

NEVER say NEVER



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

Summer 2015

OCD: THE VALUE OF HUMOR

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Painful, crippling, incapacitating, devastating. It drains the joy from life. It impairs our ability to function in the workplace and to sustain meaningful relationships. There's nothing funny about OCD. And yet the media gives us movies and TV, jokes, comics, and Internet memes to make us laugh at it. Does this not denigrate the experience of OCD by making light of its behaviors, portraying them as humorous quirks? Well, that depends.

It has become trendy to use "OCD" as an adjective, as in "He's so OCD," or as a synonym for "organized" or "anal," as in "How OCD are you?" These popular portrayals of OCD can be offensive because they trivialize and distort the actual experience of the disorder.

And yet, as they say, laughter is good medicine, and if you step back and look at it objectively, OCD can be very funny. People have different ways of coping with the challenges in their lives, and humor is certainly one of those ways.

In this issue of *Never Say Never*, we look at different kinds of OCD humor and try to ascertain when its use is good, and when it is bad.

FALL PROGRAM, 1:00 SATURDAY, OCT. 24, 2015

AN OCDFM FIRST: A panel including five of our favorite local OCD experts discussing how alternative Cognitive Behavioral methods can be used to assist or enhance the Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) experience. Join us at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ellen Thompson Women's Health Center, Classroom #1A-B, 5320 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti, MI. See our website, www.ocdmich.org, for flyer and map.

THIS PROGRAM IS NOT TO BE MISSED

THE OCD FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN

P.O. Box 510412
Livonia, MI 48151-6412

Telephone (voice mail): (734) 466-3105

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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NEVER say NEVER

is the quarterly newsletter of The OCD FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN,
a 501(c)(3) 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:

1st Thursday, 7-9 PM
St. Joseph Mercy Hospital Ann Arbor
Ellen Thompson Women's Health Center
Classroom #3
(in the Specialty Centers area)
5320 Elliott Drive, Ypsilanti, MI
Call Bobbie at (734) 522-8907 or (734) 652-8907
E-mail OCDmich@aol.com

DEARBORN:

2nd Thursday, 7-9 PM
First United Methodist Church
22124 Garrison Street (at Mason)
Call Joan at (734) 479-2416

FARMINGTON HILLS:

1st and 3rd Sundays, 1-3 PM
Trichotillomania Support Group
Beaumont Hospital Botsford Campus
Administration & Education Center, Classroom C
28050 Grand River Ave. (North of 8 Mile)
Call Bobbie at (734) 522-8907 or (734) 652-8907
E-mail rslade9627@aol.com

GRAND RAPIDS:

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

Anxiety Disorders

Meets every Wednesday, 4:30 to 5:30 pm and
7 to 8:30 pm (two groups offered at this time to keep
group size smaller)
A weekly support group open to anyone who has an
anxiety problem (including trichotillomania and
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder).

Teen Anxiety Group

Coming soon to school campuses.

Yoga

Every Wednesday, 5:30 to 6:30 pm
A gentle yoga class. No experience is necessary.
Schedules do change, so please call ahead to reserve
a spot.

Open Creative Time

1st Wednesday, 6:00 to 7:00 pm
Take your mind off your worries by being creative.
Bring a project to work on or enjoy supplies that are
available at the ARC.

Social Outing Groups

Offered once a month.
Dates and times change.
Check the ARC website for current listings.

