A Newsletter Dealing with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

NEVER say NEVER



In the midst of the seemingly endless storm, look to the promise of the rainbow the rain shall not prevail!

Summer 2008

Scrupulosity: Blackmailed by OCD in the Name of God

By Laurie Krauth, MA

ADAA Professional Member

PART 1

I pass by a picture of my kids and think, "Satan: they are my gift to you," my new client John, a wonderful husband, father of three and successful businessman tells me. "Why would I think that? I would never sell my soul to the Devil." On another day, he says in shame, "We are cutting shapes out of construction paper at the table and I'm thinking the Devil will make me lose control...In church finally, I'm feeling hope and then I think maybe God wants me to harm someone. I would never sell my soul; that is the last thing God would want."

I don't recoil in horror, as he does, because many other good, moral clients have told me about their own night-marish thoughts. A chaste, Christian college freshman obsesses that his "wild" close dancing with a girl is "bad" and fails the "What would Jesus do?" test. He repeatedly replays the dance scene in his mind, hoping to reassure himself that he didn't give her false hope that he would sleep with her. A Catholic nine-year-old girl obsesses that she once spelled "God" without capitalizing it and avoids stepping on floor stains that look to her like Jesus. When she passes a math test she wasn't prepared for, she worries endlessly that she cheated, and prays to God repetitively for forgiveness.

(Continued on page 4)

HELP US HELP YOU!



- What are we doing right?
- What are we doing wrong?
- How can we improve?
- How can we serve you better?

PLEASE PARTICIPATE IN OUR ONLINE SURVEY. GO TO www.ocdmich.org

NOTE: If you would prefer to fill in the survey on paper, please call us at 313-438-3293 and we will send you a copy.

THE OCD FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN

P.O. Box 510412 Telephone (voice mail): (313) 438-3293 Livonia, MI 48151-6412

E-mail: OCDmich@aol.com Web: www.ocdmich.org *

* Thanks to Mark Fromm, President of Business Growth Today, Inc., for hosting our website.

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is the quarterly newsletter of the OCD FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN, a non-profit organization.

Please note that the information in this newsletter is not intended to provide treatment for OCD or its associated spectrum disorders. Appropriate treatment and advice should be obtained directly from a qualified and experienced doctor and/or mental health professional. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors.

To submit articles or letters, write or e-mail the OCDFM at the above addresses.

LIST OF SELF-HELP GROUPS

ANN ARBOR:

Group is currently not meeting. Call Mary Jo at (734) 883-4038

DEARBORN:

2nd Thursday, 7-9 PM First United Methodist Church Garrison and Mason Streets Call (313) 438-3293

FARMINGTON HILLS:

1st and 3rd Sundays, 1-4 PM Trichotillomania Support Group Botsford Hospital Administration & Education Center, Classroom C 28050 Grand River Ave. (North of 8 Mile) Call Bobbie at (734) 522-8907

GRAND RAPIDS:

Old Firehouse #6
312 Grandville SE
Call the Anxiety Resource Center
(616) 356-1614
www.anxietyresourcecenter.org

General Anxiety

Meets every Wednesday, 7 to 9 p.m. Open to individuals who have any kind of anxiety problem as well as their friends and family members.

Adults Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7 to 9 p.m. Open to any adults who have or think they may have Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Friends and family members welcome.

Teen Group General Anxiety

1st Monday, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. A monthly support group for teens who have or think they may have an anxiety disorder. Friends and family members welcome.

Body Focused Repetitive Behaviors

1st Tuesday, 7 to 9 p.m. A monthly support group for adults who have Compulsive Hair Pulling, Skin Picking and Nail Biting problems. Open to friends and family members.

Compulsive Hoarding

3rd Tuesday, 7 to 9 p.m. A monthly support group for people who have trouble with compulsive hoarding. The group is open to friends and family members.

