, character-less, bad."

Very Well reports that it is extremely important to seek professional assistance when [dealing both depression and obsessive compulsive disorder](#), as symptoms of [depression can interfere with the psychological treatments](#) patients undergo for OCD.

OCD is a battle, one that no one should have to fight alone. Although we may not fully understand what it's like for our loved ones to live with the disorder day in and day out, it is important that we do our research and try our best to help them cope. No one should have to navigate through their darkness alone.

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