

Identifying Your Obsessions

CONTAMINATION OBSESSIONS

Excessive fear or disgust in regard to, and preoccupation with avoiding...

- Bodily waste or secretions, such as urine, feces, saliva, or blood
- Dirt or germs
- Sticky substances or residues
- Household cleansing agents or chemicals
- Environmental contaminants, such as radon, asbestos, radiation, or toxic waste
- Touching animals
- Insects
- Becoming ill from contamination
- Making others ill by contaminating them
- Diseases, such as AIDS, hepatitis, herpes, or other sexually transmitted diseases

HOARDING, SAVING, AND COLLECTING OBSESSIONS

- Worry about throwing things away, even seemingly useless items
- Urge to collect useless things
- Feeling uncomfortable with empty space in the home and having a need to fill it
- Urge to purchase multiples of the same item
- Urge to maintain purchased items in pristine condition, resulting in not using them
- Urge to pick up useless items from the ground

ORDERING OBSESSIONS

- Preoccupation with symmetry, exactness, or order

- Excessive concern that handwriting be perfect or “just right”
- Concern with aligning papers, books, and other items a certain “perfect” way

RELIGIOUS OBSESSIONS AND SCRUPULOSITY

Excessive fear, worry, and preoccupation with...

- Having blasphemous thoughts and being punished for them
- Praying “perfectly”
- Violating, even slightly, religious rules or precepts
- The possibility of losing control and shouting expletives in a church or synagogue

BODY IMAGE OBSESSIONS

Excessive fear, worry, and preoccupation with...

- Having a physical defect that makes you look ugly
- The possibility that others easily notice your perceived defect and consider it ugly

HEALTH OBSESSIONS

Excessive fear, worry, and preoccupation with...

- The possibility of having a catastrophic illness despite being told you are healthy
- The possibility that you may be responsible for causing or not preventing a potentially catastrophic illness in yourself or a loved one

AGGRESSIVE OBSESSIONS

Preoccupation with and excessive, irrational fear of...

- Losing control and harming yourself or others
- Acting on unwanted impulses, such as running over someone with your car
- Choking or stabbing someone

- Responsibility for some terrible accident, fire, or burglary due to personal carelessness
- Blurting out insults, obscenities, or racial epithets
- Doing something embarrassing or looking foolish

SEXUAL OBSESSIONS

Unwanted, worrisome, and intrusive...

- Sexual thoughts, images, or impulses of “snapping” or losing control
- Thoughts of molesting your own children or other children
- Thoughts of groping others
- Thoughts of being or becoming a homosexual
- Preoccupation with the idea of committing violent, sexual acts toward others without knowing that you are doing it

MISCELLANEOUS OBSESSIONS

- An unwanted urge to know, seek out, or remember useless information, such as slogans, license plate numbers, names, words, or historical events
- Fear of saying something wrong, not saying something just right, or leaving out details
- Worry about losing things
- Worry about making mistakes
- Worry that you didn’t perfectly understand something you read
- Worry that you wrote imperfectly
- Worry that you wrote an expletive or racial epithet without knowing it
- Being easily bothered by certain sounds and noises, such as clocks ticking, loud noises, or buzzing

- Being easily bothered by the feel of clothing or other textures on the skin
- Intrusive nonsense sounds, music, or words
- Fear of saying certain words because of superstitious beliefs about those words
- Fear of using certain colors for superstitious reasons
- Excessive superstitious fears and rigid adherence to them
- Excessive concern with lucky and unlucky numbers

Identifying Your Compulsions

CLEANING AND WASHING COMPULSIONS

Excessive, illogical, and uncontrollable...

- Hand washing, often performed in a ritualistic way
- Showering or bathing, often performed in a ritualistic way
- Ritualistic tooth brushing, grooming, or shaving
- Cleaning of the house, certain rooms, the yard, sidewalks, or cars
- Cleaning of objects or household items
- Use of special cleansers or cleaning techniques
- Avoidance of objects considered contaminated
- Avoidance of specific places considered contaminated, such as cities, towns, or buildings
- Concern with wearing gloves or other protection to avoid “contamination”

CHECKING COMPULSIONS

Checking over and over (despite repeated confirmation)...

- That you didn't harm others without knowing it
- That you didn't harm yourself

- That others didn't harm you
- That you didn't make a mistake
- That nothing terrible happened
- That you didn't do something that could cause future harm
- Some aspect of physical condition, such as appearance, or of health, such as pulse or blood pressure
- Physical surroundings, such as locks, windows, appliances, or stoves
- That jars are closed by excessive tightening
- That doors are closed by excessive, repeated shutting

HOARDING, SAVING, AND COLLECTING COMPULSIONS

- Saving or collecting seemingly useless items
- Picking up useless items from the ground
- Difficulty throwing seemingly useless items away, as they might someday be useful

REPEATING, COUNTING, AND ORDERING COMPULSIONS

- Reading and rereading things excessively
- Excessively writing and rewriting things
- Repeating routine activities, such as going in and out of doorways, getting up and down from a chair, combing hair, tying shoes, or dressing and undressing over and over
- Doing certain activities a particular number of times
- Counting items, such as books on a shelf, ceiling tiles, or cars going by
- Counting during compulsive activities, such as checking or washing
- Arranging items in a certain order, such as books, pencils, or objects in cupboards

BODY IMAGE COMPULSIONS

- Excessively checking your body for signs of a physical defect
- Making extensive efforts to hide perceived defects from others
- Changing your appearance to hide or “fix” perceived physical defects

HEALTH-RELATED COMPULSIONS

- Requiring repeated reassurance that you don't have a catastrophic illness
- Getting repeated medical tests
- Excessively checking your body (for example, your blood pressure or heart rate) for signs of disease
- Spending excessive time on the Internet researching symptoms of catastrophic disease

MISCELLANEOUS COMPULSIONS

- Mental rituals, such as prayers or repeating “good” thoughts to counteract “bad” thoughts (with the intention of reducing or neutralizing anxiety)
- Reassuring self-talk or mantras stated over and over (with the intention of reducing or neutralizing anxiety)
- Excessive need to repetitively ask others for reassurance when ample assurance is evident to others and has already been provided
- Excessive need to confess “wrong” behavior, even the slightest or significant infractions or perceived infractions against others
- Superstitious behavior that takes excessive amounts of time
- Need to touch, tap, or rub certain items or people

- Measures, other than checking, to prevent harm to self or others, such as avoidance of certain objects or extreme precautions to prevent highly unlikely harm or danger
- Eating ritualistically according to specific rules, such as arranging food or utensils, eating at certain times, or eating foods in a particular order

OCD-RELATED COMPULSIONS

- Pulling hair from your scalp, eyebrows, eyelashes, or pubic area
- Acts of self-damage or self-mutilation, such as picking skin
- Compulsives hopping (often related to hoarding; for example, buying a number of things for fear of running out)