HOLLAND:

Call Geraldine at (616) 335-3503 or Tony at (616) 396-5089

LANSING:

3rd Monday, 7:00-8:30 PM Delta Presbyterian Church 6100 W. Michigan Call Jon at (517) 485-6653

ROYAL OAK:

1st and 3rd Tuesdays, 7-9 PM St. John's Episcopal Church 115 S. Woodward at 11 Mile Call Terry at (586) 790-8867

SPRING LAKE / MUSKEGON / GRAND HAVEN:

1st and 3rd Mondays, 7-9 PM Spring Lake Wesleyan Church, Classroom E-111 Call Pam at (231) 744-3585

AKRON, OH

Parents of Kids with OCD 3rd Monday, 7 PM Outpatient Pediatric Psychiatry Dept. Akron Children's Hospital, 300 Locust Street Suite 280 in Conf. Room Call Susan at (330) 499-0373 To receive free e-newsletter, Contact Marie at ooocccdddkids@yahoo.com

AKRON/CANTON, OH

OCD/Scrupulosity 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7 - 8:30 PM Queen of Heaven Parish, (In the Bride's Room) 1800 Steese Road, Green, OH Call Susan at (330) 499-0373 Scrupulosity (Continued from page 1)

Sufferers of scrupulosity around the world experience their own versions of my clients' nightmarish thoughts. They have persistent, irrational, unwanted beliefs and thoughts about not being devout or moral enough, despite all evidence to the contrary. They believe they have or will sin, disappoint God, or be punished for failing. In response to their disturbing thoughts, they try to calm themselves by using a host of compulsions. Some repeat religious phrases; others call their pastors for reassurance. Many avoid situations even their beloved church or temple because it triggers their horrible obsessive thoughts.

Research shows that scrupulosity is one of the most common forms of OCD. Some studies suggest that scrupulosity is more common among people who are especially devout, or whose religions have certain tenets, such as emphasizing "perfect" devotion or considering bad thoughts as sinful as bad deeds. Nevertheless, it affects people from multiple religions whose level of devotion varies, and even affects atheists.

Some people—religious and not experience scrupulosity as an irrational moral perfectionism. I've heard them describe the fear of getting "in trouble" for making a non-existent or unlikely error for which they would be punished. A businessman obsessed about having told a colleague that he had read a book when in fact he had skimmed one of the chapters, and agonized over how to clarify "the truth" to his colleague. A graduating law student feared she would be rejected by the Bar for inadvertently providing them with an imperfect resume; she traded hours and days of studying time for the Bar exam to making compulsive calls to former schools and employers to confirm dates she had been there.

SCRUPULOSITY VERSUS HEALTHY MORAL AND RELI-GIOUS BELIEF

If you have an occasional irrational, unwanted thought, do you have OCD? Everyone has such thoughts; people without OCD just dismiss them as unimportant and move on. If you are committed to your religion, morality or ethics, and want to be as good as you can be, is this scrupulosity? Many devout and good people feel this way, and continually demand more of themselves, but they don't have OCD. People without OCD may try harder when they feel guilt or disappointment about something they think or do. But they are not obsessed with their failure.

OCD sufferers, on the other hand, dramatically overreact to perceived failures. They "see sin where there is none" (Nelson, Abramowitz, Whiteside and Deacon, 2006) or blame themselves for falling short of impossibly high standards. They are tortured by the intensity of their doubts about their goodness, and the belief that, therefore, they are downright bad.

Their discomfort makes it hard to dismiss the thoughts, which become sticky and hard to chase away. The persistence of the thoughts, and the frequency and anxious intensity with which they return, turn those irrational thoughts into obsessions.

Think of the obsession as a mosquito bite — it's unwanted, uncomfortable, and feels like it will never go away. In response, OCD sufferers feel they must get rid of that obsession at any cost. The result is a compulsion, and it's much like the scratching of a mosquito bite.

To neutralize those disturbing thoughts, sufferers often use a mental or physical ritual, such as repeating a religious phrase or religious act, seeking reassurance, or doing penance. The obsession may be temporarily relieved by the compulsion, but it soon returns, more powerful than ever, just

like a mosquito bite itches more after scratching it than if it is left to itch for awhile.

John, my former client, obsessed about having sold his soul to the Devil in exchange for his wonderful life, and then compulsively repeated religious homilies for hours. Finally he would repeat to himself: "I am a good Christian man. I am a good Christian man."