LANSING:

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

LAPEER:

2nd Wednesday, 7:30 - 9 PM
Meditation Self-Healing Center
244 Law St. (Corner of Law & Cedar Streets)
Call Mary at (810) 441-9822

PETOSKEY:

2nd Tuesday, 7-9 PM
The John & Marnie Demmer Wellness Pavilion
820 Arlington Ave.
Petoskey, MI 49770
Call Kevin at (231) 838-9501
E-mail Runocd@gmail.com

ROYAL OAK:

1st Wednesday, 7-9 PM
Beaumont Hospital, Administration Building
3601 W. Thirteen Mile Rd.
Use Staff Entrance off 13 Mile Rd.
Follow John R. Poole Drive to Administration Building
Park in the South Parking Deck
Meets in Private Dining Room
(If the building is locked, press the Security button next
to the door, tell them you are there for a meeting, and
they will buzz you in.)
Call Terry at (586) 790-8867
E-mail tmbusoe@att.net

OCD and Humor

By Janet Singer

Obsessive-compulsive disorder often is portrayed as a quirky, cutesy, bothersome at most, illness. This couldn't be further from the truth. OCD is a potentially devastating neurologically-based anxiety disorder with the ability to destroy lives. There is nothing funny about it.

But that doesn't mean we can't use humor when dealing with OCD. While there is nothing amusing about having it, the situations that often arise from dealing with the disorder can be downright funny. What OCD sufferer doesn't have a story or two to tell that would be sure to make us laugh?

Everyone I've met who has OCD has a great sense of humor. This may have to do with creative thinking, a quick wit, or just sheer necessity. But the ability to laugh at oneself, especially in the face of adversity, is a huge plus — not only for those who have obsessive-compulsive disorder, but for those who care about someone with OCD. A stressful situation looked at from a humorous perspective will surely reduce anxiety, or at least keep it from overtaking the sufferer. And laughter is good for us. It relaxes us, helps us recharge, and can even boost our immune systems.

My son Dan has always had a quick wit and a great sense of humor, and his ability to see the comical, often absurd, aspects of OCD has certainly helped in his recovery. But, understandably, the more severe his OCD was, the less often his sense of humor emerged. So I tried to help. For example, Dan had a hard time driving for a while as he was not only afraid of hitting someone, he was afraid of upsetting other drivers: Maybe he was making them late because he was driving too slowly, or maybe he hurt someone's feelings when he inadvertently cut them off.

I suggested we write down all the license plate numbers of all the cars he came in contact with, try to track these people down, and then send them all letters of apology when he got home. Conversations like this helped Dan get a little distance from his own thoughts, and often made him aware of how

ludicrous his reasoning had become.

Humor makes us all feel more comfortable, and the more relaxed we are around one another, the more natural the flow of conversation. Humor brings a certain lightness to a situation, thereby fostering open communication that can help reduce the stigma of OCD. It's easier to talk with someone about what OCD is and is not when nobody is worried about asking the wrong questions, or saying the wrong things.

I've seen Dan use his sense of humor in this way when dealing with his OCD in college. Acknowledging his obvious compulsions (such as tapping or touching), indeed even making fun of them, made his friends more comfortable and encouraged dialogue about OCD. Making fun of himself served another purpose. It demonstrated to his friends that he knew his behaviors weren't "normal," and he recognized they were illogical. This, I'm sure, added to their comfort level.

Therapists often recommend personifying OCD as a way to battle the disorder. I believe taking that one step further would also be beneficial: Personify OCD and then laugh at it. Making fun of something takes its power away. Laughter can take the insidious disorder that is OCD and reduce it to something non-threatening and comical. This change in perspective doesn't happen easily, but it's certainly worth aiming for.

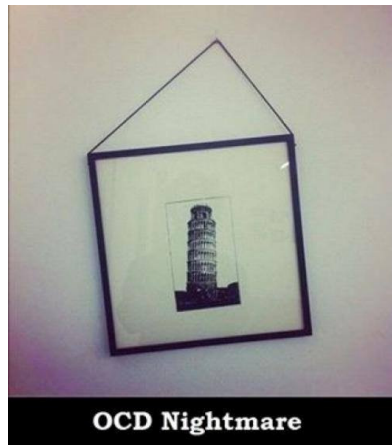
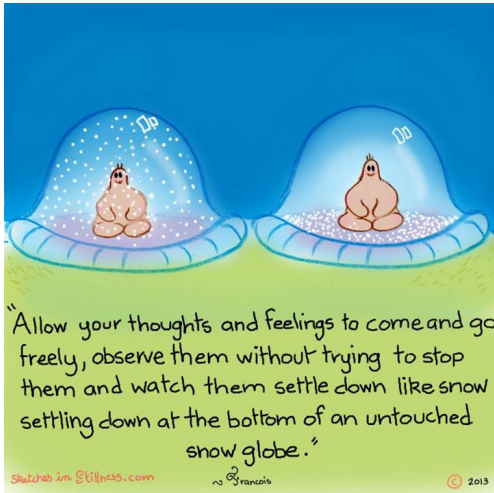
Fighting OCD is no easy task, and sufferers must strive to find the approach that works for them. I believe using humor certainly can't hurt, and this tactic likely will be a powerful tool for recovery. Because, when you think about it, isn't humor effective in dealing with just about anything?

