

101 Tips for People with OCD

The following list has been compiled using tips posted by members of the OCD Action forums on a thread that started with the following post:

Now most of us here on the forum have OCD, one way or another, and I thought what we could do is compile a list of 101 tips for people who have OCD, so people who are down, or are new to the site can find some quick helpful hints from people with the condition firsthand, to help them through a rough patch, or parents and carers can read the tips and advise the sufferer with some good information.

playthoseblues

Tip 1: Lack of sleep can make pure obsessions worse, telling the sufferer that they might have something else wrong with them, apart from OCD. It can also make obsessions seem a lot more real!

playthoseblues

Tip 2: OCD is treatable. There are therapies, medications and books out there to help. There are resources and YOU ARE NOT ALONE. Speak to your doctor, find a therapist, read a book, join a forum.

Ratwomble

Tip 3: Walk away from stress.

Tess

Tip 4: Keep a record of all your OCD achievements however small so that when you have a bad day you can read it and see just how far you've come. It's so easy to forget all the things that we manage to achieve.

SO WRITE DOWN ALL YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Truddles

Tip 5: Remember no-one is perfect, we are Human at the end of the day and the thoughts that we have only make us Human. You can't control everything that goes on in the very complex organ that is the Mind.

bunnymad

Tip 6: Never be frightened of asking for help with your ocd thoughts and obsessions. This forum is a great place to ask for that help. There is always someone willing to help.

tizzkins

Tip 7: Laughter is excellent therapy, don't be afraid to laugh at your OCD and to let others laugh with you (but not at you).

Tess

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- Tip 8:** **If you feel that there's someone you trust – be it a partner, friend or family member – talk to them.** The simple act of sharing your problem can be a massive help in itself.
L
- Tip 9:** **Try to ignore your thoughts.**
shelly
- Tip 10:** **Need to calm yourself down?** Listen to music. Any type!
playthoseblues
- Tip 11:** **Learn to play an instrument.** If you are anything like me with my issues, you will get great at it cos you can't put it down. A great channel for any OCD.
Forthaven
- Tip 12:** **If you do have to do a compulsion, e.g. wash your hands, try to think of it as something you're doing simply because your OCD insists, rather than to avoid getting typhoid or whatever.** After all, rationally you know once is enough to get clean, so the extra goes are just to satisfy OCD.
That way, rather than "how many times do I need to wash my hands to get all the germs off?", it becomes a question of "how many times is the minimum my OCD will put up with?". Avoids all the dithering about whether and how germs could possibly survive 5 washes.
Wombat140
- Tip 13:** **Work on building up your confidence and self esteem**
Both tend to be low with OCD and as a result we lack the confidence to trust our own judgement and so we're unable to dismiss the doubts that OCD causes.
Truddles
- Tip 14:** **Using anti-bacterial soaps/hand wash is overkill.** By using them you are drying out your hands of their natural oils. The oil that our hands secrete to help us grip things with is naturally anti-bacterial. You may think your hands are free from germs, but by washing with anti-bacterial soaps you are killing off your own natural defences. Don't use!
Stan
- Tip 15:** **Be kind to yourself at all times** and if you have a bad day always remember that tomorrow's another day.
aishah
- Tip 16:** **Encouragement from those around us is a great tool** for helping to build our confidence especially when we've managed to challenge our OCD.
Truddles
- Tip 17:** **Remember you are so much more than your OCD** and refuse to allow it to consume you entirely however bad it may seem.
jo
- Tip 18:** **Exercise is great for taking your mind off intrusive thoughts** and is proven to lift serotonin levels.
Marie
- Tip 19:** **Never forget that the OCD is not you, and you are not the OCD.**
Maxthedog
- Tip 20:** **You're entitled to treatment and to be treated with respect.**
Truddles
- Tip 21:** **Never dwell in the past, look to the future, live in the present.**
playthoseblues
- Tip 22:** **Don't blame yourself.**
Having OCD isn't your fault. So when you have a day where you do three amazing things that fight the OCD, don't bother about the 93 OCD driven things you have to do. Gradually things get better, you get stronger, the OCD gets weaker. The balance shifts.
Celebrate the victories, and don't beat yourself up about the other stuff.
Ratwomble