Researchers Phillipson & Schwartz (2006) suggest that some sufferers become preoccupied with a trivial part of the religious ritual instead of the whole picture. For instance, they may focus on saying prayers perfectly instead of developing a relationship with God. They may act "more Catholic than the Pope" (for example, if confessing weekly is normal, going daily).

OCD rituals differ from devout religious practice, but it can be hard to tell the difference at first glance. In fact, many religions have behaviors that may look like OCD to an outsider.

Jennifer Traig, the author of a wry memoir, "Devil in the Details: scenes from an obsessive girlhood," describes the ways Orthodox Jewish religious rituals and scrupulosity compulsions may be mistakenly confused with each other.

"Judaism has codified a whole choreography of compulsive, compulsory gestures and tics," the scrupulosity sufferer writes. "We reach up to touch the mezuzah each time we pass a doorway. We kiss the prayer book when we close it, the Torah when we approach it, any religious object when we drop it. We cover our eyes when we say the Shema prayer, and bend, bow, and straighten when we say the Aleinu... Orthodox Judaism looks so much like scrupulosity that some psychiatrists, and my father, have asked if they might be one and the same," she teases.

"[But] there are some vital differences. Orthodox Jews are motivated by spiri-

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REMEMBERING LOIS TURPEL



It is with sorrow that we announce the passing of Lois Turpel of Garden City. Lois was a fixture of the OCD Foundation of Michigan for many years. She was a founding member of the Board of Directors, later serving as its Vice-President. She co-facilitated the Plymouth Self-Help Group for many years. We remember fondly the many hours spent at her house with her husband Ernie, preparing the newsletter, *Never Say Never*, for mailing. Lois will be genuinely missed.

Scrupulosity (Continued from page 4)

tual duty and rewarded by a sense of fulfillment; the scrupulous are motivated by [brain] circuitry and rewarded by chapped hands...Most scrupulous Jews tend to overlook, even violate, the bulk of the laws while observing one or two with excruciating care. Compulsions tend to come before commandments. I could violate three or four commandments in one fell swoop. I was happy to lie to my dishonored parents while breaking the Sabbath, as long as it was in the service of getting my hands ritually clean." (Traig, 2004, pp. 33-35)

Despite many rules governing life, Judaism, in fact, does not seek perfection. For instance, Orthodox Jews don't mix meat and dairy products in the same meals. But under the principle of K'zayit, they needn't worry if a drop of milk touches their meat. Likewise, "the ideal is to totally concentrate on the prayer in a perfect communion with God. [But the principle of] B'dieved, which roughly translates to *second best*, says that if your mind wanders while praying, keep going and don't repeat the prayer" (Grayson, 2006, p. 224).

Examples of other religions with beliefs and practices that can be mistaken for scrupulosity abound. But the anguished obsessions and compulsions, the tormenting doubt and guilt distinguish scrupulosity suffer-

ers from morally and religiously inspired people.

WHAT CAUSES SCRUPULOS-ITY?

Religion itself doesn't cause scrupulosity, of course: it's merely the form some people's OCD takes. OCD has an extraordinary ability to target sufferers' Achilles' heel, attacking people where they're vulnerable. Although John was a devoted family man, he focused on the bad, irrational thoughts he had about harming his loved ones.

At present researchers believe that OCD is genetic, passed down through families. People with a biological predisposition for OCD will be triggered at some point by an event, experience or environmental stressor and develop full-blown OCD. But even without that particular incident, they would be triggered eventually by some other stressful experience.

John recalled that his OCD began at the age of seven. A teacher at his Catholic school talked about a man who sold his soul to the Devil for riches. That comment triggered a fear that John had done the same. He responded with hand-washing and checking symptoms to reduce his anxiety, and continued to suffer throughout his childhood.

In high school, a psychiatrist diagnosed him with depression and prescribed Prozac, which can also re-

duce OCD symptoms. He took Prozac through his early 20s, when he decided he no longer needed it. His OCD symptoms ebbed and flowed for the next decade. He came to me 25 years after his OCD had begun, when work stress was wearing him down. After a colleague told him she'd had an encounter with the Devil, John became obsessional and suicidal and he knew he needed help.

