



Pure-O OCD

It is commonly known that OCD is a complex condition, which comes in many forms. The Pure-O form might be less talked about, but it is just as serious and important to consider.

Primarily obsessional obsessive-compulsive disorder, or Pure-O, is rather rare and so it has been difficult of scientists to determine how it has grown to differ from other types of OCD. However, demystifying the condition can help you and your loved ones find healthy coping strategies, in case you are dealing with Pure-O OCD.

The banner features the Explorable logo and the text 'Quiz Time!' in a white, handwritten-style font. Below this, there are three white-bordered cards on an orange background. The first card shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden floor with the text 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2'. The second card shows a fan of colorful pens with the text 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2'. The third card shows a Ferris wheel at sunset with the text 'Quiz: Flags in Europe'. To the right of the cards is a white arrow pointing to the text 'See all quizzes =>'.

What Is Pure-O?

The main characteristic of OCD is the intense anxiety, caused by obsessive thoughts and images. This is the reason why OCD falls under the category of anxiety disorders. The American Psychiatric Association states that in order to diagnose a person with OCD he/she must experience either obsessions or compulsions.

Since, as you already know, the obsessions are an expression of anxiety, and the compulsions are a dysfunctional way to tame that anxiety.

The Key Difference

Pure-O is a special kind of OCD, in which the person experiences obsessive thoughts, without engaging in compulsive behaviors and ritualizing. This may sound like a less severe type of OCD, while in fact it is different in nature, but not in severity.

The reason is that people who struggle with Pure-O OCD, have compulsions in the form of

cognitions – thoughts, ideas, images, etc. This means that they are often tormented by violent intrusive thoughts that might not be observed externally, but have significant internal repercussions.

Myth or Reality?

Pure-O OCD has baffled the minds of researchers and mental health professionals, ever since the first documented cases of OCD. Some experts argue that this condition doesn't even exist mostly because it doesn't comply to the common patterns of OCD.

If obsessive thoughts generate intense anxiety, how do people manage to cope with it without engaging in some form of action that reduces feelings of nervousness? This is the most popular argument used by people who disprove the existence of Pure-O. However, the staggering amount of evidence demonstrates that Pure-O is very much a realistic condition that affects a lot of people.

What Does Pure-O Feel Like?

People with Pure-O OCD experience mental compulsions, which are difficult to spot. These mental rituals come in the form of certain phrases or words that they repeat, in order to neutralize the negative effects of obsessions.

Those who struggle with Pure-O usually have cognitive compulsions that revolve around one or a few central themes. Those may be responsibility, sexuality, violence, religiosity, health, relationships. Although from the outside, people with Pure-O OCD may seem highly functional, they are, in fact, tormented by obsessive thoughts, which are followed by cognitive distortions and form a vicious cycle of anxiety.

In these cases, courses such as this one, as well as mental health professionals, can be of great help.

What If It Isn't OCD?

If what you are experiencing does not correspond with the description of OCD, or Pure-O OCD, then what could it be?

Although it is always best to consult with a mental health specialist before taking any action or self-diagnosing, it could be that you are dealing with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) [1]. The cognitive aspects of this condition are somewhat similar to OCD, since those who struggle with GAD may often experience all sorts of intrusive, worry-filled thoughts, which make it easy to confuse this condition with OCD.

The best way to differentiate between OCD and generalized anxiety is by checking for compulsions and rituals, both mental and behavioral. Other anxiety disorders may also have similar symptoms to OCD and GAD, so it is always best to consult with an experienced mental health specialist.

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