

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE WORD "DISORDER"

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I have assessed and treated many young people with OCD. Typically, towards the end of my initial meeting with them and their parents I begin to explain what OCD is, and how common it is, etc. I break down OCD by obsessions (unwanted, intrusive thoughts, images and impulses that cause anxiety) compulsions (some repetitive or ritualistic act that is done to neutralize the obsessive thought or get rid of the anxiety that the obsessive thought causes) and the word *disorder*. Many times I see a confused or frightened look on the young person's face (and sometimes the parent's as well) when we begin to talk about the word disorder. You can almost read their minds thinking, "Oh my God, I have a disorder! Does he think I'm crazy? Am I crazy?" The answer to these questions is "No", and "No". Having a disorder does not make you crazy nor does your treating professional think you are crazy. Repeat. You are not crazy!

The word disorder is simply the term doctors use to describe the interference or disruption or *disorder* that the obsessions and compulsions that you are experiencing are causing in your life. Or to put it into terminology consistent with this webpage, the "chaos" that these symptoms are causing in your life. That's all that word means. It is nothing to be afraid or embarrassed of. The object of treatment for OCD is to reduce the obsessions and compulsions to a point where they are no longer causing interference or disorder in your life. Thankfully, for most OCD sufferers that is a realistic goal.

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