When he began treatment with me, he said he wondered if his phenomenal success now--wonderful kids, wife and career--was evidence that he did sell his soul and that he would go to hell. Irrational thoughts appeared at agonizing moments.

"I'd be bathing the kids and have the thought that I wished the Devil would make me hold them under water," he said. "Or I'd be wrestling with the kids [and imagine] grabbing their throat and saying that I will sell my soul to strangle them, or putting them to sleep and hoping Satan will make me smother them with a pillow."

He repeatedly had blasphemous thoughts. He'd think: "Come to me Lucifer" and repeat to himself in horror: "You cannot take my soul. God protect me. Jesus is Lord." Or "I'm going to harm my kids. 'Satan: they're my gift to you." His compulsion was to repeat: "Satan, you are not my Lord. I'm a Christian man."

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FROM THE HEVER SAY HEVER ARCHIVES:



What Just Happened Here??

By Roberta Warren Slade

OCD is called "the doubting disease". We sometimes forget that beyond the more common displays of washing, checking, or hoarding, and the experience of tormenting or otherwise intrusive thoughts, OCD can manifest itself in other strange and unexpected ways. We might not realize it at the time, and we may never know that a particular occurrence was, in fact, on OCD episode.

The following is a true story. I offer it as an example of how OCD can sneak up on you and rob you of your own sense of "knowing".

I was driving to work one morning and was stopped at a red light. The light changed to green, and I proceeded to make my right turn. As I made my turn, I saw a driver run the light from my left, speeding into the lane I was about to enter. I eased to my right to allow him through. However, he only saw that I was "in his way". He overreacted, jerked to his left, and plowed into an innocent driver who was legitimately in the left lane.

I performed my civic duty and stopped, both to make sure the drivers were ok, and to serve as a witness to what happened. But as we were talking, something began to creep over me, slowly and faintly at first, then more strongly. The offending driver had to swerve to avoid hitting me. Did I in fact cut him off? Did I really have the green light, or did I make my right turn against the light? Was it my fault that the innocent driver got hit? I found myself apologizing to her. I found myself speculating on the cause of the accident, entering into the conversation the possibility that I had made an improper right turn. More and more, I began to doubt my own knowledge of what I had just witnessed. A police officer arrived at the scene and interviewed the parties involved. Then he came over and issued ME a ticket for making an illegal turn and failure to yield. HUH?? WHAT JUST HAPPENED HERE??

No less than that innocent driver broadsided by a smug young punk, I had just been blindsided by OCD. OCD made me doubt my own eyes, my own certainty as to what I had observed. OCD made me feel GUILTY. OCD made me feel that I had CAUSED what in fact I had only WITNESSED. And OCD got to laugh as I suffered through years of increased insurance payments that resulted from my traffic conviction and the undeserved points that were added to my driving record.

It was not until several years later that I even realized this had been an OCD episode, and a costly one at that. I try to be more careful now, more aware, more trusting of my own beliefs and instincts. I am not willing to give OCD the pleasure of another "GOTCHA!"

(TELL US YOUR UNUSUAL OR UNEXPECTED OCD EXPERIENCES)

The Lighter Side of Scrupulosity

By Jennie Shanburn

My experience with scrupulosity is painful, debilitating, ridiculous and humorous. I think it's important to see the humor and irony in it as part of learning to live with it and managing it well. Scrupulosity will most likely always be a part of my life, and I hope by sharing about my experiences with it, others will relate and see they are not alone.

Scrupulosity for me comes in many forms, and it doesn't always directly involve religion. One form is an obsession over offending others, which can lead to completely unneeded apologies on my part. As an example of this cycle, I might tell a friend I like her new haircut. Hours might go by and I then I start thinking "Uh-oh, what if she thought that because I said I liked her new haircut that I hated her old haircut? She might be thinking right now that everyone secretly hated her old haircut and might be feeling really bad about herself. I need to apologize and explain." So, knowing in my rational mind that there is little to no chance that my friend is thinking that, but my OCD mind saying that she is thinking that and I'll be anxious about this until I apologize, I try to find the opportune time to bring it up even though I feel awkward about it. I say to my friend: "I'm sorry if by saying that your new haircut looks good it sounded like I didn't like your hair before. I didn't mean that." My friend is thinking to herself: "Wow, I hadn't even thought of Jennie's comment in the past few hours. That was weird of her to apologize like that..." And, the ironic part is that probably by apologizing like I did, now my friend thinks that I actually didn't like her previous haircut because why would I go to such extreme lengths to explain myself?!

