

College Confidential - OCD Edition

Diverse Perspectives on Transitioning to College
With OCD

Introductions

Tori Green

Cassie Marzke

Ron Marzke, PhD

Rachel Davis, MD

Transitioning to College

- Have a goal: Why are you going to college?
- Plan but limit trips home
- Keep something consistent
 - Netflix show, game
- Look into mental health resources before college starts
- Bring medical records to new provider
- Enroll with Disability Services as soon as possible

Roommate Situation

Pros

Cons

Communicate with RA

Content of Obsessions

Obsessions may be triggered or come up for the first time in the new context of college, for example:

- Scrupulosity
- Sex
- Contamination
- Appearance
- Relationships
- Failure and Perfectionism
- Just Right

Finding Support

- Friends
- Family
- Therapist
- Clubs or organizations with a mental health focus
 - Active Minds
 - NAMI
- Online support groups
- IOCDF support groups
- University Mental Health Center

Maintaining (or Starting) a Healthy Lifestyle

Balance!!

Adequate Sleep

Diet

Down time

Effective coping skills

Exposures! (next slide)

Incorporating ERP

Living an ERP Lifestyle

How does OCD interfere with academic life?

Personal experiences and tips

Academic

A few ways that OCD interferes with studying and learning:

- Getting stuck on details/missing the big picture
- Preoccupation with obsessions and rituals
- Problems with set-shifting
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Re-reading and re-writing
- Perfectionism

What to do if OCD Gets Worse

- Have a management plan in place
 - Warning signs
 - What to do
- Watch for all or nothing thinking and be prepared to challenge it
 - “I can’t do this. I have to to quit” vs.
 - I can take less credits
 - I can take a medical LOA
 - I can take a very difficult class at a community college
 - Less than perfect is OK

Getting stuck on the details

- Study with other students
- Meet with professors
- Start with an outline vs. write everything and cut back
- Turn in drafts for feedback
- Meet with tutors
- Find out if reading the text is necessary – are lectures sufficient?

Preoccupation with obsessions and rituals

- Studying alone in your room may not work so well
- Try different study environments
 - Distracting environments may be helpful for some distract from intrusive thoughts and limit ability to engage in rituals
 - Coffee shop, mall food court, etc.
- Listen to music
- Listen to motivational scripts
- Take a break, do exposure (or something relaxing), come back
- Use a treadmill desk

Feeling overwhelmed

- Ways to take a step back:
 - Have set times for work and play
 - E.g. take a full day off per week
 - Get outside
 - Exercise
 - Sign up for something fun
 - Engage in productive leisure
 - Something that occupies your mind (rock climbing,
 - Keep regular sleep schedule
 - Practice mindfulness
 - Self-compassion!!!

Set-shifting

- Study different topics in different areas
- Study individual topics in larger blocks of time
- Work on projects in larger blocks of time
 - Take schedule breaks

Re-reading and re-writing

- Use audio books
- Use dictation program

Time management

- Walk to class with a friend
 - Be accountable
- Use alarms and schedule on phone
- Schedule meetings with professors/TA's to decrease risk of procrastination

University Accommodations

- **Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)**
 - Applies to all public and private schools
 - Not to schools run by religious entities
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**
 - Applies if a school receives federal financial assistance
 - Including schools run by religious entities

Americans With Disabilities Act

- Prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in public places including schools/colleges
- OCD is covered under the ADA

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in section 7(20), shall, solely by reason of his or her disability, be excluded from the participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...

K-12 vs. College

K-12: Schools must identify students with disabilities and develop/implement an IEP

College: Student must self-identify and provide documentation that supports the diagnosis of a disability

- Must request reasonable accommodations

- Not required to disclose disability, but if you don't college not required to provide reasonable accommodations

 - i.e. disclose sooner rather than later

 - You are not required to disclose your disability to your professors

Documentation Guidelines

For Psychiatric/Psychological Disabilities

<https://www.ahead.org/affiliates/connecticut/documentation>

Licensed Mental Health Professional

- Impartial individual (not a family member)
 - Licensed clinical social worker
 - Licensed professional counselor
 - Psychologist
 - Psychiatrist
 - Neurologist

Clear Statement of the Disability

- DSM-IV or 5 diagnosis
- Summary of presenting symptoms

Current impact on the student's functioning

- OCD interferes with school in these ways:
- Impact or limitations in other major life activities
- Degree of impact: mild, moderate, severe

Assessment procedures and evaluation instruments

- Clinical interview
- Rating scales
- Psychological testing
 - Include standardized or percentile scores

Treatment information

- Impact of medications
 - Improvements
 - Side effects
- Impact of therapy
- Adherence to recommended treatment

Purpose of Reasonable Accommodations

- To provide equal access for otherwise-qualified students to instruction, materials, and evaluation
- To minimize the impact of a disability on a student's academic performance

Can a College Refuse Your Request? – Yes if...

1. Undue financial or administrative burden
2. Significantly changes the nature of the academic program
 - Unfair advantage
 - Lowers the standards
3. Personal nature
 - E.g. personal devices or personal attendant

“Unreasonable” Accommodations

- Not taking exams
- Not required to do the same amount of work
- Not attending class when it is mandatory or missing a significant amount of class

Reasonable Accommodations

- Not everyone with OCD will need accommodations.
- You are not restricted to the list of “typical accommodations
- Work with your psychiatrist or therapist to determine effective, recovery-oriented accommodations

Some accommodations may exacerbate OCD

Symptom-enabling accommodations should be very time-limited

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

- Room alone
- Emotional support animal
- Extended time on tests
- Testing alone in a quiet environment
- Regularly scheduled meetings with professors
- Use of writing centers
- Tutors
- Breaking up one due date into smaller deadlines/projects
- Time off/miss class for therapy or doctor's appointments
- Service animal

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

- Lectures recorded
- Copy of the lecture slides
- Day shift instead of night shift rotations (if available)
- Local rotations instead of away rotations
- Afternoon classes (if available) (or AM) – access to register early
- Oral exams instead of written exams
- Use of audiobooks instead of textbooks
- Provide examples of “normal/good” work product (e.g. papers)
- Allowed to live off campus in order to cook own meals
- Step out of lecture for brief breaks

Potentially “Unhealthy” Accommodations

- Allowed to leave class to wash hands
- Extended deadlines
- Allowed to be late on a regular basis

Temporary or Rare accommodations

- One-time extension on deadline
- Occasionally postponing an exam
 - Must be proactive
- One on one discussions instead of class participation
- Private feedback instead of in the lecture hall
- Complete project on own instead of in a group
- Own set of supplies or equipment (e.g. in lab)
- Partial credit for late work
- Allowed to enter the lecture hall late