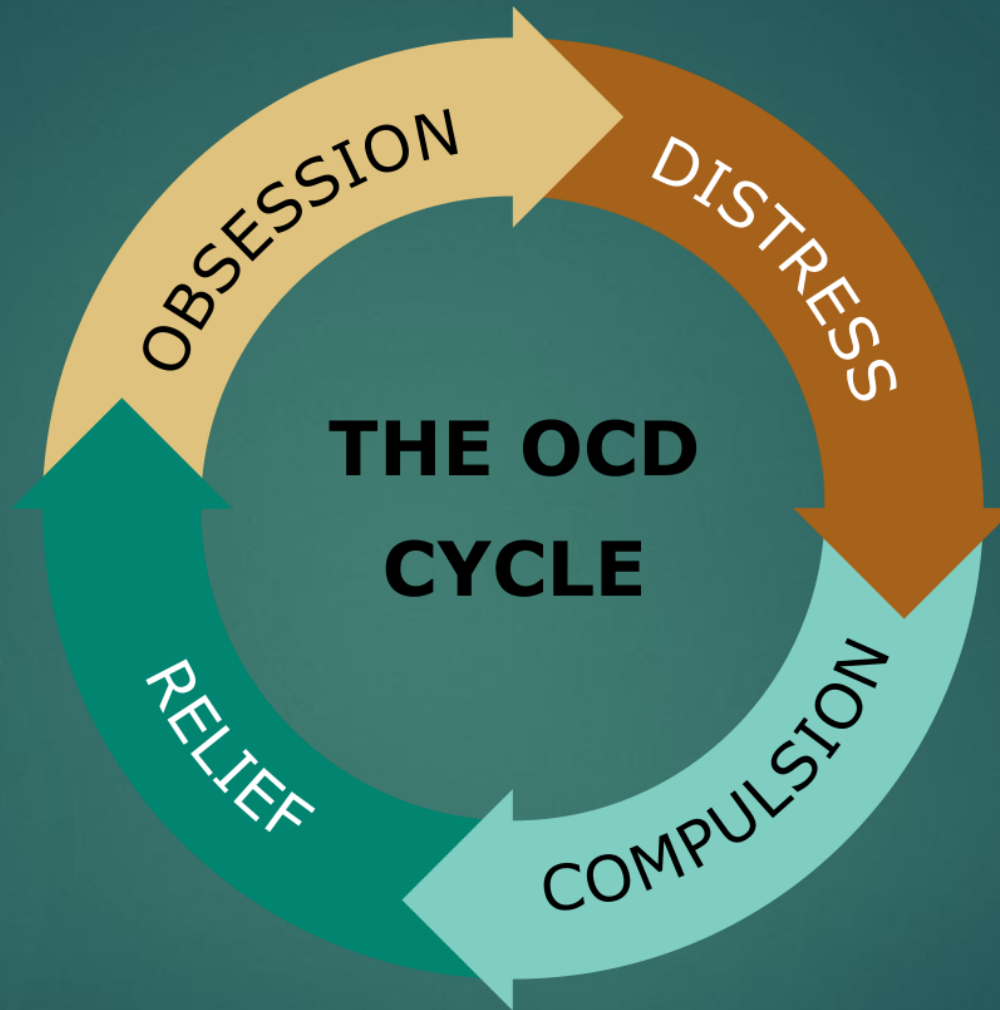




An autistic perspective on OCD

DEAN BEADLE


So what is OCD?



All humans can have intrusive thoughts- but in OCD they become “sticky”



**What
percentage
of general
population
have OCD?**




Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is estimated to affect between **1% and 3% of the global population** during their lifetime.

OCD-UK



What percentage of autistic people are thought to have OCD?





Research from 2015 showed that **17% of Autistic people also have OCD** and further research from 2020 shows that **between 17% and 37% of autistic young people also have OCD.**



Autistic Dream Realms Project (2023). (A collaborative community project between Autistic Realms and Katie Munday, Autistic and Living the Dream)



It's **not** just a keenness to be tidy!!



**So why are autistics more likely
to develop OCD?**

Strong autistic sense of justice



“Can you take us to Wharewaka please?”

Perfectionism



Monotropism

“Many autistic people identify with monotropism...Monotropic people focus more energy (attention/resources) on a smaller number of things at any one time. This has been likened to having **tunnels of attention** where monotropic people become so highly engaged in their specific interest that they may not notice what is happening outside of that space but equally could be hyper-vigilant within that attention tunnel, and consequently less aware of what is happening outside of that channel. This contrasts with **polytropic people**, who can divide their attention and energy resources across a wider number of channels of interest/tasks/ sensory stimuli at any time.”

<https://autisticrealms.com/monotropism-autism-ocd/>

Childhood trauma is believed to be a factor in developing OCD



84% of autistic people experience multiple forms of adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse and victimisation

Trauma and Social Adversity in Autism: Considerations and Directions for Clinicians and Researchers

K. Beck, 2024

Why are autistics more likely to develop OCD?