Another form of scrupulosity is a fear of lying. It could go something like this:

Other person: "How long were you in that meeting?"

Me: "45 minutes...but it could have been a little more or a little less, I'm not sure, I wasn't completely paying attention to the clock."

With this response, I am covering all my bases in case "45 minutes" isn't completely accurate and therefore I would be lying about it.

Or:

Other person: "How are you feeling?"

Me: "Okay. Well, I am somewhat happy because it is almost the end of the workday, but a little overwhelmed with all the work I still need to do and also tired. I am probably feeling other things as well, but I can't quite explain them right now."

Yes, I have even considered not being completely accurate on how I am feeling as lying! How can anyone be completely accurate about how they are feeling?!

I should actually be more concerned about annoying and wasting the time of those asking me these questions because all they wanted was a simple answer!

Thankfully these OCD symptoms are much more under control now, but there was a time that I didn't even want to talk to people because these types of situations would happen all the time.

Even with contamination/washing symptoms, they have more to do with contaminating other people than myself. It is in some ways worse to me to think I have contaminated someone else's stuff than my own, because then I have an urge to tell that person and apologize.

And then there is the religious aspect. Many people who suffer from scrupulosity are highly religious, but that doesn't necessarily need to be the case. I am part of the Eastern Orthodox Church and so I participate in confession to a priest. This has been an interesting experience for me with my scrupulosity. In fact, I think I have annoyed more than one priest with my lengthy, too-detailed confessions. And then there's the kicker - "Is there anything else you need to confess?" the priest asks toward the end of confession. That is a loaded question to ask someone with scrupulosity! You might want to think twice before asking that in the future!

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ONLINE SUPPORT

OCD-Support (http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/OCD-Support)

This is a very large and well-connected support group. Among its many members are doctors and treatment professionals who respond to questions.

OCD-Family (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OCD-Family)

This is a mailing list for the loved ones of OCD sufferers, a safe place to discuss OCD and the way it affects the family as well as the sufferer. Its purpose is to help learn new ways of dealing with OCD from a second-hand perspective and to learn how to help our loved ones.

It is asked that OCDers themselves not subscribe to this list.

OCD and Parenting (http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/ocdandparenting)

An online support group for parents of children with OCD.

Organized Chaos (http://www.ocfoundation.org/organizedchaos)

For teenagers/young adults only, this is a site for learning about OCD from each other, and from treatment providers.

OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

JJ's Place (www.jjsplace.org)

The website for kids with OCD. Also has resources for family and friends, teachers, and therapists.

Brain Physics: (www.brainphysics.com)

An excellent resource for OCD and spectrum disorders.

OC Foundation Hoarding Website: (www.ocfoundation.org/hoarding)

Everything you ever wanted to know about compulsive hoarding.

BDD Central: (www.bddcentral.com)

The most comprehensive online presence related to body dysmorphic disorder (BDD).

For a long list of websites relating to OCD, see our website at www.ocdmich.org.

The Lighter Side of Scrupulosity (Continued from page 7)

Too often religion becomes the vehicle for anxiety and pain for those with OCD. But it is important for us to remember that God, or whatever higher power you believe in, knows when you have OCD and has understanding about that.

The funny thing is that my scrupulosity is selective. I can totally speed and break traffic laws and not feel too guilty about it. My driving record proves that!

