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The Many Faces of OCD

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We already know that OCD has two major components: obsessions and compulsions. However, this condition comes in many forms and flavors, depending on the nature of the obsessions. Some are preoccupied with keeping things in perfect order, while others can't stop washing their hands.

We are about to explore the 5 most common forms of OCD. The distinction has been made, so that it is easier to understand various forms of the disorder. However, not a single person is just one thing, and so whichever kind of OCD you or a loved one may struggle with, it certainly doesn't define you as an individual.

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The Hoarder

The Essence

The hoarder is an extreme collector. From newspapers and magazines, to clothes, shoes, ties or books, the hoarder feels the need to obtain and collect objects. Considering that almost every man-made product comes in various shapes, sizes, colors and models, a hoarder can easily develop obsessions for virtually anything.

The Source

Some argue that consumerism is the main reason why some people develop compulsive shopping. Each day, we are bombarded by ads, discounts and promotions. One example is the ever popular "Buy one, get one free". Nonetheless, consumerism only gives you the means to engage in compulsive buying, so we cannot blame it for our obsessions.

The source of compulsive hoarding lies somewhere deep inside the walls of your mind. Our obsessions might be the result of unfulfilled needs and desires. In other words, we engage in compulsive hoarding in order to fill an emotional void.

The Cleaner

The Essence

Cleaning is probably the most common obsession among people who struggle with OCD. We all know that germs are everywhere but we don't feel the need to think about it. In order to chase the obsessive thoughts away, people who struggle with this type of OCD engage in frenetic cleaning. They literally spend hours cleaning, washing, vacuuming, scrubbing and rinsing.

The Strain

Not all of them are terrified by the idea of germs and bacteria living on the surface of objects. For some, the content of the obsessions applies only to what exists on the surface of the body and nothing more. In order to remove the tension caused by obsessive thoughts or images related to contamination, they engage in compulsive washing. For instance, they wash their hands 50-100 times a day (in a frantic manner) or they take several showers.

In some rare cases, a person's compulsive handwashing can be so severe that he/she might end up with scratches, blisters and raw skin.

The Arranger

Just like "The Cleaner", this specific type of OCD has become a part of popular culture, through movies, sitcoms, commercials, and even jokes. Sadly, when it comes to dealing with OCD in real life, there's absolutely nothing exciting or funny about it.

The Essence

As you've probably concluded, arrangers are obsessed with keeping things in perfect order. Books have to be arranged in alphabetical order, pencils must have the same length, documents must be neatly placed in categories and clothes must be perfectly ironed.

The Source

Most people, obsessed with arranging their possessions, come from families governed by discipline and order. For them, a slightly wrinkled shirt or a misplaced book means chaos and complete lack of control. At a first glance, they seem captivated by the idea of symmetry and order, but from their perspective, things can be a lot more complicated and worrisome.

Variety

Apart from the countless hours lost, people obsessed with order and symmetry find it extremely difficult to choose which standard is best. For instance, books can be arranged in alphabetical order, by title or the author's name, or they can be placed in sections, depending on the content of each book. This uncertainty carries a sense of strain for those who struggle with OCD.

The Checker

The Essence

The Checker is mostly afraid of catastrophes. For checkers, the possibility of a natural or man-caused disaster is an extremely real one. On top of that, people who struggle with this type of OCD often find themselves overwhelmed by self-doubt.

This is why they feel compelled to double-check everything. In order to prevent potential fires, floods or burglaries, these people will compulsively check doors, windows, alarms, stoves and electrical appliances.

The Effect on Others

Living with a person who's constantly checking things can be extremely tiring. At some point, he or she might ask you to engage in the same behaviors. In other words, their fears and obsessions will extend beyond their own persona.

The Scrupulous One

The Essence

In layman's terms, being scrupulous means to try and avoid wrongdoings, at all costs, or to be extremely precise.

The Background

People who display scrupulosity were often raised in families with high moral or religious standards. In some way, we could argue that scrupulosity is similar to pathological guilt. Those of us who display such high standards are usually obsessed with holding our moral or religious code, no matter what.

The Effects

Every violation of their code is followed by self-inflicted punishment, such as thoughts of guilt,

shame, disappointment, risky behaviors, or even self-injury.

Sadly for all of us, humans are not perfect and nor will they ever be. Making mistakes from time to time is absolutely understandable. Our moral or religious standards should serve as guidance, not a tool for counting mistakes and creating punishment.

Avoiding Labels

The distinction between different types of OCD, which was made here, had the purpose of illustrating various struggles that people experience. However, it is important to remember, that whether you are the one fighting OCD, or a someone you care about, labels are always detrimental. As people, we have many layers and nuances, so it is impossible to avoid describing an individual, or a disorder, in just a few words.

Therefore, if you label someone, even if you do it absentmindedly, it can be very stigmatizing and traumatizing for them. The same is true if you label yourself. Labels block the way to resolving inner conflict, such as OCD, so the best policy is to avoid them as much as possible.

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