

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterised by the presence of obsessions, compulsions, or both, that can interfere with meaningful daily activities and cause significant distress to an individual. Treatments can be effective to manage the symptoms and experiences of individuals with OCD, if further concerns persist, including those in relation to the interference of OCD with your quality of life, do not hesitate to seek the advice of a health professional.

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What is OCD?

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common, chronic, and long-lasting disorder in which a person experiences a pattern of uncontrollable and recurrent thoughts and obsessions, driven by the urge to repetitively engage in such behaviours and compulsions. Common themes experienced by individuals with OCD are inclusive of fear, such as the fear of germs or the need to control and arrange objects or complete a series of actions in a specific manner.

Although the cause of OCD is not explicitly known, genetics, an individual's environment to which they are exposed to and learned behaviours throughout their life can play a role, commonly present in teenagers and early adulthood. More information into the causes of OCD can be found [here](#).

OCD can present itself in a number of ways. The collection of obsessions and compulsions that disrupt someone's day and can feature themes associated with:

- Checking
- Contamination / Mental Contamination
- Ruminations
- Intrusive Thoughts
- Symmetry and orderliness

If you would like more information, you can check out this [website](#).

Typical obsessions experienced by individuals with OCD can include:

- Fear of getting contaminated by people or the environment
- Disturbing sexual thoughts or images
- Extreme concern with order, symmetry, or precision
- Recurrent intrusive thoughts of sounds, images, words, or numbers
- Typical compulsion:
- Excessive or ritualized hygiene
- Repeated cleaning or arranging of household objects
- Repeatedly checking
- Repeated counting

Strategies to manage OCD

Approximately 7 out of 10 people benefit from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and/or medication in the management of symptoms and experiences associated with OCD. Further information regarding this can be found [here](#). Research suggests that Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) is one of the most effective CBT treatments available, with strong evidence supporting its use in the treatment of OCD.

Some other interventions that are available to individuals, seeking to mitigate their symptoms of OCD can include:

- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Imaginal Exposure
- Habit Reversal Training

It is important to remember that everyone is different and as such, everyone's experiences are different. You are not alone, there are a range of supports available and accessible to you to enhance your health, wellbeing and quality of life. A combination of self-care, therapy based and medications can be useful in managing OCD however it is important to seek the advice of a health professional to guide and support you through this process.

OCD and my studies

A student with OCD may experience greater difficulty in concentrating and maintaining focus, leaving them feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. The following recommendations can be considered when studying, to enhance your academic experience and outcomes, while managing OCD.

- **Making schedules:** Remaining on top of your workload and managing your study through referring to a to-do list or daily/weekly/monthly calendar can be beneficial in ensuring you remain on track with study and assessment due dates.
- **Sleep and exercise:** It is important to maintain a regular sleep pattern to ensure you are getting enough sleep to manage day-to-day life. Not getting enough sleep may make your symptoms and experiences more challenging. It is recommended that students get at least 8 hours of sleep per night to be well rested and mentally prepared for the next day. Exercising regularly has also proven to improve an individual's ability to self-regulate, maintain attention and assist in clear thinking. Engaging in 15-30 minutes of exercise daily can aid in releasing stress and tension from the body.
- **Engage in self-care practices:** Taking the time to establish a routine that helps you look after yourself can make a big difference, especially in the long-term.
- **Find what works for you:** Determine the best study method that works for you. Consider the day of the week, time of day, if you prefer to work with music or quietly and what location works for you (home, friends house, outdoors, library). Knowing your study preference will increase your efficiency as a student.
- **Ask for help:** Your family, friends and university staff are here to help you. Seek help and support throughout your academic journey.

University Support

WSU resources:

If you would like support then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) can help you.

- **WSU [Counselling Service](#)**.

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or telephone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370 or sending an email to counselling@westernsydney.edu.au. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30 pm.

- **WSU [Disability Service](#)**.

