

## **Talking to a Loved One About Your OCD**

Talking about OCD to friends, partners, or family members can be a daunting thought. What if they don't understand? What if they dismiss it as a mere need for things to be clean or organised, without taking into account the extent to which OCD rules and ruins your life every single day? What if they reply with the dreaded words, "That's normal, I have that too", when in reality all they do is organise their pens by colour every now and again, completely trivialising the true hell that is living with OCD?

These things may happen, but you shouldn't let this put you off telling a loved one about your condition and expressing that you need support, love and encouragement. There is no guarantee that the outcome will always be positive, but until you try you will never know. The reality is that there are people out there who don't understand OCD or mental health in general, but you still have the right to voice your needs and be heard. Your loved ones don't want to watch you suffer, and they don't want to see your confidence, independence, and life stripped away from you. They might just need some time to fully understand and accept what is happening. 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 conversation, here are 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 about what OCD really is**

If you think your loved one isn't going to understand OCD, 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:

['Introduction to OCD' video](#)

[OCD Action- OCD in brief](#)

[MIND- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder](#)

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

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

[Supporting someone with OCD](#)

[Reassurance seeking](#)

### **Break it down**

With the help of videos and factsheets, you may find it easier to explain OCD to your loved ones if you break everything up into sections. Not only will this make it easier for them to understand, but it will also help you organise the information in a concise way. 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 may not be aware of, and then finish with telling them how it affects you daily and why it's a disorder, not an adjective.

### **Pick a convenient time**

Timing is crucial. If you pick an inconvenient time when your loved one is 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. It may be better to speak to them beforehand and arrange 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 support you need from your loved ones, it's important to be as honest and open as you can with them. This can be incredibly hard, but 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 or start getting annoyed or frustrated. Explaining everything you are comfortable with will help them understand and hopefully be able to give the support you need to fight OCD.

### **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 happy that you've reached out to them. One thing they may do is ask a lot of questions. They may feel annoyed or sad 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 you may feel bombarded by lots of questions. Although it's frustrating and probably the last thing you want to do, it's important to let them ask questions and then 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. You can use the analogy of someone going into battle with no weapons or armour, and how this describes your experience of having to fight OCD on your own every single day. 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, because the conversation you are having involves exposing your vulnerabilities and speaking about something upsetting. 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 to having the conversation what you want to say so that if you get upset you've got notes to keep you going or something you can show your loved ones. Having little reminders of what you want to say so you don't go off track might 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, and you should be so proud of yourself for taking this step. 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 we can't promise a positive outcome every single time, what we can say is that reaching out for help is the first step to change. You don't have to suffer with OCD on your own forever. Recovery is possible, and it all starts with a conversation.