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- Tip 23:** **Scared of doing violent things to people in the street? A great way to overcome this is exposure therapy**, by staying outside for a certain while, and conditioning yourself to the environment. I used this the other day by washing my mum's car, and listening to music, and the spikes got less the more the time wore on!
playthoseblues
- Tip 24:** **Don't ruminate.** Thinking over what you might have done, trying to remember and worrying make the obsessions worse.
sweeteater
- Tip 25:** **Avoid excessive drinking.** You may initially enjoy the 'numbing' effect it has on your mind but the next day you will feel twice as worse with your OCD.
chrisc
- Tip: 26** **Always ask yourself the question 'If I didn't have OCD, how would I be spending my day today, what would I be doing?'** and take positive action to do that. Remember that allowing OCD to dictate what you are doing is not a winning formula to recovery; the one thing OCD can never take away from you is your choice to change.
rapaporj
- Tip 27:** **Don't let others put you down, you're just as good as they are.**
Soxon
- Tip 28:** **Remember when your OCD shows it's ugly head, it is nothing more than a school playground bully** who has found what you love the most and is giving you your worst fears on it! When you get an OCD thought, thank the OCD for reminding you what is important to you.
Trinity
- Tip 29:** **If during a course of CBT you feel that the therapist isn't addressing your particular OCD problems** or that there's something that you don't understand, don't be afraid to tell your CBT therapist. Tell them what it is that you need help with. Don't be afraid to insist, they are after all there to help and guide you.
Truddles
- Tip 30:** **Remember that you are in charge and not the OCD.**
Truddles
- Tip 31:** **OCD sucks!**
playthoseblues
- Tip 32:** **If OCD really pisses you off**, give it the two-fingered salute and just tell it to F*%\$ off.
OCDMAN1979
- Tip 33:** **Make use of the OCD Action forums for invaluable help and support from others with OCD.**
Truddles
- Tip 34:** **Physical exercise like jogging and walking are very very effective in reducing anxiety thus reducing your overall compulsions.**
I started jogging for at least 20 minutes a night with my ipod in listening to my favourite songs and letting my mind just wonder to the music. This is a method called detached mindfulness it is probably the most naturally effective way to reduce your symptoms I have found anyway.
Panthera
- Tip 35:** **Get an OCD buddy so that you can provide each other with support and encouragement.**
Truddles
- Tip 36:** **F ace E verything A nd R ecover**
Trinity
- Tip 37:** I heard one like that.
FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real
Maybe put those the other way round, so your's is a retort to mine.
Wombat140

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- Tip 38: Yes we know OCD is within the mind.** It will make ones life miserable but can also rather knowingly help the person focus on important things which may push the person to fame and glory. There are many great people who were rather unaware of their OCD.
aks
- Tip 39: Set yourself small achievable goals.**
They need to be achievable in order to boost your confidence (if you make them too difficult you'll not be able to achieve them and this will make the OCD think that it's won). Every time that you achieve a goal give yourself the credit that you deserve and then set another one.
Truddles
- Tip 40: OCD might win most of the battles but ultimately we're going to win the war!**
Truddles
- Tip 41: Just because you have a thought, it doesn't mean it's real or is going to happen –** everybody has random thoughts, try not to dwell on them too much.
Lauren
- Tip 42: Big cats drive me to overcome OCD.** Look at Big Cats for inspiration.
Panthera
- Tip 43: Listen to heavy metal.**
Panthera
- Tip 44:** This follows on from Panthera's post –
Accept and value yourself as an individual and spend time regularly doing things which you enjoy to give yourself respite from OCD thoughts.
Tess
- Tip 45: Use your natural talents and abilities to channel the OCD into productive pursuits.**
Tess
- Tip 46: Remember it's the way that we react to the thought that's the problem and not the thought itself.**
Truddles
- Tip 47: Try to develop a Positive Mental Attitude.**
We can achieve far more if we have a positive attitude. If we continually think that we can't do something then we won't be able to do it, but if we remain optimistic and positive then we are far more likely to succeed and achieve our goals.
Truddles
- Tip 48: Take Your Meds.**
If your doctor has prescribed medication for you then you should take the dosage recommended and avoid alcohol if recommended. They take a while to work, but they are worth it.
Ratwomble
- Tip 49: Be kind to yourself.**
Truddles
- Tip 50: Don't forget to take your medication with you when you go away.**
To ensure that you don't forget to take your medication with you when you go away keep some in your toiletry bag (or in something else that you always take away with you) or put a reminder in it. Most people don't forget to take their toiletries with them when they go away. If you do keep some spare medication don't forget to frequently take them out and use them and replace them with new ones so that they don't expire before you use them.
Truddles
- Tip 51: When you're feeling low and finding it difficult to cope because of the OCD talk to someone.** Don't bottle it up, share your thoughts with someone – a family member, close friend or write on the forum or send a PM to a friend on the OCD Action forums. Don't just suffer in silence.
Truddles
- Tip 52: Be positive and 'RESIST' when you feel an OCD moment coming on.**
TC