Janet Singer is an advocate for OCD awareness, with the goal of spreading the word that OCD, no matter how severe, is treatable. Janet writes regularly for Psychcentral.com as well as Mentalhelp.net, and has been published on many other web sites including Beyond OCD, Anxiety and Depression Association of America, and Mad in America. She has also been an invited speaker at OCD conferences. She has her own blog, [ocdtalk \(www.ocdtalk.wordpress.com\)](http://www.ocdtalk.wordpress.com).

OCD "MEMES" ON THE INTERNET

by Roberta Warren Slade

It took me a while to understand exactly what was meant by "meme," a term often used on the Internet. Wikipedia states that "a meme acts as a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols, or practices that can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena with a mimicked theme." These are some of the common OCD memes you can find on the Internet:



"You have been assigned this mountain to show others it can be moved."



OCD Humor: The Pros and Cons

(Snippets from the Internet)

(Editor's Note: As expected, one will find a wide range of opinions expressed on the Internet (which, really, has come to represent all thought on all topics) relative to the political correctness of all things. The question of the use of humor to characterize mental illness has been addressed in many ways. Here are some representative quotes/excerpts.)

Maru Gonzalez, EdD in her blog on The Huffington Post, 6/16/15
Reposted on the International OCD Foundation (IOCDF) site on 6/26/15
iocdf.org/blog/2015/06/26/attention-internet-ocd-is-not-a-joke/

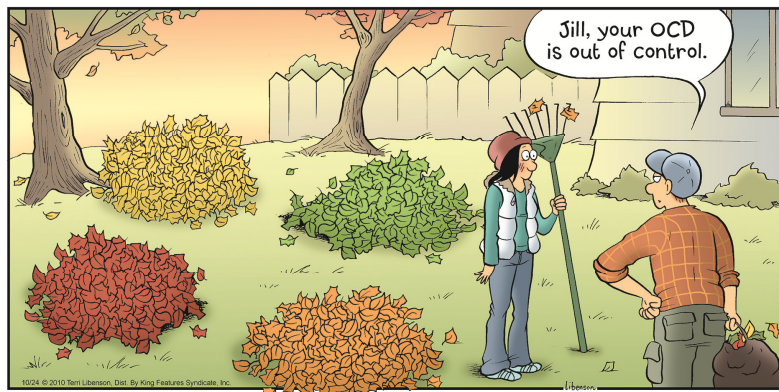
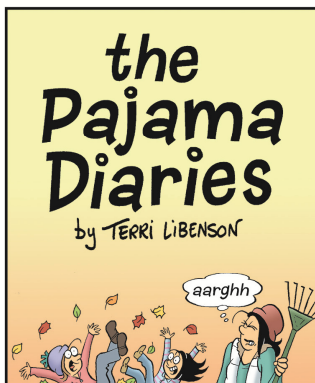
Attention Internet: OCD Is Not a Joke

This morning I woke up to a “How OCD Are You?” quiz trending on my Facebook newsfeed. Three of my “friends” had taken the quiz and subsequently posted the results to their timelines. Of course this quiz (. . .) is not intended to measure and analyze the symptoms of those who are legitimately concerned about their mental health; rather it is meant to be fun and humorous.

