Managing OCD with CBT

by Katie d’Ath and Rob Willson
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Introduction

Welcome to the world of cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Becoming your own expert on OCD and how to overcome it helps whether you are processing a recent diagnosis, trying out some self-help, working with a therapist, taking medication or perhaps thinking of having another go at recovery. On average, a person waits ten years to get help for OCD, but people really do break free from it. We hope this book helps you do exactly that.

About This Book

We wrote Managing OCD with CBT For Dummies as a resource for people who are struggling with OCD in some way. Whether you have OCD yourself or you know someone who does, we want this book to help you understand the problem well and to show you how to help yourself (or someone else) tackle the problem.

Understanding OCD is the first step in creating change; know your enemy, and you can be well armed to fight against it. When you know the basics, you can create a clear picture of your own vicious cycle of obsessions and compulsions. In this book, we talk you through how to respond to your OCD differently and offer plenty of tips and practical advice to help you work toward your goal of overcoming OCD. But knowing the theory is unlikely to really change anything. You actually have to commit to (and stick with) experimenting with behaving differently if you want to see change. It’s like learning a language; you can study all the grammar rules and even the vocabulary, but you’re not going to become fluent unless you start using the language to communicate.

This book is not only about getting rid of OCD but also about recognising what you may be missing as a result of your OCD. It encourages you to look at the bigger picture and
think about your life beyond OCD; it suggests you put more emphasis on enjoyable and rewarding activities so you can create the life you want to lead.

Between us, we have over 30 years of experience in helping people overcome OCD, and we have tried to stick closely to evidence-based practice. We’re not medical doctors; we’ve based our advice regarding medication on the United Kingdom’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance for OCD (www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg31). It’s compiled by the leading experts in the field, who draw on high quality research to guide their recommendations.

Although this book is meant to help you help yourself, no one expects you to beat OCD entirely on your own. See what support you can get from your doctor and your loved ones and take a look at some of the excellent charities that exist for people with OCD.

Foolish Assumptions

A word of warning: This book is not going to be a perfect fit for your OCD. If you have OCD, our experience tells us that your hope for relief of responsibility and difficulty tolerating uncertainty will mean you will be inclined to focus upon the way in which your OCD ‘is different’.

All we can say is that the principles outlined here almost certainly relate to your OCD so focus on applying these to your personal experience of OCD rather than focusing upon your doubts about whether or not this book is ‘right’ for you.

Icons Used in This Book

To help you pinpoint vital information, we’ve placed icons throughout the text to highlight nuggets of knowledge.

This icon suggests a practical thing to do or try in order to help you put whatever we’re talking about into practice.
The Remember icon prompts you to pause and take note of something that is particularly important and worth committing to memory.

A Warning highlights typical pitfalls that are worth watching out for. Don’t worry; it’s very common to fall foul of these. That’s how we know to point them out to you.

The OCD Demon icon gives an example of the sort of argument your OCD may come up with to try and put you off or derail you. There are many ways OCD tries to do this, so don’t worry if yours comes up with a different argument. Just notice that it’s your OCD talking and take the words with a bucket of salt!

Tips are practical ideas we hope make your journey of recovery a little smoother.

**Beyond the Book**

You can pick up extra tips and tools online. Check out the Cheat Sheet at [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingocdwithcbt](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingocdwithcbt) and some short bonus articles at [www.dummies.com/extras/managingocdwithcbt](http://www.dummies.com/extras/managingocdwithcbt).

**Where to Go from Here**

This is a reference book, so you can read it from cover to cover to improve your general understanding of CBT for OCD, or you can just dive straight into the page that interests you most. (This is especially good to remember if you have a strong tendency toward being overly thorough.) The important thing is to use the book in the way you find most helpful.

The best place to start is Chapter 1, which introduces CBT for OCD. If you already understand the basics, you may want to jump straight to Part III for details on combating OCD. Lots of topics in CBT for OCD are interrelated, so we provide cross-references throughout the book to point you to other relevant chapters. You can go straight there or save the related information for later – whatever works best for you.
Part I

Understanding OCD

getting started with

managing OCD

For Dummies can help you get started with lots of subjects. Visit www.dummies.com to learn more and do more with For Dummies.
In this part. . .

✔ Become familiar with the nature of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).
✔ Recognise how cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can help treat your OCD.