

## Treatment for OCD

There is treatment that can really help kids with OCD get better. OCD can be treated in two ways: with medicine and behavior therapy. Medicines that help brain chemicals work properly can help kids with OCD. How? These medicines can make the obsessions and compulsions feel less intense, and they also help tone down the worry and fear. By itself, medicine doesn't fix OCD, and many kids with OCD don't need medicine to get better. But for some kids, medicine sure does help.

With or without medicine, a special type of "talk therapy" is the most important part of treatment for kids with OCD. This type of therapy is called behavior therapy (also called cognitive-behavioral therapy). For most kids with OCD, behavior therapy helps them learn to deal with anxiety, to face fears, to resist compulsions, and to slowly but surely conquer OCD.

## What's it Like to Go to Behavior Therapy for OCD?

There are lots of mental health specialists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors (also called therapists) who are trained to do the behavior therapy that works for OCD. The therapist might start by just getting to know the child and parents. The therapist might ask about favorite activities or TV shows, pets or hobbies, or particular sports.

The therapist will also ask some questions about problems with worry and rituals that the child has been having. Then the therapist will explain about OCD and how the behavior therapy works to help it get better. The therapist will help parents understand the child's OCD and what they can do at home to help it get better, too.

In behavior therapy for OCD, kids learn different ways to deal with their worries **without** doing a ritual. At first, it may seem hard to stop doing rituals, but the therapist can teach kids how to feel safe enough to try. It's definitely tough at first, but if they stick with it, kids begin to feel stronger and braver against OCD.

After learning about ways to get their worries under control, kids start to practice them. As with anything new (such as playing the piano or kicking a soccer goal), the more someone practices, the better he or she can do it. When kids practice what they learn in behavior therapy, they find out it actually works!

Kids with OCD usually go to therapy about once or twice a week for a while, then less often as they begin to get better. Getting better can take anywhere from a few months to a few years.

Kids usually are really relieved when the symptoms of OCD get weaker and they begin to feel stronger. It feels good to be free of OCD!

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