As someone whose life was once consumed by OCD, I cringe every time I see such quizzes because they relegate my experience — and those of others with OCD — to nothing more than an idiosyncrasy, a quirk, something that warrants laughter and ridicule. Unfortunately, trivialization of OCD is not isolated to internet quizzes. Indeed, people with OCD are often a caricature for anal-retentiveness and perfectionism, the butt of the joke on Saturday Night Live and a frequent punch-line for stand-up comedians and improv comics. And I don't think a week goes by when I don't hear the phrase “I'm so OCD” or “You're so OCD” used in casual conversation to describe behaviors that are mildly perfectionistic.

OCD is also a popular theme in hipster and variety stores. I have seen mugs, hand sanitizers, apparel, even OCD action figures that exploit, trivialize and make fun of OCD, all at the expense of people who actually have OCD. Indeed, there seems to be an emerging industry profiting from the

(Continued on page 7)



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exploitation and trivialization of people's very real and deeply painful struggles. And while such products are meant to be humorous and light-hearted, the pain of their cumulative impact cuts deep.

Bill Brenner in The OCD Diaries, 9/7/12

theocddiaries.com/ocd/is-humor-reinforcing-the-ocd-stigma

"In the final analysis, I think most health issues need to be addressed with a combination of sober education and humor. People need to know the suffering real OCD brings about, just as people need to know the anguish a cancer patient experiences.

But we need to laugh at our conditions once in a while, too, because the laughter makes the disease appear smaller, even if it's only for a few moments."

Cherry Pedrick, RN on Cherry's Website

www.cherrypedrick.com/humor.html

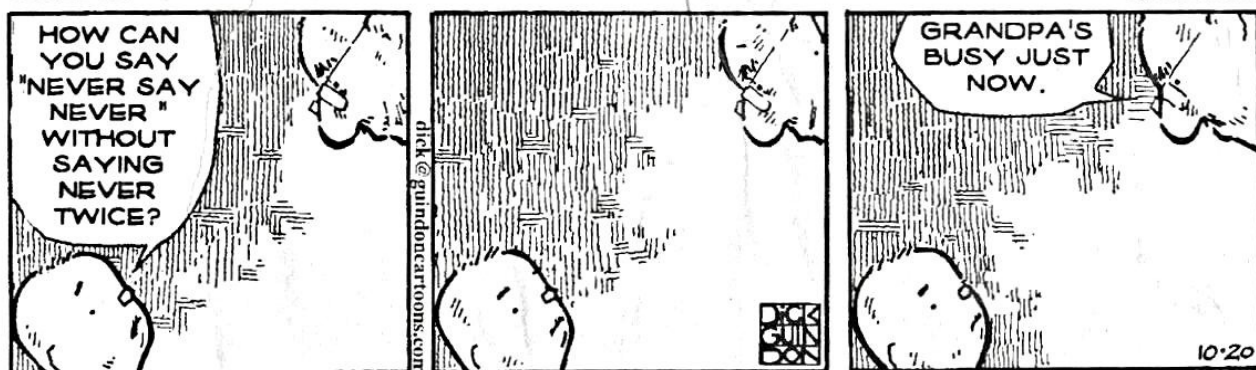
"I don't want to diminish the anxiety of living with OCD. But let's admit it: OCD can also be very funny. Looking at the light side of life can help any problem or disease. And laughing is good for you. When OCD is really bad, there doesn't seem to be much humor in it. But if you can step back and look at it objectively, I think there is much humor. I think that is one of the secrets to getting well – stepping back and seeing OCD as separate from yourself."

Alex Measday's introduction to the humor section of his OCD website, Again and Again

www.geonius.com/ocd/#humor

"Psychological disorders are not to be taken lightly, but, like some, I am a strong believer in laughter being the best medicine (or at least up there with the SSRIs!). Different people have different senses of humor, however, so skip this section if the thought of OCD jokes bothers you."

