

Fighting OCD during the COVID-19 Crisis

The current situation with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is a scary and uncertain time for everyone. However, it may be a particularly difficult time for people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Please see some advice below about how to manage OCD during this time.

Be kind to yourself

Fear and anxiety are normal responses. Trying to push these feelings away may lead to more compulsions and distress.



Remember that it is ok to feel difficult and negative emotions. It is even ok to press pause on ERP until this period is over.

Seek support from others

Speaking to others can really help.

Try speaking to friends and family about how you feel.

You could also contact OCD Action on:

0845 390 6232

[**support@ocdaction.org.uk**](mailto:support@ocdaction.org.uk)

Limit news

It is understandable to want information and updates on COVID-19. However, some news sources may not be reliable and repeated checking may lead to increased anxiety and distress.



Try to limit how many times you check the news, and make sure you are using reputable sources.

The news can also be confusing so you may want to speak with your family about what you read or watch.

Ask yourself why

If you are unsure if a behaviour is related to OCD, ask yourself why you are having to do it. Is it because you have been advised to due to COVID-19, or is it because it will reduce anxiety?



If you are having to do something repeatedly to reduce your anxiety, watch out for this being a compulsion.

Be cautious of reassurance

Although it is reasonable and understandable to want reassurance at a time like this, reassurance seeking can become a compulsion.

Try to watch out for reassurance becoming more frequent and repetitive and where possible, try to limit how much you are asking for reassurance.



Follow the guidelines... but no more

We are all being advised to wash our hands frequently and to avoid lots of things. OCD may try and use this advice to introduce new compulsions or make old compulsions worse.

Follow [Public Health England guidelines](#) but try to make sure you are not doing more than the recommendations.

To help you spot OCD make two lists: one with what the official advice says you should do to reduce the risk of Coronavirus, and one with what OCD says you should do. Try not to listen to OCD.



Challenge OCD in other ways

It might not be possible to engage in some ERP tasks right now, especially if these would involve going against Public Health England guidance for COVID-19. However, you might be able to focus on fighting other areas of OCD.

Identify other compulsions that you could try to resist.

Be proud of yourself

Resisting and reducing compulsions can be difficult at the best of times, but it is likely to be even more challenging during periods of heightened anxiety.

Be proud of yourself for anything you are doing to try and challenge OCD, no matter how small.

It might also be nice to treat yourself with a reward for your efforts!



Keeping well during the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic is a new and uncertain time for all of us and will affect our mental health in different ways. Please see below some tips on things you can do to keep mentally healthy during this time.

Don't forget the basics

Eating healthily, staying hydrated and getting enough sleep are key for good physical and mental health. However, it can also be easy to forget about the importance of these.

Try to eat healthily, drink lots of water, and aim for 8-10 hours of sleep a night.



Structure

Having a routine and structure to your day can help keep a sense of normality as well as ensuring you make room for everything important.

Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible, or if you aren't happy with your usual routine, now may be a good time to do things differently.

Activities

Consider how you will fill your time. Think about which activities bring you enjoyment and a sense of achievement, and plan these into your weekly routine.

Some ideas for activities include:

- Arts and crafts
- Cooking or baking
- Playing or listening to music
- Reading
- Puzzles



Keep active

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At present you are allowed to leave the house once a day. You could use this time to go for a walk, run or bike ride. Alternatively, there are lots of exercises you could try at home, like [PE with Joe Wicks](#), virtual Zumba, video tutorials of [yoga](#) or dancing around your kitchen.

Plan what exercise you want to do each day.

Keep a journal

Keeping a journal is a nice way to keep track of what you have been up to, and to reflect on your experiences. It is also a helpful way to monitor how you are feeling so that you can notice and address difficulties early.

Start a journal and keep a note of what you do and how you feel.

Stay in touch

Maintaining social relationships is important for your wellbeing. In spite of social distancing rules, you can still phone, video call, text or even write to stay connected with others.



Make plans to phone or video chat with people or groups you would usually see in person. If you're worried about what you'll talk about, make a plan with someone to watch a film, or read a book so that you can discuss it when you talk to each other.

Take time to relax

Planning in relaxing activities may help to reduce a general sense of anxiety. You could use apps like [Calm](#) or [Headspace](#), practice some yoga, or have a nice relaxing bath.

Identify some relaxing activities and plan these in.

Keep hope!

COVID-19 won't be around forever, and so it is important to remember that normality will return!

Think about what you would like to do once COVID-19 is over. You might want to start making some provisional plans so you have some things to look forward to.

