

How to tell a loved one about your OCD

Talking about OCD to friends, partners or family members is a daunting thought. What if they dismissed it as a mere need for things to be clean and organised or a simple germ phobia without taking into account the extent of which OCD rules and ruins your life every single day. What if they reply with the dreaded words "me too. I have OCD. I do that to" when in reality all they do is organise their pens into colour order every now and again. Completely trivialising the true hell that is living with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

You shouldn't let these possibilities put you off telling a loved one to get the support, love and encouragement you need. I can't guarantee the outcome will always be positive. The reality is that there are people out there who don't understand OCD or mental health in general, for that matter. But until you try you will never know. If your loved ones are true loved ones, they won't want to watch you suffer. They don't want to see you have your independence, confidence and life stripped away from you. Keep reminding yourself this when you decide to tell them about your OCD.

If you are planning to tell a loved one about your OCD but don't know how to go about it or if you are particularly worried about the ordeal, here is some quick tips and advice which you may find helpful.

Print off some information sheets about OCD or have some videos ready to show them what OCD really is

If you think your loved one isn't going to understand OCD. Maybe they say "I'm so OCD" a lot unnecessarily, take some information about OCD with you to help them understand what OCD really is. If you think a video would be more helpful, show them that.

Here are some really useful videos and websites that you could use:

[OCD Action- OCD in brief](#)

[MIND- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder](#)

[Living with OCD \(Video\)](#)

[Debunking the myths of OCD \(video\)](#)

Break it down

With the help of the videos and websites, you may find it easier to tell your loved ones if you break everything up into sections. Not only will this make it easier for them to understand but it also stops you going off track. Maybe start with the intrusive thoughts; the fuel behind the compulsions that most people don't even acknowledge. You can then use this to explain your compulsions which they or may not be aware of. And then finish with telling them how it affects you every single day and why it's a disorder, not an adjective.

Pick a convenient time

I think the timing is crucial. If you pick an inconvenient time where they are preoccupied or busy, they may not be able to give you their full attention. They might not be listening and therefore might not really understand what you're saying. I would recommend maybe talking to them before and maybe arranging a time that's convenient for both of you, that way you are maximising the chances of having a successful conversation with them.

Be honest and open

In order to get the most support from your loved ones, it's important to be as honest and open as you can with them. This is incredibly hard, we all know that. But please try and do the best that you

can. If you are not entirely open with them, they may not understand fully. They may jump to conclusions and start getting annoyed or frustrated. By explaining everything you are comfortable with will help them understand and hopefully be able to give the support you need to fight Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Let them ask questions if they want to

We don't know how your loved ones will react. They may be upset, confused, angry or even happy that you've reached out to them. One thing they may do is ask lots of questions. They may be annoyed that you didn't tell them sooner. They might ask you to tell them everything you do, to make sure you are not at risk of hurting yourself. This is likely to be an emotional and confusing time for everyone, so bombarding you with questions is likely. Although it's frustrating and probably the last thing, you want to do it's important to let them ask questions and answer them the best you can. The more your loved ones understand, the more they will be able to support you.

Use pictures or analogies to describe how you are feeling and what you are going through

Sometimes things are easier to understand if they are drawn out or described using an analogy. They often make things clearer for the person to understand especially if they have no idea what you are going through. I often use one about going into battle with no weapons or armour. It's just me fighting OCD every single day alone. Analogies are powerful and can really make suffering crystal clear to someone who doesn't understand.

Write what you want to say down first if you think you may get upset or tongue-tied

If you find yourself getting overwhelmed and stumbling on your words, don't panic. This is completely natural; it's a massive deal. You should not beat yourself up if this does happen to you. To prepare for this, you may find it useful to write down prior what you want to say so if you get upset you've got notes to keep you going or something you can show your loved ones if you don't think you can carry on. Having little reminders of what you want to say so you don't go off track may be really handy in keeping your mind focused, so you don't forget to tell them everything you want to.

Telling a loved one about your OCD takes enormous amounts of courage.

You should be so proud of yourself that you are even considering it. There's no rush, take your time and do it when you are ready. However, the sooner you reach out, the quicker, you can fight OCD and get your life back on track. Although I can't promise a positive outcome every single time, what I can promise is that by reaching out for help is the first step to change. You don't have to live trapped in the mercy of OCD forever. Recovery is possible, it all starts with a conversation.