



# Dealing With The Haters (And The People Who Do Want To Help):

What I Wish People Knew About OCD



**Nathan Siegel**

**Graduate Student in Mental Health Counseling  
City University of New York, Baruch College**

- Who am I ?
  - Professional Background
  - Personal Background
- Idea and Purpose for this group

# GOALS

- Identify and analyze misconceptions and stereotypes about OCD in society
- Connect around our shared experiences with these, and talk about how we deal with them
- Discuss misconceptions and unhelpful comments we get from people closer to us, such as friends, family, and therapists
- Identify strategies for dealing with these comments, and for helping those close to us understand



# OCD MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

- What are some common stereotypes about OCD?
- How is OCD typically portrayed in the media?

# OCD MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA

From an article by Martin Ingle in *The Guardian*, 5/18/21:

“More often than not, the OCD sufferer is seen as quirky and oh-so-endearing, not dissimilar to a dim pet that you look on lovingly but pityingly. Usually, their function in the story is funny and silly and, most importantly, their illness is something they *want* to do, rather than something they would do anything to get rid of” (Ingle, 2021).



# VIDEO QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do you think about this portrayal of OCD?
- What does it get wrong? Could there be anything it gets right?
- What might seeing this kind of portrayal make people think about OCD?

# VIDEO 1: MONICA IN *FRIENDS*

- *Friends* is a TV comedy that ran on NBC from 1994 – 2004
- Monica is one of the main characters, and is sometimes very particular about things
- The show never officially states she has OCD, although many viewers have come to believe that was the show's intention
- The show consistently makes jokes about Monica's behavior

# VIDEO 1: MONICA IN FRIENDS







# VIDEO REFLECTION

- What do you think about this portrayal of OCD?
- What does it get wrong? Could there be anything it gets right?
- What might seeing this kind of portrayal make people think about OCD?

VIDEO 1.5:  
MONICA IN  
*FRIENDS* AGAIN

I CAN DO THIS



ALL DAY

## VIDEO 2: SHELDON IN *THE BIG BANG THEORY*

- *The Big Bang Theory* is a TV comedy that ran on CBS from 2007 – 2019
- Sheldon is one of the main characters, a physicist at Caltech who lives in an apartment with friends
- He has many quirks and particularities – in the spinoff (*Young Sheldon*), the show officially says he has OCD

I RETURN

# SHELDON AND HIS





# VIDEO REFLECTION

- What do you think about this portrayal of OCD?
- What does it get wrong? Could there be anything it gets right?
- What might seeing this kind of portrayal make people think about OCD?

## VIDEO 3: DETECTIVE MONK IN MONK

- *Monk* is a mystery / comedy / drama TV show that aired from 2002 - 2009
- Adrian Monk is a former detective. After his wife's death, he had a total breakdown and couldn't leave the house for three years. Now, he's once again emerged and is a detective again, but he's struggles with OCD, which has worsened since his wife's death.



# MONK VIDEO MOMENTS TO CONSIDER

Andy Breckman (writer): “I found, later, when we talked to some experts, that I was not far off the mark”

Dean Parisot (director): “The trick here is we’re not trying to make fun of the disease. We’re creating a character who has this problem and is functioning.”



# SO WHAT IS OCD ACTUALLY?

“OCD is not a personality quirk or a character trait — it is a very real mental health condition that affects about 2 to 3 million adults, and half a million youth, in the US alone. While many people can have obsessive or compulsive traits, OCD stands for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and people who are diagnosed with OCD cannot simply ‘turn it off’ ... This level of extreme worry and fear can be so overwhelming that it gets in the way of their ability to function. To try to overcome this anxiety, people with OCD use “compulsions” or rituals, which are specific actions or behaviors. These compulsions are not activities a person with OCD does because they want to, but rather because they feel they have to in order to ease their fears. OCD is not about logic — it is about anxiety and trying to get relief from that anxiety” (International OCD Foundation, 2014, 2021).



From TV to Real Life...

# HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OCD TALKED ABOUT LIKE THIS IN REAL LIFE?

An example



# OCD MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

Interactive Share / Online Poll

What are examples of ignorant / annoying comments about OCD that you've heard in real life?

Table talk

# OCD MISCONCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

Interactive Share / Online Poll Part 2

Have you heard stereotypes about OCD combined with other stereotypes? How so?

Table talk

# SPECTRUM ACTIVITY

- Everybody will stand along an imaginary spectrum
- I'll say a statement
- One end will be "totally disagree" and one will be "totally agree"
- In the middle there is a spectrum for if you partially agree, partially disagree, or are in the middle, etc.
- Don't make judgements about where people stand
- Don't assume you know what they think
- Everybody makes their own decision



## STATEMENT # 1

I hear annoying comments like this about OCD  
fairly often



## STATEMENT #2

People often say misconceptions if they find out I  
or my loved one has OCD





## STATEMENT #3

I know how to respond when I hear this  
misconceptions and I often speak up



## STATEMENT #4

This kind of thing really gets to me and makes me  
feel annoyed



## STATEMENT #5

People who care about me (family, friends) and want to help say annoying things about my OCD



A LITTLE BREAK



# BEYOND THE HATERS: GETTING SPECIFIC

Moving beyond random comments to more specific or challenging situations.

# A CHALK TALK

- There will be a few posters around the room, each with a specific question
- Respond to the question on each poster thoughtfully with a post it note
- Quiet activity
- Take time to read through what others have written
- The idea here is to dive deeper and discuss specific situations and challenges



# TABLE SHARE

- What stood out to you?
- What resonated with you?
- What surprised you?
- Opportunity to share a story

# PAIR SHARE

- A story:
  - You could share →
    - An instance where someone close to you said something like this that frustrated you or was difficult
    - Something you think a well intentioned family member or friend might say





# HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH...

- Unhelpful comments / misconceptions from friends?
- Unhelpful comments / misconceptions from family?
- Unhelpful comments / misconceptions from therapists?



# WORKSHOP A SITUATION



# CLOSE

What I wish posters...

What I wish my friends understood about my experience with OCD

What I wish my family understood about my experience with OCD

What I wish my therapist / medical professionals understood about my experience with OCD

# REFERENCES

Ingle, M. (2021, May 19). *It's no wonder we still think OCD is a neatness illness – it's mainly how we see it on screen* | Martin Ingle. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/19/its-no-wonder-we-still-think-ocd-is-a-neatness-illness-its-mainly-how-we-see-it-on-screen>

“I’m soooo OCD” + Other Myths About Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. (2014). Retrieved from <https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/OCDMyth-Handout-092313.pdf>

What is OCD?. (2021). Retrieved from <https://iocdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/What-Is-OCD-Brochure.pdf>