It's thought OCD tends to occur in super-honest personality types- autistics are known for our honesty

Perhaps alexithymia compounds things in this intersection?

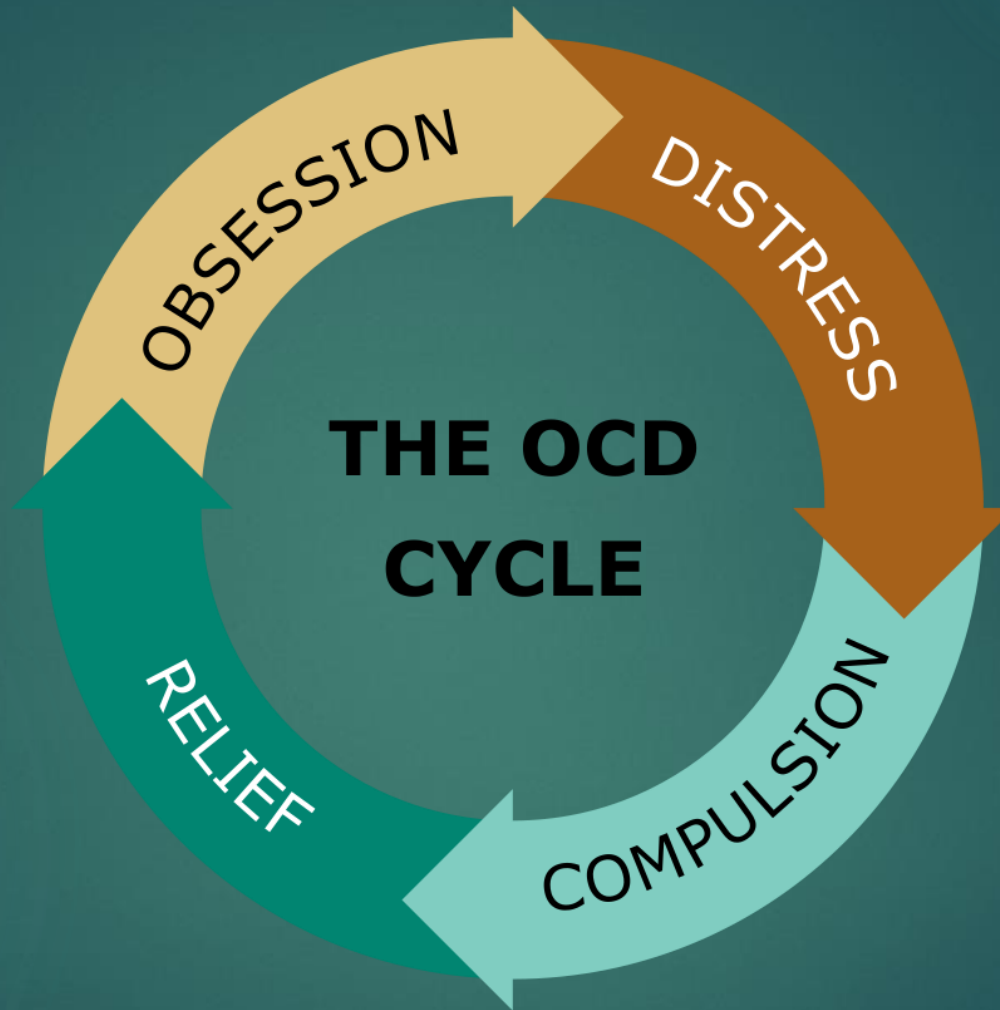
The need for certainty/clarity is prevalent in both groups



Key point:

Autistic repetition brings peace, order and comfort.

Compulsions in OCD are driven by fear of what will happen if you don't do them.

