What is obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)?

Everyone double checks things sometimes. For example, you might double check to make sure the stove is turned off or door is locked before leaving the house. But people with OCD feel the need to check things repeatedly, or have certain thoughts or perform routines and rituals over and over. The thoughts and rituals associated with OCD cause distress and get in the way of daily life.

The frequent upsetting thoughts are called obsessions. To try to control them, a person will feel an overwhelming urge to repeat certain rituals or behaviors called compulsions. People with OCD can't control these obsessions and compulsions. For many people, OCD starts during childhood or the teen years. Symptoms of OCD may come and go or get worse during stressful times.

What does it mean to have OCD?

People with OCD generally:

* Have repeated thoughts or images about many different things, such as fear of germs, dirt, or intruders; acts of violence; hurting loved ones; sexual acts; conflicts with religious beliefs; or being overly tidy
* Do the same rituals over and over such as washing hands, locking and unlocking doors, counting, keeping unneeded items, or repeating the same steps again and again

Reference: NIMH OCD Booklet, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES – National Institutes of Health, NIH Publication No. TR 10-4676, Revised 2010

* Can't control the unwanted thoughts and behaviors
* Don't get pleasure when performing the behaviors or rituals, but get brief relief from the anxiety the thoughts cause
* Spend at least one hour a day on the thoughts and rituals, which cause distress and get in the way of daily life

Are there other problems from OCD?

OCD sufferers are more likely than those who do not have the disorder to also suffer from other anxiety disorders.

How can I help myself if I have OCD?

First, talk to health and wellness staff about your symptoms.

* Ask for reasonable accommodations, if needed
* Stay on your medication, if prescribed
* Try shifting your attention to something else; you could exercise, jog, walk or listen to music
* Write down all your thoughts or compulsions as it will help you see just how repetitive your obsessions are
* Create an OCD "worry period". Don't suppress obsessions or compulsions; develop the habit of rescheduling them. Choose one or two 10 minute “worry periods” each day, time you can devote to obsessing and move on
* Try to practice a relaxation technique like mindful meditation, yoga, or deep breathing for at least 30 minutes a day

What is the treatment for OCD?

OCD is generally treated with cognitive-behavioral therapy, medication, or both. Cognitive behavior therapy teaches a person different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to situations. If you would like to know more about medications, set up an appointment with the Health and Wellness Center.

I know someone who has OCD. What can I do?

* If they are thinking about hurting them self or someone else get help immediately
* Do not leave the person alone
* Let the nearest Job Corps staff member know NOW!
* If not able to find a Job Corps staff member quickly, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
* Access the Job Corps Safety Hotline (844-JC1-SAFE) via text, email, phone, mobile app or web site
* Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
  (800) 273-TALK (8255)  
  TTY: (800) 799-4TTY (4889)