So, while scrupulosity has been difficult for me, I have to remember it is a glitch in my brain and it can be controlled. There is hope in this. For more information on scrupulosity, I would recommend:

The Doubting Disease: Help for Scrupulosity and Religious Compulsions by Joseph W. Ciarrocchi

<u>A Thousand Frightening Fantasies: Understanding and Healing Scrupulosity and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder</u> by William Van Ornum

<u>Can Christianity Cure Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?</u>: A Psychiatrist Explores the Role of Faith in Treatment by Ian Osborn, MD

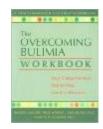


SUGGESTED READING

Jacqueline Adams
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
Lucent Books, 2007
ISBN 978-1420500004
Reading Level: Young Adult



Randi E. Mc Cabe, Ph.D. Traci L. Mc Farlane, Ph.D. Marion P. Olmsted, Ph.D. *The Overcoming Bulimia Workbook* New Harbinger Publishers, 2004 ISBN 978-1-57224-326-2



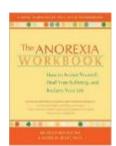


Eric Stice, Katherine Presnell
THE BODY PROJECT
Promoting Body Acceptance and
Preventing Eating Disorders
Oxford University Press, 2007
Facilitator Guide
ISBN 978-0-19-531989-7
Workbook ISBN 978-0-19-533151-6

rewind, replay, repeat

Jeff Bell Rewind, Replay, Repeat A Memoir of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Hazelton, 2007 ISBN 978-1-59285-371-7

Michelle Heffner, M.A. Georg H. Eifert, Ph.D. *The Anorexia Workbook* New Harbinger Publications, 2004 ISBN 978-1-57224-362-0



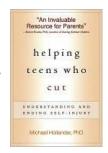
Michael Hollander, Ph.D.

Helping Teens Who Cut

Understanding and Ending Self-Injury

Guilford Publications, 2008

ISBN 978-1-59385



Scrupulosity (Continued from page 5)

At the same time, hoping to quell the severe anxiety that the irrational thoughts gave him, he often sought to avoid them. He started to turn bathing them over to his wife, and refused to be near his children with a knife or a pizza cutter, both of which he'd imagined using to murder them.

John was naturally horrified by these thoughts and the fact that they occurred to him at all seemed proof that he had, in fact, sold his soul to the Devil.

THIS ARTICLE WILL CONTINUE WITH PART 2 IN THE FALL 2008 ISSUE OF NEVER SAY NEVER.

Laurie Krauth, MA, is an Ann Arbor, Michigan, psychotherapist specializing in the treatment of anxiety disorders, including OCD, as well as in the treatment of depression, relationship and LGBT concerns. She is a scientific advisory board member of the OCD Foundation of Michigan and a professional member of ADAA. Links to OCD resources and contact information is available at www.LaurieKrauth.com. This article ran in the OCF early spring '07 edition.

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Penzel, F. "Let he who is without sin..."

OCD Newsletter, 15(4), Summer 2001

(9)

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Traig, J., *Devil in the Details: Scenes from an obsessive girlhood*, (New York, Little, Brown and Co.)

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

List with us

Treatment professionals, what better way to find the OCD sufferers who need your help, and to give them a way to find you. Just place your business card in *Never Say Never*, the quarterly newsletter of the OCD Foundation of Michigan. For just \$25.00 per issue, your card can be in the hands of the very people who need you most. It's a great way to reach out to the OCD community, and at the same time support the OCD Foundation of Michigan. Send your card to OCDFM, P.O. Box 510412, Livonia, MI 48151-6412, or e-mail to OCDmich@aol.com. For more information, call 313-438-3293.

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The OCD Foundation of Michigan is funded solely by your annual membership fees and additional donations. We have no paid staff. All work is lovingly performed by a dedicated group of volunteers. WHY NOT VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME? Call 313-438-3293 or e-mail OCDmich@aol.com.

The OCD Foundation of Michigan Membership Application Please Print:		
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Please Don't Throw Me Away

You've finished reading me and don't need to keep me anymore. Or worse (boo-hoo), you don't need me and don't even want me. In either case, please take me somewhere where I can help someone else. Take me to your library. Take me to your doctor, therapist, or local mental health clinic. Take me to your leader. But please, please, don't throw me away.



OCD Foundation of Michigan Mission Statement

- ♦ To recognize that Obsessive~Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety—driven, neurobiobehavioral disorder that can be successfully treated.
- ♦ To offer a network of information, support, and education for people living with OCD, their families and friends, and the community.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OR DELETED FROM THE MAILING LIST PLEASE CONTACT US

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