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- Tip 53: Don't enter into an argument with your OCD.**
OCD is like a toddler and always wants the last word in any argument. If you don't engage with your OCD when it's telling you what to do or not to do it will eventually lose interest.
Truddles
- Tip 54: When you're having a good day, a day you feel life's not so bad when you are focused on an in control of your own thoughts,** try to remember how you are feeling that day if you need to write it down, and use it when you feel you are being attacked by the thoughts after all it's you telling yourself you're being tricked.
angel above
- Tip 55: Your OCD thought won't last forever. Slowly, the edge will smooth off.**
playthoseblues
- Tip 56: Smile**
If you walk along with a smile you're more likely to get smiles and pleasant reactions from others. People are more likely to talk to someone with a friendly smile. So even if you're feeling miserable try to smile or you'll just get miserable faces and bad reactions from other people and then you'll feel worse.
Truddles
- Tip 57: Smiling releases endorphins too.**
playthoseblues
- Tip 58: I struggle with intrusive thoughts in particular when I'm driving/sitting in slow-moving traffic, and I find that listening to audio books helps to distract me and prevent me from ruminating.**
Sarah81
- Tip 59: Go to Zumba classes.** It is very energetic. I find this helps with my intrusive thoughts.
Emily
- Tip 60: Mindful meditation,** try and be aware of what's going on around you, the weather, the noises, the traffic, scenery. Are your feet and bottom relaxed, this grounds you. If you are into photography, look around, will that make a good photo etc. Try and get outside of your mind.
Emily
- Tip 61: OCD likes to play many tricks on us! Doubt is one of them!**
playthoseblues
- Tip 62: Make contact with others with OCD and gain emotional strength from each other.**
Tess
- Tip 63: Go to the OCD Action conference.**
Nimrod
- Tip 64: Consider carefully your New Year's resolutions.**
Nimrod
- Tip 65: Tell people.**
I have started doing this after having this since about 8 and I'm 39. It may help to educate the world bit by bit. It may also let you realise that some of the battle is the isolation.
njb
- Tip 66: Never try and research your obsessions online.** It will reinforce them and make things a million times worse. In tough times stick to safe havens like OCD Action.
slogswEEP
- Tip 67: Force yourself to sing, the more upbeat music the better.**
Twitchy
- Tip 68: OCD can make us feel low and often leave us feeling negative about ourselves. Write everything good that has happened to you over the past week and prove the condition wrong!**
playthoseblues

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- Tip 69:** I read this somewhere... **Try to live just for today, for this very minute... Remember the past is gone, and the future is out of reach**
wannabefree
- Tip 70:** **Make time for yourself each day doing something that you enjoy that doesn't involve your OCD.** Don't let anyone interrupt this time as it's your time.
Soxon
- Tip 71:** **To get the most out of life you need to raise your goals and lower your expectations.** Make your expectations for both yourself and others more realistic. Expectations, especially unrealistic ones lead to disappointment and unfulfilled results. Remember a goal is a process that's self initiated and you have control over it, but all expectations depend on external events and or the behaviour of others and we generally don't have control over them.
Truddles
- Tip 72:** **Your OCD knows you and will use this against you.**
leighmcgivern
- Tip 73:** **Recognise it for what it is – it's OCD.** It has different disguises, but it's always OCD.
redinthehead
- Tip 74:** **Tackle small battles at a time, and when you feel ready take a big battle.** Strategy can be key to overcoming fears!
playthoseblues
- Tip 75:** **Remember we are not alone with this... Keep communicating with other sufferers through forums like OCD Action.** We're all in this together for as long as it takes to get through...
wannabefree
- Tip 76:** **Remember that you are an individual, your OCD will not be exactly the same as anyone else's** so if one type of treatment doesn't work for you then try something different.
Tess
- Tip 77:** **Focus on your strengths and not on your weaknesses.** We tend to forget that we each have many strengths as our OCD tends to focus on our weaknesses.
Soxon
- Tip 78:** **Meditation and yoga can be effective ways of relaxing and improving your mental health.**
Daisychain7
- Tip 79:** **Incorporate regular exercise into your life.** This has been mentioned a few times already but is worth mentioning again. Take up running, cycling, boxing or any class that you find interesting. Go out and buy the things you need knowing that you are prepared to actively put more distance between you and OCD. You don't have to be a pro, you just have to be proactive.
JamesOC
- Tip 80:** **Write a diary of your experiences,** write a book even, but document your good and bad times... It will make fantastic reading for those who seek to understand our illness...
wannabefree
- Tip 81:** **Learn how to forgive.** With OCD we tend to have difficulty forgiving ourselves. Remember Forgiveness is not something we do for other people. We do it for ourselves – to get well and move on.
Truddles
- Tip 82:** **Be patient...** Even when things seem to be wrong we are still making progress... We are on a journey, that will take as long as it takes.
wannabefree
- Tip 83:** **Know your limitations.** When your OCD is playing up you can't expect to be able to cope as well as you could without the OCD. So be kind to yourself and accept that you've done your best given the limitations imposed by your OCD. Put it down to experience and try to improve the next time that you tackle the task or thought.
Truddles

