



Au Pair Extraordinaire

For parents who care

268 Bryanston Drive
Bryanston
2191
South Africa
Tel: 011 463-4438
Fax: 086 619-5491
Cell: 082 603-3512

enquiries@aupair-extraordinaire.co.za
www.aupair-extraordinaire.co.za
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Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

by Justine Loewenthal (Neurotherapist, EEG Technician)

The blockbuster “As Good As It Gets” won Jack Nicholson an Academy Award for his portrayal of an author with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). This disorder does not only happen in the movies, but in fact is estimated to affect approximately 1 in 100 adults, and 1 in 200 children and teens.

What is OCD?

OCD sufferers are not in control of the overwhelming anxiety that they experience as a result of their obsessions and compulsions. They worry excessively, all the time. Common worries relate to germs, safety, getting dirty, being ‘perfect’, counting objects, doing something ‘bad’, and collecting senseless objects. Because this takes up so much time and energy, it often results in social isolation.

It is normal to have recurrent thoughts about things that worry us. But obsessions are thoughts, images or impulses that occur repeatedly and which feel out of the person’s control. The person usually finds them disturbing and unwelcome and they often realize that they are irrational thoughts. The sufferer spends a lot of time dealing with the obsessions which should be spent on important activities. Compulsions are repetitive thoughts or acts that the person feels compelled to do in order to get rid of anxiety related to the obsessions, even though they may realize that the acts are senseless. People with OCD may avoid situations that trigger obsessions.

Many people have a ‘lucky’ ritual, such as using a specific pen to write an exam. This is not OCD.

70% - 80% of OCD sufferers also suffer from depression. Other comorbid conditions of OCD are social phobia, panic disorder, Tourette’s Syndrome, eating disorders, and sleep disorders.

Causes of OCD

The exact cause of OCD is not known, although genetics are thought to play the main role. OCD can be inherited, but may never produce symptoms in some cases. Research is being done to investigate what triggers are needed to ‘activate’ the predisposition.



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Treatment options for OCD

A very sad fact is that research has shown that it can take up to fifteen years for an OCD sufferer to receive the correct treatment! A number of obstacles may stand in the way: embarrassment of the sufferer to look for help; ignorance about the symptoms; affordability of treatment; lack of proper training of health professionals.

It is extremely important to note that the treatment of OCD requires a holistic approach – psychotherapy and neurotherapy and / or medication.

If you or your child identify with the symptoms of OCD, contact us so we may refer you to the correct professionals for help.

