

5 key strategies to support OCD

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OCD is a mental health condition which consists of unwanted and repetitive thoughts (known as obsessions) and actions carried out by the person in an attempt to rid themselves of the thought. These actions are known as compulsions.

Below, we explore 5 key strategies to help support a young person who is experiencing this condition.

1. Acknowledge the 'OCD Bully': Encourage your child to think of their OCD as a bully (they could even draw this bully on a piece of paper). Discuss how you would respond to a bully and that the best strategy is to acknowledge them and walk away. Try and apply the same strategy to an obsessive thought – acknowledge that the thought is there but then try to switch your focus to something else.

2. Externalise your anxieties: It can be really helpful for a child to externalise their anxieties. The 'stress bucket' is a great resource for this as it will encourage your child to think about the triggers that add to their stress and anxiety, but it will also help them to think about healthy coping strategies that assist in managing this anxiety.

3. Keep a 'Mood Diary' or an 'OCD Diary': 'Mood Diaries' are a great way of tracking how an individual is feeling on any given day. The process of externalising these emotions on to paper can help to ease the tension that comes with them. 'OCD Diaries' are a fantastic way of keeping track of any obsessions and compulsions as well as noting down any helpful coping strategies that relieved the feeling of anxiety.

4. Discuss the 'Helicopter View': When your child is experiencing an obsession, ask them to consider how this situation would look from a helicopter. In other words, looking at the bigger picture of the situation. Questions to consider could be: What is making me feel this way? What advice would I give somebody else in this situation? How would this seem to others? What will help me to manage this situation.

5. Encourage mindfulness: Mindfulness strategies can be a helpful resource in supporting your child's OCD. Try 'take 5 breathing' or meditation apps in order to attempt to let go of unwanted thoughts.

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