

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

Millions of people are affected by OCD at some point in their lives. It is a mental illness that is manifested in varying degrees, as mild as a person feeling the unstoppable impulse to repeatedly check the door a few times to be sure it is locked before leaving the house. Howard Hughes, as portrayed by Leonardo DeCaprio in the Aviator, was an example of OCD that is totally life disrupting-- an obsession with cleanliness --hand washing, unable to touch or be touched.

WHAT IS OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER?

It is a mental illness:

- Obsessions -- Unwanted thoughts, impulses, images
- Compulsions --Repeated Behaviors - Compulsions

SYMPTOMS OF OCD INCLUDE:

- Rituals are performed: washing/cleaning, repeating, checking
 - organizing (having to have things maintained in a specific order place, etc.)
 - worrying (repeated thoughts)

TREATMENT WORKS --PEOPLE WITH OCD SHOULD GET HELP:

- Behavior Therapy
 - exposure therapy (gradually confronting fear/anxiety)
 - ritual prevention (following exposure therapy, persons gradually cuts down on rituals)
- Medications can help many people with OCD
- Close cooperation, daily “homework” and patience works well to help
- Choose people who can provide support
- Record progress in limiting/stopping ritualistic behaviors

HOW LOVED ONES CAN HELP:

- Stop! Refuse to participate in rituals
- Stop reassuring the rituals
- Agree not to answer questions regarding rituals
- Learn all you can about OCD

REMEMBER, OCD IS A TREATABLE ILLNESS.