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Dating a Person with OCD

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Dating is usually a sensitive topic even for people who don't necessarily struggle with mental health disorders. With all the obsessions and compulsive behaviors specific to OCD, dating can sometimes be a challenge.

Nevertheless, people with OCD can have a great love life, just like everyone else, even if this means some extra effort from both partners. What is more, if you look past your interest's quirky preoccupations, you are very likely to see a lovely, caring, interesting and downright fascinating individual. But since dating someone with OCD has its specificities, let's explore some tailor-made tips.

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Don't Be Intrusive

Some people, who experience OCD, tend to perceive their condition as a weakness. They, more than anyone, know the struggle and pain associated with OCD, and they may not be eager to share such a deep experience, until you get to know each other a bit better. Your interest may feel shame, and fear that you will see him/her as weak or broken.

That is why the most effective behavior you can have, is to be supportive and listen, when your interest wants to share about their OCD. Show interest, but avoid being intrusive, as it might make them feel like they are being interrogated and increase the feelings of shame.

Remain Calm

In some cases, preoccupations can be so dominant, that it may be virtually impossible to hide them. For instance, if your date starts arranging the flatware in a different order, avoid having a strong reaction, as it can only increase the awkwardness of the situation. In most cases he/she will tell you about these uncontrollable compulsions and if not, you can politely ask.

Keep in mind that no matter how unconventional or eccentric his/her obsessions may seem, a strongly negative reaction on your part can only exasperate the situation.

Be Patient

Suppose you're already in a relationship with someone who's struggling with OCD. Sometimes it can be extremely difficult, given the fact that his/her obsessions can often interfere with your life as well. For instance, it's hard to enjoy a nice dinner when your partner has to go to the bathroom every 10 minute to wash their hands.

Patience is key, when dating a great person who happens to have OCD. It is important to stay focused on what attracted you to your partner, and try to work on the issue together. If your partner is willing to change and work on their issues, your patience will serve as extra dose of encouragement.

Be Understanding

It's difficult to be patient without being understanding. Knowing what OCD is will change your perspective and help you get less frustrated with your partner, because you will understand them much better. Educating yourself about OCD, which you can do with the help of this course, will help you be more empathetic and try to see the worlds through his/her eyes. Try to put yourself in your partner's shoes and imagine how it must feel like to constantly struggle with obsessive thoughts. Consider the disappointment that your partner might feel, whenever their compulsive behavior interferes with your relationship.

OCD is never easy to manage, but it could be less painful when you face it as a couple.

Be Open and Listen

A healthy couple is one in which both partners discuss their issues in a friendly and open manner. If your partner feels confident enough to openly talk about their OCD, the best thing to do is listen carefully and actively. Just like reading or writing, listening is a skill that takes time and practice to master. Most people listen not to understand, but to reply. The end result is that the partner feels misunderstood or even ignored.

If your partner is trying to tell you about their OCD and you are not listening, they might feel frustrated and lonely. The key to effective listening is empathy. Don't listen because you feel obliged to do so, but because you care. Try to resonate with your partner's emotions. Keep in mind that your unconditional love and support is what makes their OCD easier to manage.

Tips for Active Listening

Active listening characterizes a set of behaviors, with which you can show the other person that you are really listening to them and care about what they have to say. Try the tips listed below and your partner will feel much better understood.

Maintain Eye Contact

Don't stare, but also make sure that you are not looking around the room, at your hands, etc., while your partner is talking. Even if this may be your way of listening, maintaining eye contact demonstrates to the other person that you are paying attention.

Encourage the Conversation

To help your partner feel more at ease and to understand better what they are trying to say, use phrases such as: "I see", "What do you mean when you say that...", "Could you elaborate on this?", "Am I right to think that..."

Use Non-Verbal Language

Utilize non-verbal language, in the form of nods, smiles, and other appropriate expression, to let your partner know that you are engaged in the conversation.

Avoid Judgment

We sometimes label people and behaviors, without even realizing it. It could be difficult to stop doing that, because we are so accustomed to it, but making the effort guarantees better communication with your partner.

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