

DEMYSTIFYING OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

PRESENTED BY DR. BRADLEY RIEMANN | MARCH 16, 2021
FOR WAFCA-CE WITH FUNDING SUPPORT FROM THE GREAT LAKES MHTTC



ISSUE IMPORTANCE

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a common and often debilitating condition. OCD is among the **top ten causes of disability**, impacting about **1 in 40 individuals** in the United States each year. The compulsions and obsessions characteristic of OCD can be time-consuming and distressing, sometimes causing significant impairments in an individual's personal and professional life. Some sources estimate that it can take, on average, more than **nine years for individuals to receive a correct diagnosis** of OCD. Successful treatment requires that professionals are knowledgeable about OCD and well-equipped to provide best-practice care.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

OCD is a common, debilitating condition characterized by either obsessions or compulsions (or both).

The primary element of effective treatment is ERP (Exposure Response/Ritual Prevention).

Effective exposure therapy includes prolonged, repetitive, and graduated exposure.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is very treatable when treated properly.



UNDERSTANDING OCD

OBSESSIONS

Recurrent and persistent thoughts, urges, or images that are experienced as intrusive, unwanted, and cause marked anxiety or distress.

Person attempts to ignore or suppress obsessions or to neutralize them with some other thought or action (i.e., compulsion).

EXAMPLES

- Contamination
- Repeated doubt
- Need for exactness or symmetry
- Need to tell, ask, or confess
- Harming
- Religious

COMPULSIONS

Repetitive behaviors or mental acts that a person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession or according to rules that must be applied rigidly.

Aimed at preventing or reducing distress or preventing a dreaded situation – not connected in a realistic way and/or clearly excessive.

EXAMPLES

- Checking
- Washing or cleaning
- Counting, ordering
- Repeating
- Praying
- Requesting assurance



RESPONDING TO & TREATING OCD

The treatment of choice for OCD is a behavioral therapy technique known as **Exposure Response Prevention (or Exposure and Ritual Prevention), ERP.**



- ERP is based on the principle of **habituation**: the decrease in anxiety experienced with the passage of time.
- Because OCD can be a two-part condition (obsessions and compulsions), it can therefore need a two-part solution (exposure and ritual prevention).
- **Exposure** refers to placing an individual in a controlled, feared situation to target an obsession.

There are three keys to successful ERP:

- *It needs to be prolonged enough to lead to within trial habituation (at least 50% reduction in anxiety).*
- *It needs to be repetitive enough to lead to between-trial habituation (until causing minimal anxiety).*
- *It needs to be graduated via an established exposure hierarchy.*

Advantages of ERP:

- *Effective and robust*
- *Minimal side effects*
- *Quick improvements (many after first week of treatment)*

Disadvantages of ERP:

- *Hard work for patients*
- *Absence of available and effective ERP practitioners*



As noted above, it can be difficult to find ERP practitioners. **Rogers Behavioral Health** provides free OCD screening and a comprehensive scope of care for OCD treatment.

This guide was created with funding from the Great Lakes Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.

The guide is based on material presented by Dr. Bradley Riemann on March 16, 2021 for WAFCA-CE, with funding support from MHTTC.

WAFCA serves as the Wisconsin partner for the Great Lakes Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.

