

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in Adolescents

Obsessive compulsive disorder or OCD starts from adolescence onwards. OCD is feeling of strong obsessions and compulsions which result in intense discomfort and affects daily functioning. Obsessions are thoughts which are persistent and recurrent. They even include unwanted images and impulses which lead to distress and anxiety. These feelings and thoughts are usually irrational or unrealistic. Compulsions are repetitive rituals or behavior such as checking something again & again, or mental acts such as counting. These obsessions & compulsions cause intense distress and anxiety and can interfere with the daily activities, relationships, social activities and academic functioning. The person with OCD thinks that he has no control over his actions. OCDs are relapsing and chronic illness.

The thoughts change as the adolescent grows. Younger children suffering from OCD often have thoughts of harm befalling on them and their family such as thief getting into the house through an unlocked door. This will make the children to recheck the door and windows again and again fearing that they might have left the door unlocked accidentally. Teenagers suffering from OCD fear that they might get fall sick due to germs, contaminated food and AIDS. The adolescent develops certain rituals, such as washing hands innumerable times, in order to get over the fear. These rituals help them to think that they have overcome the problem for the time being and give them temporary relief. If they do not perform these rituals, they become more and more anxious.

OCD is a sign of brain circuitry's unusual functioning and it involves the striatum part of the brain. The brain activity patterns of such people differ from normal people and people with other mental disorders. Researchers have concluded that OCD is usually a family problem and is a disorder of the brain. Streptococcal bacterial infection can create or worsen the condition of OCD. Adolescents with no family history of OCD can also develop it. Most of the adolescents feel embarrassed to talk about their OCDs. They think that people will label them as crazy and this will make them feel ashamed. This will make it difficult for the parents to talk to their children about their OCD, in order to solve them. Parents need to develop good communication skills for this purpose. Parent's support is also very important to the adolescent. Cooperation is extremely important along with treatment, because if the problem is not treated the adolescent will grow into a disturbed adult.

Most of the adolescents with OCD can receive effective treatment. The treatment can include psychotherapy and intake of medications such as fluoxetine, clomipramine, fluvoxamine, paroxetine, sertraline and other serotonin reuptake inhibitors. When OCD is caused due to streptococcal infection, the adolescent

can be administered with antibiotics to kill the bacterium which is causing it. Exposure and response prevention behavioral therapy is very useful in solving OCD. In this therapy, the adolescent is wontedly exposed to his/her fears which give him/her obsessive thought. After that he/she is trained to avoid these thoughts and the rituals which he/she carries out to tackle the anxiety.

An adolescent having OCD can also have depression, substance abuse, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, and other types of anxiety disorders. When a person with OCD and other mental illness, is treated, OCD becomes more difficult to treat and even diagnose.

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