GUINDON



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FROM THE NEVER SAY NEVER ARCHIVES:

Pooh suffers 'psychological problems'

From BBC News at bbcnews.com

Winnie the Pooh, Christopher Robin and their forest friends are "seriously troubled individuals" according to Canadian researchers.

Far from being the innocent world it appears to be on the surface, Hundred Acre Wood is, say the researchers, a place where psycho-social problems are not recognised or treated.

In a report published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, the specialists suggest AA Milne's characters would be better off with psycho-active drugs and more parental guidance.

Lead researcher Sarah Shea said the purpose of the tongue-in-cheek study was to remind people that anyone can have disorders.

Shaken bear syndrome

Pooh, a bear of very little brain, is said to suffer from the condition known as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

His fixation with honey and his repetitive counting behaviours suggest he may also present obsessive compulsive disorder, according to the report.

Pooh's learning problems could also arise from him being dragged downstairs by Christopher Robin, bumping his head on each step - a possible case of "shaken bear syndrome", asks the study.

"We cannot but wonder how much richer Pooh's life might be were he to have a trial of low-dose stimulant medication," say the researchers.

Piglet obviously suffers from generalised anxiety

disorder according to the study.

Anti-panic agent, it says, would have saved him from the emotional trauma experienced while attempting to trap heffalumps.

Role models

While the chronically depressed Eeyore and risk-taking Tigger are also prescribed different kinds of medication, some of their friends need support and better role-models.

Had his condition been identified early, Owl's dyslexia could be overcome through intensive support.

The researchers predict that Roo is likely to become a delinquent for lack of a good role model, while Kanga will probably miss the opportunity to get an MBA due to a social context that does not "appear to value education and provides no strong leadership".

Which brings us to Christopher Robin.

Not finding any diagnosable condition, the specialists express concern over several issues. Namely, the boy's lack of parental supervision and the fact that he spends his time talking to animals.

"Sadly the forest is not, in fact, a place of enchantment, but rather one of disenchantment, where neuro-developmental and psycho-social problems go unrecognised and untreated," conclude the authors.

Whether the readers of Pooh would benefit from the bear's visit to a child development clinic, as suggested in the study, is another matter.