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- **WSU [Student Welfare Service](#)**.

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress

management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

- **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

- **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdraw Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- **Leave of Absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date.

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community Support

Community resources:

- **[Lifeline](#)**.

If you are really struggling during the night when completing assessments or feel most alone, contact [Lifeline](#) (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14** or, Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back!

- **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- **Beyond Blue**

[Be you – beyond blue](#): General information about building resilience and facing adversity.

- **[This Way Up](#)**

You can also check out the online treatment program for OCD from This Way Up.

- **[MyCompass](#)**

This free online treatment program has been developed by the Black Dog Institute to help people better self-manage mild-to-moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress.

- **[Mental Health Advocacy & Education | Made of Millions Foundation](#)**

The site has blogs on various mental health topics, reading materials on intrusive thoughts and OCD, a global mental health livestream with various speakers and more.

- [The OCD Stories](#)

You can check out some podcasts about OCD featuring experts in the field or people who are experiencing similar symptoms sharing about their life in the OCD Stories.

Resources

- [Podcasts](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Apps](#)

Podcasts

'What is OCD?'

This podcast episode delves into what OCD is and addresses common misconceptions portrayed through the media. This podcast also offers bi-weekly episodes, exploring interventions, strategies and lived experiences of individuals with OCD.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0Vi56EtcXv6CVtF84pGU8r>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/1-what-is-ocd/id1499514794?i=1000465955614>

'My Top Ten Tips for Overcoming OCD'

In this podcast episode, 10 top tips on overcoming OCD are shared from real life, lived experiences of an individual diagnosed with OCD.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4yofaZtgVfoAz5A8OgoFMB>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/episode-198-my-top-ten-tips-for-overcoming-ocd/id1499796514?i=1000569335241>

Videos

Debunking the myths of OCD - Natascha M. Santos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhlRgwdDc-E>

How OCD Can Impact A College Student's Life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE0_J82IwKY

Noah discusses having OCD and being a college student

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=96eJkVNSUZo>

Apps

- **[Talk Campus](#)**: There is a 24/7 support app called TalkCampus, which is free and available to download on iOS devices (App Store) and android devices (Google Play). WSU students can connect and talk with other students about anything.
- **[Smiling Mind](#)**: Smiling Mind offers a free app to help you practice your daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. There are dozens of exercises tailored to different demographics and desires. All the content and programs are free, which is the perfect app for beginners to try mindfulness. Free and available on the app store and google play.
- **[Headspace](#)**: Learn to manage feelings and thoughts with the lifelong skill of everyday mindfulness, any time of the day. Free and available on the app store and google play.
- **[My Compass](#)**: myCompass is a free app that is available to download on iOS devices (App store) and android (Google play). Interactive self-help program designed to address mild to-moderate symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression through personalised treatments delivered entirely online.
- **[CBT Thought Diary](#)**: This app helps you record what you thought each day, so you can reflect on how you choose to respond. The app hence helps you manage anxiety.
- **[nOCD](#)**: This app was created by people with OCD, they offer live video-based OCD therapy and in-between session support.
- **[OCD.app](#)**: The app can help you be aware of unhelpful thinking habits and challenge them, increase positive thoughts, manage anxiety and depression and provide daily mood and self-esteem boost.

Still struggling?

If you are finding it difficult to manage on a day-to-day basis, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

View a PDF version of this webpage [here](#).

References:

[Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder](#)

[Impact of the DSM-IV to DSM-5 Changes on the National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

[4 Types of OCD](#)

[How is OCD Treated?](#)

[Clinical Definition of OCD](#)

[Evidence-Based Assessment of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder](#)

[What Causes OCD](#)

[Mayo Clinic - Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder](#)

[ACT Mindfully – Acceptance and Commitment Therapy](#)

[Exposure and response prevention for obsessive-compulsive disorder: A review and new directions](#)

[Treatments for OCD](#)