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- Tip 84: Allow things to be less than perfect...** It is the less than perfectness that makes life interesting...if all were perfect it would all be boring, having said that, I personally wish it was perfect sometimes, but then I'm human!
wannabefree
- Tip 85: Don't let OCD affect your driving!!**
playthoseblues
- Tip 86: Be assertive once in a while.** For example, if it is okay for others to touch shoes, then it is okay for me, right? Right... Apply this to whatever you are doing... Wash hands once before preparing food, or when they get too sticky, that is all... That is all that is necessary to allow our immune systems to develop and strengthen, naturally...
wannabefree
- Tip 87: Fuel your brain,** by eating a healthy and varied diet. Eat regularly throughout the day to help prevent fluctuations in blood glucose levels.
Truddles
- Tip 88: To optimise your treatment tell whoever's treating you (Psychiatrist, Psychologist or CBT Therapist) everything.** As in order to formulate the most appropriate treatment plan for your particular OCD needs they need to know the true extent of your obsessions and compulsions. That includes telling them if you're depressed or feeling suicidal.
Truddles
- Tip 89: Focus on the positives in life, rather than on the negatives.** In other words concentrate on what you can do rather than what you can't do.
Soxon
- Tip 90: Allow yourself to be less than perfectly clean once in a while...** Non OCD sufferers do that all the time.
wannabefree
- Tip 91: Work, Rest and Play –** Try and balance these 3 elements.
playthoseblues
- Tip 92: Never forget the massive steps we take forward each day,** whether success or failure, we are all moving forward together... We are OCD'ers and need to be proud, just as others with a disability are... We are the anxiety equivalent of paralympians...
wannabefree
- Tip 93: Do the opposite to what your OCD is telling you.**
stus
- Tip 94: Don't put off doing things until your OCD improves.**
For instance if there's a hobby that you'd like to do, or somewhere that you'd like to visit, then at least try it now, don't put it off until your OCD improves. Initially you might not be able to partake in the activity fully but as your confidence grows so will your ability to overcome the obstacles that the OCD puts in your way.
Truddles
- Tip 95: Make a note of all the tips,** nothing beats a *hand-written* one!! Make it a point that u read it at least once in a day. U never know which tip may inspire u whenand for the lifetime!!
ocdinfected
- Tip 96:** *This tip is somewhat in continuation to Tip 12*
We all know that when acting upon our compulsions, doing it just ONCE is enough. But OCD makes us do it a no. of times... sometimes by a count, sometimes till we feel pacified. In any case, since its difficult to convince ourselves about the 'once enough' thing, for starters what we can do is to gradually minimize the no. of times of performing a compulsion, be it just by 1 in number.
E.g. if I wash my hands say 5 times, I will tell myself that from this very moment whenever I wash my hands, *I will* do it 4 times.
This 'once enough' formula leaves us only with unachievable goal... gradually minimizing can sometimes do the trick!
ocdinfected

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- Tip 97:** **Every day set aside time that is solely for you.** Pamper yourself or do something that you enjoy during this time and don't allow anyone or anything, OCD included to interrupt you. This is your time, a chance to recharge your batteries.
Truddles
- Tip 98:** **Studies show that the mental benefits of dance beat other forms of exercise for people with anxiety disorders,** even watching it is good for you!
inca
- Tip 99:** **Try using an ebook.** If your OCD means that you have difficulty handling books, this could be your first step in accessing a therapy book.
inca
- Tip 100:** **If people you know have difficulty understanding that OCD is now largely accepted to be neurobiological in origin then refer them to the OCD Action website's Resource Centre.**
inca
- Tip 101:** **Be ready to be amazed at the little achievements you make without realising them,** and build on those... From small acorns grow whole oak trees... It is one day at a time, one minute at a time... One breath at a time...
wannabefree

THANK YOU

to everyone for their contributions to this presentation.

You can either download this document in its entirety or you can copy and paste your favourites so that you can print them and keep them with you at all times as a reminder.