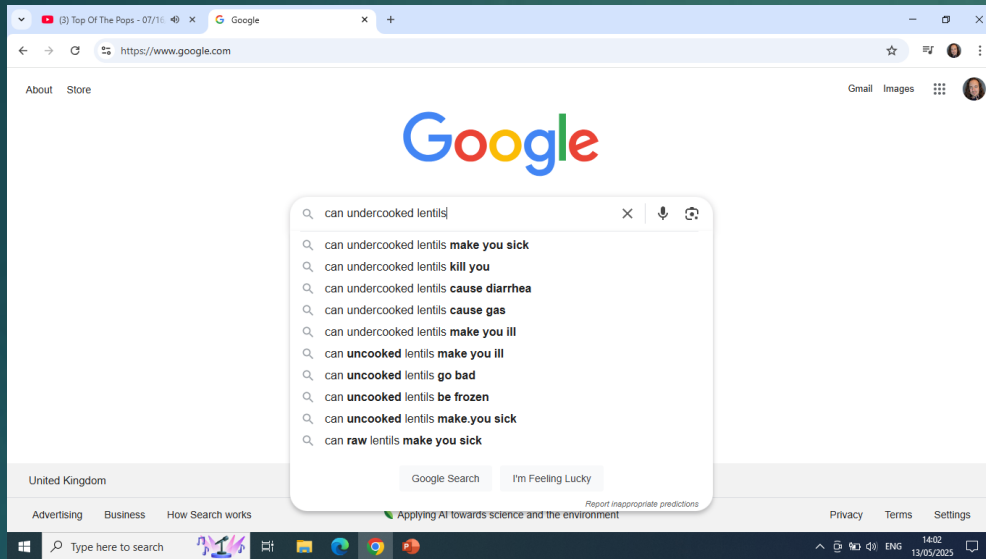


All humans can have intrusive thoughts- but in OCD they become “sticky”

Compulsions: my greatest hits



But compulsions can also be:



Picture credit: ohmygodlife

What helps?



But should I offer
reassurance?

Reframing my thoughts

- ▶ Arguing with intrusive thoughts only fuels them
- ▶ Agreeing with them *SOMETIMES* dissolves them
- ▶ Most OCD thoughts are ego-dystonic
(they accuse you of being the opposite of your values)
- ▶ I speak to them like a bully whispering in my ear

OCD latches on to
things that you
value.

*That's how it gets
your attention.*

Dr. Menige

Name it before it takes root

That was an intrusive
thought

Wow, OCD!
You're really
trying to get
at me today

OCD is a faulty alarm system



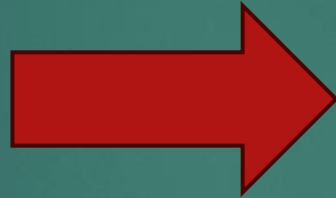
Thoughts are like post



Reacting to intrusive thoughts




STOP!




Then focus on something **sensory**

- Wiggling fingers in front of eyes
- Reading something
- Counting leaves on a tree etc etc


Anything that reconnects you to your senses



Acknowledge thought- name it “this is an OCD thought- creates distance between you and the thought



Instead of trying to fix it or avoid the feeling- **sit with it for a moment-** “this is making me feel anxious- OF COURSE it is, because it’s a horrible thought”



“OCD you are **telling me that same old story** again that you’ve told me time and time again”- reduces it’s power



“Ruminating over this doesn’t help me lead a fulfilling life, so **I’m going to go back to doing what I was doing**”- helps you to reconnect to the moment/what’s real



I've been gameifying it with some success

Can I wash this plate up just once before I eat off of it?

Can I still cook with this jar of herbs even though it fell on the floor?

Build a file of OCD wins...

Mums pizza
Touched nose
Didn't change plate
Didnt bring wipes
Didnt go back to
check plug

Ocd victories


08:52

...all the times you didn't do the compulsion-
all the times you proved to your nervous
system that you were safe.

“Right now, the only thing that is real is this chicken”




Reclaiming the moment and rejoining the now



“I don’t know, OCD. But YOU don’t know for sure either, so I’m not gonna take your word for it...”



Harm OCD: “I don’t have that power”



**When you start to gain
perspective...don't be fooled into
thinking it's now safe to google the
worry...that's how it gets you!!**

Grounding exercises - useful tool against panic attacks

If you're feeling anxious or worried, bring your attention back to the current moment with this simple grounding exercise. Notice the following around you:

5 things you can see

4 things you can feel

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

THEBLISSFULMIND.COM

SOURCES

Bunn, T. (2013). *Soar: the breakthrough treatment for fear of flying*. Guilford, CT: Lyons Press.

OCD Flare Ups- Thoughts from a multiple survivor

OCD flare-ups are a temporary increase in symptoms, where intrusive thoughts become more frequent and compulsions feel harder to resist. For me, this usually involves a new obsessive worry.

- Triggers can include recent life changes, stress
- You have 100% success rate at surviving the hardest days
- Notice the OK moments
- It WILL pass
- Acknowledge your STRENGTH- most people could not cope with that level of distress- you are a warrior

Tired?

Overwhelmed?

What is happening in my body?


Hungry?

Have I been stressed recently?

DO things- stopping normal things confirms to nervous system that something is wrong







The longer you search for certainty,
the tighter OCD's grip is.
There is no mythical 'certain' that
will abate OCD.

Accepting uncertainty. Living
despite uncertainty is the way
forward.

OCD can feel isolating.
You feel separate from the world.
You're at war whilst everyone
else goes about their everyday
lives.

Those who support us
acknowledging our battles.
Making us feel seen.
It's **EVERYTHING**.



Facebook: Dean Beadle Speaker

TikTok: dean.beadle

Instagram: deanbeadlespeaker

Youtube.com/deanbeadleuk

deansbeadle@yahoo.com

