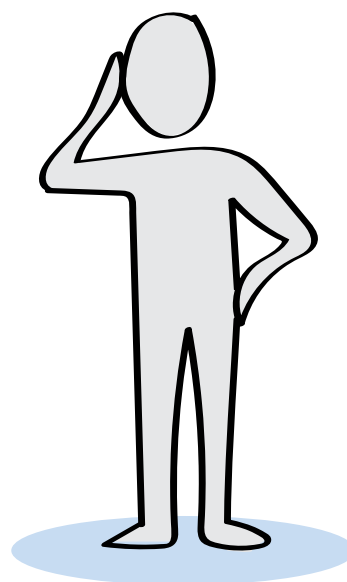


Coronavirus and mental wellbeing – for people with an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

This guide has been created to help people who have an Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (or more routinely referred to as OCD). This is a serious anxiety-related condition where a person experiences frequent intrusive and unwelcome thoughts, commonly referred to as obsessions.

Having OCD affects the way we live our lives and can impact people in many shapes and guises. This may include having obsessive fears around germs and contamination to unwanted and distressing intrusive thoughts about harming a loved one, perhaps violently or sexually.

The present global public health crisis around COVID-19 has led to a number of additional worries for those affected by Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. The following tips have been adapted from the advice provided by [OCD UK](#) and have been designed to help you differentiate between the recommended public health advice for this virus and OCD induced behaviours. These can also help you to combine therapeutic steps whilst engaging in these recommended behaviours.



20 seconds only

The [advice from health professionals](#) is to be careful not to touch your face, and to regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds. Information on how to wash your hands carefully and properly, with pictures and videos can be found in this [NHS video](#). It is important to stay in control of how frequently and for how long you wash your hands to avoid excessive and compulsive handwashing. Singing Happy Birthday for two verses is enough time to complete a thorough hand wash, and this will help you to stick to the limits.

Be kind to yourself

Sometimes OCD may get the better of you, and you might find yourself cleaning your hands or your home to excess, but it's important to remember that these are difficult times and we need to be kind to ourselves. This might mean reaching out for support or recognising that one bad day does not mean that all days will be bad.

Challenge your OCD in other ways

The recent advice on [social distancing](#) or [staying at home guidance](#) means that you may have to change your coping strategies and behavioural exercises. It is important to think about other ways and techniques to help you keep on top of things. There may be other behavioural exercises that you can do whilst keeping in line with health advice on COVID-19. The below provides details of some organisations you can contact if you need further support.

Try to stay connected

At times of stress, we work better in company and with support from others. Try and keep in touch with your friends and family, by telephone, email or social media, or contact a helpline for emotional support. It is important not to sensationalise things and to keep to the facts about Covid-19. This means that if you are sharing content, use this from [trusted sources](#), and remember that your friends might be worried too.

Also try to regularly assess the amount of time you use social media. Think about whether you need to reduce your social media activity and avoid negative or inaccurate information that may be shared by others because this may heighten your worry or anxiety. Consider muting or unfollowing accounts or hashtags that cause you to feel anxious.

Stay on top of what's happening by using the [Government website](#), which is the most up-to-date and reliable source of information.

It's helpful to remember the things you CAN still do

There is a lot of advice on what you can't do because of the outbreak, so it may be helpful to remember what is still possible in light of the government's social distancing and self-isolation guidelines.

- Listen to your favourite music
- Talk and Skype/FaceTime family and friends
- Read books
- Enjoy the outdoors, even if it's your own garden in the short term
- Sing or dance at home (even if both are best behind closed doors!)
- Keep active and exercise (see [Healthy Cornwall's home exercises videos](#))
- Watch your favourite TV or films (we recommend the fun, laugh out loud variety!)
- Have HOPE for a life without OCD (even if that comes after this public health crisis)

There are many things we can do to help protect and improve our mental wellbeing, which includes the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#). Additionally, there is a range of online help and support such as those listed below, which includes Cornwall Council's mental health safety planning and OCD or [mental wellbeing organisations](#).

Apps

Keeping healthy and well is a priority and there are now many apps available to help improve your general wellbeing, from meditation techniques to managing emotions, and reducing the urge to self-harm. Take a look at some NHS apps which may help you with your mental wellbeing www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health.

Safety Planning

A safety plan is for someone to use when they are feeling that their mental health and wellbeing is low, and/or that they are at risk of self-harm or acting on suicidal thoughts – a plan to remind themselves of reasons to live, family and friends they can talk with and things that can make them feel strong and in control of their feelings.

By having a safety plan, you're making sure that there are strategies you can use to keep yourself safe, which can help you feel more in control when everything feels out of control. Think of your safety plan as your 'mental health first-aid kit'; it includes different things that will help you through a crisis.

Everyone's plan is personal and different, but it can help by walking someone through their steps to keep them safe. For people who self-harm or feel suicidal it's not designed to be their only support, but can help as part of a wider approach to supporting their wellbeing.

More information about how you can support someone to create a safety plan, alongside signposting to further sources of support, access to free online suicide prevention and general wellbeing training for adults, and Papyrus' children's safety plan can be found on the [Cornwall Council website](#).

Sources of support for your mental wellbeing

OCD UK

National OCD charity, run by and for people with lived experience of OCD - www.ocduk.org

OCD Action

National charity which offers support and information to anyone affected by OCD - www.ocdaction.org.uk

Anxiety UK

Anxiety UK is a national registered charity for those affected by anxiety, stress and anxiety based depression www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Young Minds

The UK's leading charity for children and young people's mental health - www.youngminds.org.uk

Samaritans

Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide.

Call: **116 123** (24 hours a day, free to call) www.samaritans.org Email: jo@samaritans.org

Shout

Shout is a 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.

Text: shout to **85258**

Mind Infoline

Mind provides confidential mental health information services.

Call: **0300 123 3393** (9am-6pm Monday to Friday) or text **86463** Email: info@mind.org.uk
Website: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines

Saneline

Saneline is a national mental health helpline providing information and support to people with mental health problems and those who support them. Call: **0300 304 7000** (4:30pm-10:30pm)

Website: www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline

Volunteer Cornwall are a charity who support people through voluntary action, and they now have an online referral form for their Coronavirus support service (for vulnerable people who need assistance during isolation) - [Volunteer Cornwall](#)

A handy guide from **Cornwall Council** which includes information about benefits and crisis grants www.cornwall.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits/benefits-and-coronavirus

Pentreath are a charity in Cornwall who promote good mental health through personal development, education and employment www.pentreath.co.uk

Valued Lives is a mental health crisis service in Cornwall www.valuedlives.co.uk

NHS 24/7 help line

To talk to someone about your mental wellbeing you can call the 24/7 NHS mental health telephone support, advice and triage help line - **0800 053 3800**. Support is available to anyone, regardless of age, all day every day. If you or someone you know feels they need to access urgent mental health support, they will listen to you and assess how best to help.

Mental Health Foundation -

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/o/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd