

# Parent Talk

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## OCD in Kids & Teens

OCD is a condition that's commonly misunderstood and misrepresented in the media. Most people probably think OCD is a preference for keeping things neat and clean and is something that only adults experience. The truth is that OCD can present with varying symptoms, some of which have nothing to do with cleanliness, and often impacts kids, teens, and young adults. In this edition of Parent Talk we provide an overview of what OCD is and some symptoms to keep an eye out for.

### What Is OCD?

OCD stands for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and is a mental health condition that revolves around both obsessions and compulsions. With OCD, a person will experience intense and unwanted intrusive thoughts usually focused on a particular concept. These unwanted thoughts are known as obsessions. To fight back against obsessions, people with OCD develop repetitive behaviors and actions which are known as compulsions. Compulsions vary and can be anything from ritualistically tapping on a wall to hours of reassurance seeking with loved ones. What's important to note is that those with OCD don't enjoy their obsessions or compulsions. Obsessions are typically very scary for kids with OCD and compulsions are something they are compelled to engage with, rather than a strictly conscious choice. So, when you hear someone say they have OCD because they prefer to keep things clean, remember that real OCD is not enjoyable and kids with it get no pleasure from their symptoms.

### Subtypes & Common Symptoms

Many of us think about the type of OCD that includes obsessions with being clean and avoiding germs. While there is a subtype of OCD known as Contamination OCD that centers around this, that is just one of many other ways OCD can manifest. Others include:

**Relationship OCD**  
This form of OCD revolves around serious doubts about romantic relationships. The symptoms can cause those with Relationship OCD to question if their partners are truly committed to them or if they are in a relationship with the right person. Teens more commonly experience this type of OCD.

**Harm OCD**  
Harm OCD centers around fears and obsessions about hurting other people. People with this type of OCD experience unwanted violent thoughts and causes them to want to avoid any potential situations where they are exposed to violent situations.

**Scrupulosity**  
This type of OCD centers around religious fears and obsessions. Scrupulosity usually involves intense praying, or other religious observances to combat fears around being immoral.

### Effective Treatments

OCD is most commonly treated using a form of therapy called Exposure & Response Prevention (ERP). This method involves slowly exposing the client to the things that trigger their OCD symptoms to help them control their brain's response. For example, if someone's OCD revolves around contamination and a fear of germs, a therapist may ask their client to challenge themselves by touching something "unclean" such as a railing on the subway or a bathroom door handle. The exposures will be different based on the type of OCD symptoms someone has. OCD is also effectively treated using medication. While there's no medication that's specifically created to treat OCD, the condition can be greatly helped using different types of antidepressants. In addition to treating depressive symptoms, these medications also have the added effect of tackling OCD symptoms.

### Need more help?

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### Featured Resources



#### Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Awareness, Diagnosis, and Treatments

Join us on Thursday, October 31st at 11AM for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Awareness, Diagnosis, and Treatments featuring Courtney Muller, LICSW, Staff Social Worker, Center for Effective Therapy. In this seminar, we'll provide psychoeducation about OCD, diagnosis, and effective treatments.

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