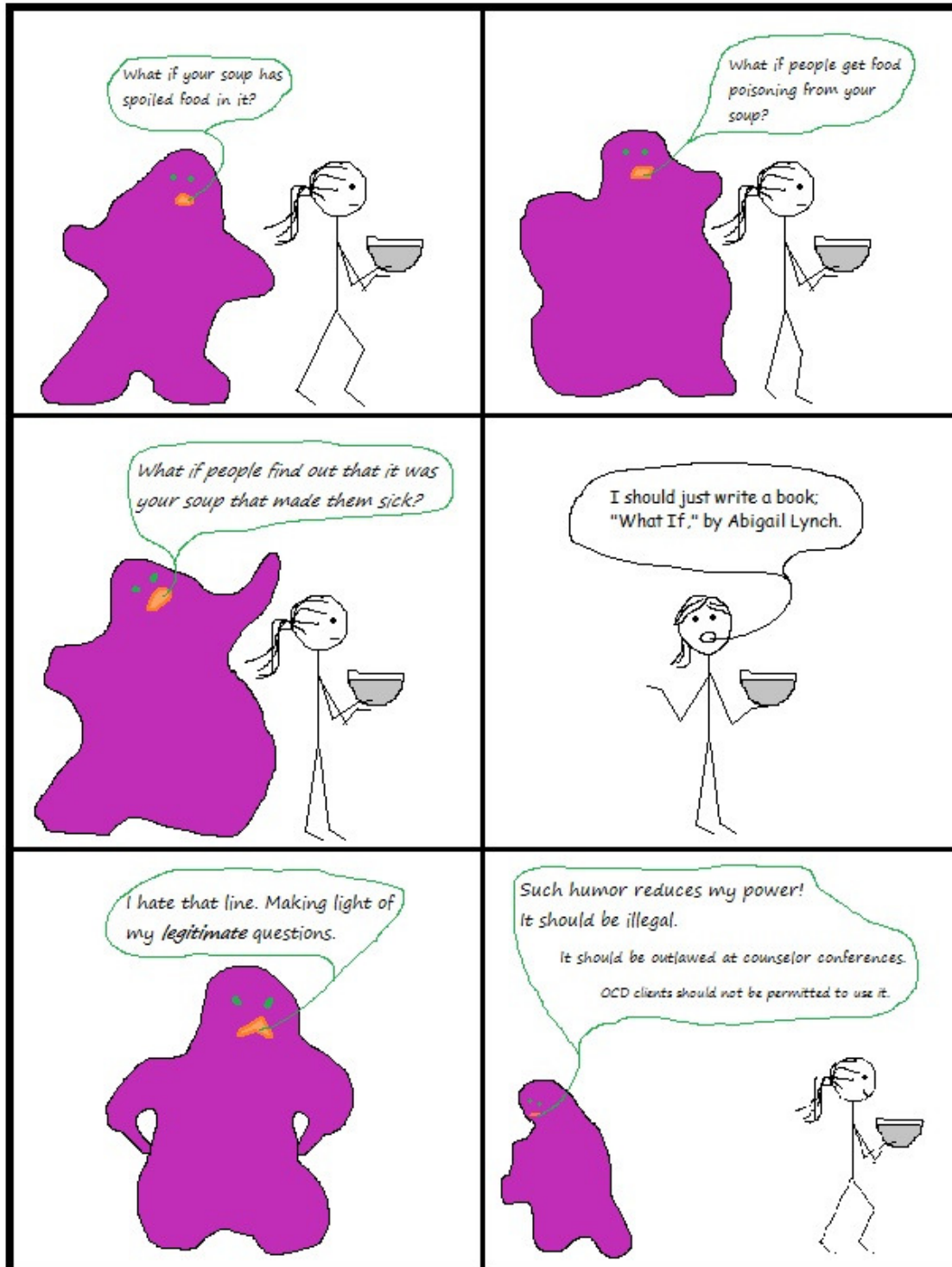
This article, dated 13 December, 2000, can be found at news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1068391.stm

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One Final Word on Humor

(Editor's Note: I found this gem by Abigail Lynch on her blog at unreasonablyrational.blogspot.com/2013/05/the-ocd-monster-doesnt-take-humor-very.html. I think it represents the definitive answer to the question we have been asking here: "What is the value of humor when dealing with OCD?")

OCD Loses Power



By Abigail Lynch, 5-26-2013

ARC Celebrates 10 Years in Grand Rapids

The Anxiety Resource Center opened in Grand Rapids in 2005. Housed in a beautifully converted 1870's firehouse, it is filled with comfortable sitting areas, meeting rooms, artwork, and reading nooks. For ten years it has offered a warm, welcoming environment of support, hope, and inspiration to those recovering from anxiety and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. We



salute the ARC staff and Board - Suzette, Sue, Mike, and Lauren - for the extraordinary job they have done in creating this precious jewel for the OCD Community in Grand Rapids.

Join the ARC in their celebration on Wed, November 4th from 4-9 pm for a fun evening of food, prizes, and special presentations. Watch for details at their website:

anxietyresourcecenter.org

Words of Wisdom

"If you wait for the perfect moment when all is safe and assured, it may never arrive. Mountains will not be climbed, races won, or lasting happiness achieved."

- Maurice Chevalier

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear."

- Mark Twain

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure."

- Helen Keller

Do you have Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

The University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry is conducting a research study using Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as a treatment for those diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). If you are someone who struggles with OCD, you may be eligible. Volunteers for this study will receive a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, 12 outpatient therapy sessions and 2 MRI scans. All study procedures are provided by our expert clinicians at no charge.

Participants will be compensated for their time.

