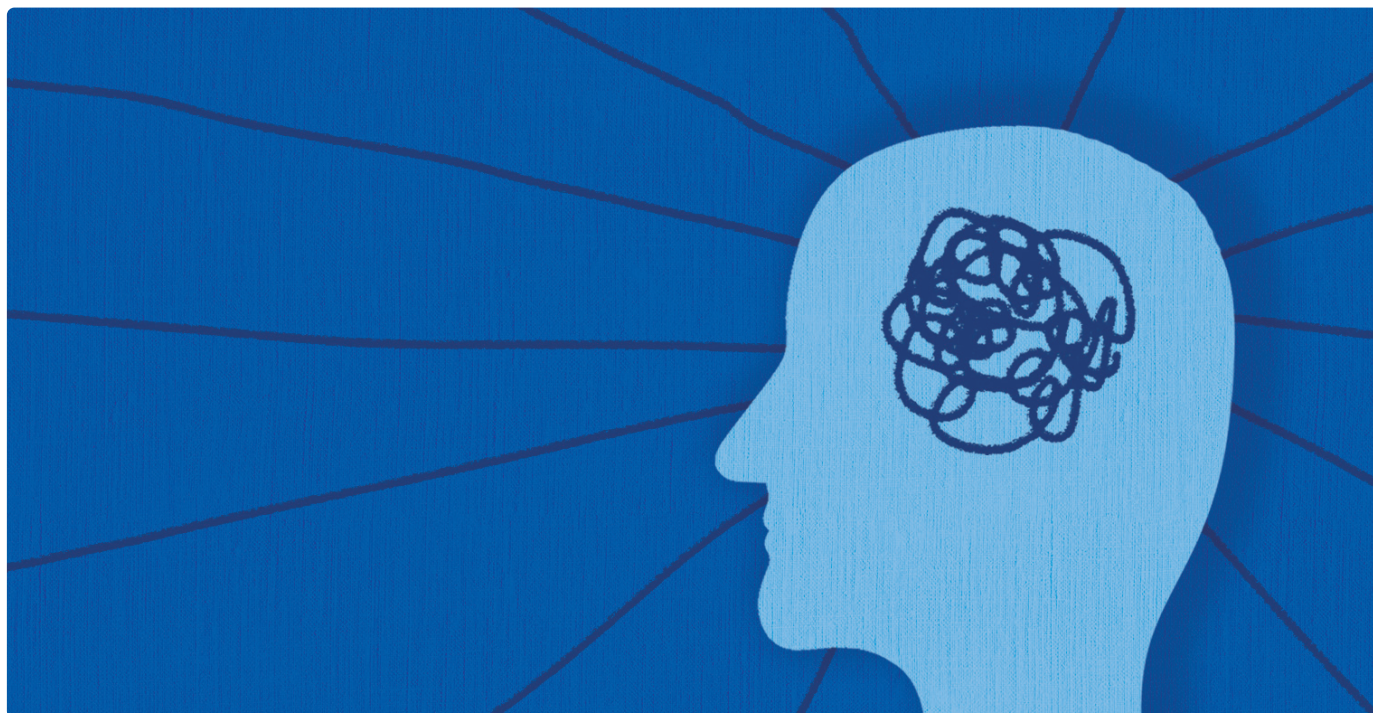


# OCD Awareness: Five types of OCD and how CBT can help



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, known as OCD, is a common mental health condition. Symptoms often manifest in the form of inappropriate, repugnant, and distressing intrusive thoughts (obsessions). The consequent compulsions are behaviours which try to neutralise or control these thoughts and feared consequences.

The condition affects as many as [12 in every 1,000 people](#) (1.2% of the population) from young children to adults, regardless of gender, social, or cultural background.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is one of the fastest and most effective treatment methods for OCD, as it aims to transform intrusive thoughts and behaviours into more constructive directions. For example, 92 per cent of [Onebright clients](#) have reached full recovery from OCD using this style of talking therapy.

The below insight outlines the five main types of OCD and how CBT can help to overcome the symptoms.

## 1 Checking

Individuals who struggle with OCD often obsess about the possibility of damage or harm. As a result, they carry out checks multiple times, which has a significant impact on the individual's life. For example, they may struggle with time management or maintaining jobs and relationships.

Some of the most common obsessive checking compulsions include ensuring doors and windows are locked, or that household appliances such as stoves and ovens, hair straighteners and taps are switched off.

## 2 Contamination / mental contamination

This compulsion is derived from the obsessive fear of being dirty or contaminated. The response is often to excessively

wash or clean in a ritualistic manner. Typically, individuals will worry about situations such as eating out, shaking hands, using facilities such as public restrooms, or touching door handles and staircase bannisters.

With mental contamination, the individual usually internalises their feelings of uncleanliness and may repeat thoughts, words, or images to try to neutralise the sense of being unclean.

## 3 Symmetry and ordering

This compulsion stems from the individual's need to have perfect surroundings to prevent discomfort or stop something terrible from happening. With this form of OCD, those individual's will spend a lot of time ensuring their surroundings are neat, objects are perfectly aligned, and household items are organised in a specific manner.

## 4 Ruminations / intrusive thoughts

Ruminations and intrusive thoughts focus on the individual's obsessive and repetitive thought processes. These thoughts can often be disturbing, horrific, and explicit in nature and often involve the following subjects: relationships, religion, violence, sex, aspects of the body and its functions.

## 5 Hoarding

Those who struggle with OCD have the compulsion to hoard specific objects usually do so because of a specific worry or fear. They can struggle with the idea of disposing of objects which no longer work, have little or no monetary value, or are generally worn out. Additionally, they tend to hold a significant emotional attachment to these items and can find it challenging to organise the objects within their house, causing their home to become inhabitable.

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## How CBT treats OCD

A therapist will work with the individual to understand how learned experiences and past events have helped shape their current beliefs and assumptions. Once these have been identified and explored, the therapist will then treat their client using a combination of the following methods:

- Psychoeducation – This approach helps clients better understand their condition.
- Formulation of the client’s specific OCD symptoms and maintenance cycle.
- Creating a hierarchy of feared situations.
- Exposure and response prevention – A practice that gradually encourages patients to confront situations that cause anxiety. This is introduced gradually and works by only exposing clients to situations where they can tolerate their levels of anxiety.
- Behavioural experiments – This allows patients to actively test out their beliefs and assumptions. For example, if a client believed they would be at high risk of contracting particular germs or disease by shaking someone’s hand or using a public restroom, they would be encouraged to conduct research that gives them an understanding of the likelihood and possibility of their thoughts or beliefs manifesting into reality.
- Cognitive restructuring – This process works by teaching patients how to identify and challenge their irrational thoughts or cognitive distortions. With OCD this often involves reducing the importance and meaning of thinking.

As with most anxiety-based conditions, it can often be challenging for a person to either identify when it is time to get help, or to gain the courage to seek assistance in the first place. For those who experience OCD, it is important to seek help as soon as the condition begins to impact the ability to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.



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