

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Although obsessive compulsive disorder or OCD is not typically seen as a serious problem by the average non-mental health professional, it can actually become a particularly debilitating disorder when left untreated. The disorder which was once thought to be a relatively rare phenomenon, affects approximately 1 to 2 million men and women and perhaps half a million children in the United States. OCD is an anxiety disorder characterized by intrusive thoughts that produce extremely high levels of worry and fear and by repetitive compulsive behaviors aimed at reducing the anxiety produced by these intrusive thoughts. Individuals dealing with the symptoms of OCD often feel at the mercy of their disorder. They typically find themselves ruminating about unpleasant or frightening ideas or engaging in unproductive yet irresistible behaviors.

A sub-category of OCD that is under reported in the literature is sometimes labeled HOCD or homosexual obsessive compulsive disorder. Individuals with HOCD are typically heterosexual men who fear that they are actually gay. You can read more about HOCD in my paper entitled "How Do I know I'm Not Gay?"

Research has shown that although for most individuals OCD is a chronic, lifetime disorder, the symptoms of the disorder can be significantly reduced, and often eliminated, through early diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Virtually all mental health professionals agree that the treatment of choice for OCD and HOCD is cognitive behavioral therapy, combined occasionally with one of a number of antidepressant medications.

The cognitive-behavioral model I employ teaches easily mastered techniques that patients can apply to their lives immediately. This approach is an active, structured, short-term problem-solving therapy that provides individuals with simple, yet powerful techniques to cope with their anxiety and depression and to reduce the fear that their obsessive thoughts can produce. The approach is a collaborative one in which both patient and therapist share responsibility for producing change. Cognitive therapy focuses on helping to correct negative or self-defeating thought patterns and teaches patients how to master problems and situations they may previously have considered insurmountable. As a result of therapy, many individuals struggling with this anxiety disorder not only find relief from their symptoms of OCD but also find that they experience fewer emotional upsets in other areas of their life.

I invite you to phone me at 410-377-4343 or email me at babass@towson.edu or visit my website to schedule an appointment to discuss your concerns.

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