Eligible participants are:

- Male or female
- 25-45 years old
- Diagnosed with OCD
- Able to tolerate small, enclosed spaces
- No alcohol or substance abuse or dependence
- Other eligibility criteria may apply.



DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHIATRY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
HEALTH SYSTEM

If interested, please call 734-936-1323
or email at Psych-OCD-Study@med.umich.edu

HUM#00091368

Does your teenager have Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder?

The University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry is conducting a research study using Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) as a treatment for teenagers with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). If you have a teenager son or daughter who struggles with OCD, they may be eligible to participate. Your teen will undergo a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and 2 MRI scans. They will also receive 12 outpatient therapy sessions provided at no charge to you.

Eligible teens are:

- Male or female
- 13-17 years old
- Diagnosed with OCD
- Able to tolerate small, enclosed spaces
- No alcohol or substance abuse or dependence
- Other eligibility criteria may apply.

Participants will be compensated for their time.

If interested, please call 734-936-1323
or email at Psych-OCD-Study@med.umich.edu



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PARTIAL HOSPITALIZATION PROGRAMS

There is a treatment option available for adolescents and adults in many areas that is often not known or considered by individuals who are struggling with OCD, anxiety, or depression. Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP) are intensive programs offered by hospitals and clinics, and can benefit those who need more help than traditional outpatient settings can provide. They typically run five days a week, from 8 or 9 am to 3 or 4 pm, and can include group therapy, private time with a psychiatrist, art or music therapy or other activity time, and education programs. They usually include lunch, and some include transportation. Here, we list some of these programs for your information.

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor, MI

Adult Partial Hospitalization Program, 734-712-5850

www.stjoesannarbor.org/AdultPartialHospitalizationProgram

Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program, 734-712-5750

www.stjoesannarbor.org/AdolescentPartialHospitalizationProgram

Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, MI, 248-898-2222

www.beaumont.edu/centers-services/psychiatry/partial-hospitalization-program

St. John Providence Hospital, Southfield, MI, 800-875-5566

www.stjohnprovidence.org/behavmed/referral/

Oakwood Heritage Hospital, Taylor, MI, 313-295-5903

www.oakwood.org/mental-health

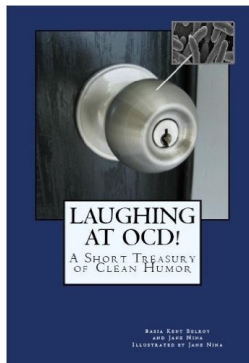
Allegiance Health, Jackson, MI, 517-788-4859 or 517-789-5971

www.allegiancehealth.org/services/behavioral-health/services/partial-hospitalization-program

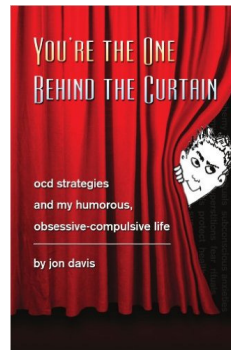
New Oakland Child-Adolescent & Family Center, 5 locations in tri-county area, 800-395-3223

www.newoakland.org/mental-health-services/face-to-face-day-program.html

SUGGESTED READING

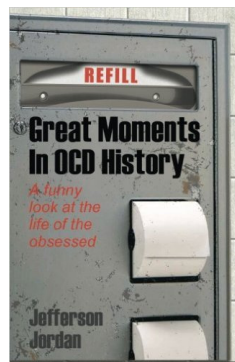


Basia Kent Belroy, Jane Nina
Laughing at OCD: A Short Treasury of Clean Humor
Kindle Edition
Amazon Digital Services, 2013

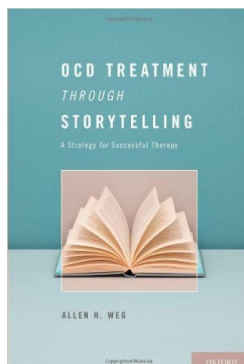
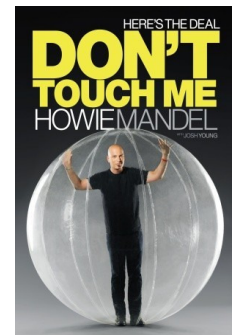


Jonathan Davis
You're the One Behind the Curtain: OCD Strategies and My Humorous, Obsessive Compulsive Life
Xlibris 2009
ISBN 978-1436393010

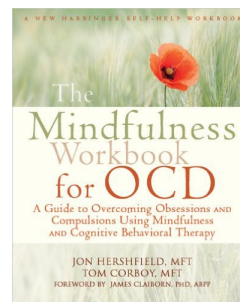
Jefferson Jordan
Great Moments in OCD History: A Funny Look at the Life of the Obsessed
CreateSpace, 2013
ISBN 978-1482530223



Howie Mandel, Josh Young
Here's the Deal: Don't Touch Me
Bantam, 2009
ISBN 978-0553386653



Allen H. Weg
OCD Treatment Through Storytelling: A Strategy for Successful Therapy
Oxford University Press, 2011
ISBN 978-0195383560



Jon Hershfield, MFT, Tom Corboy, MFT
The Mindfulness Workbook for OCD: A Guide to Overcoming Obsessions and Compulsions Using Mindfulness and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
New Harbinger Publications, 2013
ISBN 978-1608828784

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and click "Like".

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

michellebeaulieu@msw@gmail.com
www.ypsitherapy.com

Michelle Beaulieu, LMSW

PSYCHOTHERAPIST

734.219.4058

JESSICA PURTAN HARRELL Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Phone: (248) 767-5985

drjessicaharrell@earthlink.net

www.mi-cbt-psychologist.com

33493 14 Mile Rd. Suite 130

Farmington Hills, MI 48331

Antonia Caretto, Ph.D., PLLC

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

www.BeTreatedWell.com

(248) 553-9053

Office hours by appointment
25882 Orchard Lake Road #201
Farmington Hills, MI 48336

P.O. Box 2265
Dearborn, MI 48123



Laurie Epstein Koch, LMSW ACSW

Clinical Psychotherapist
Individual, Couples and Families

Center for the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders

28592 Orchard Lake Rd, Suite 301

Farmington Hills, MI 48334

248 508-1411 ~ Fax 248 626-7277

Alan D. Carriero

MSW, LMSW

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
and other Anxiety Problems

4467 Cascade Road SE • Suite 4475

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

P 616.940.9091

carriero@ocdgrandrapids.com

www.ocdgrandrapids.com

Laura G. Nisenon, Ph.D.

Licensed Psychologist

425 E. Washington

Suite 101D

Ann Arbor, MI 48104

(734) 623-0895

JAMES A. GALL, PH.D., PLLC

LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST

SPECIALIST IN THE TREATMENT OF
ANXIETY DISORDERS

TELEPHONE (810) 543-1050
FAX (248) 656-5004

950 W. AVON, STE. 3
ROCHESTER HILLS, MI 48307

A HEALING PLACE, LLC

SARAH VLNKA, LMSW

Clinical Social Worker

vlnka.sarah@gmail.com

209 First Street

Jackson, MI 49201

ahealingplacejackson.com

(517) 998-4673

(517) 998-0005 (fax)

SarahVlnkaLMSW.com

PLEASE HELP

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 734-466-3105 or e-mail OCDmich@aol.com.

The OCD Foundation of Michigan Membership Application

Please Print:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ ZIP/Postal Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

May we send you newsletters, notices and announcements via e-mail? _____

- ☐ Enclosed please find my check for \$20 annual membership fee.
- ☐ Enclosed please find an additional donation of \$ _____

Make check or money order payable in U.S. funds to
THE OCD FOUNDATION OF MICHIGAN
c/o Terry Brusoe, Treasurer
25140 Dockside Lane
Harrison Twp., MI 48045-6707

9/2015

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.



The 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**

The OCD Foundation of Michigan
P.O. Box 510412
Livonia, MI 48151-6412