

Coping Mechanisms

To try and distract from obsessions and compulsions, encourage your child to do the following when they are feeling overwhelmed by their own thoughts:

- 5-4-3-2-1 technique:
 - Name 5 things they can see
 - Name 4 things they can touch
 - Name 3 things they can hear
 - Name 2 things they can smell
 - Name 1 thing they can taste
- Breathing exercises:
 - Take a deep breath in through the nose
 - Hold it for 2 seconds
 - Breathe out slowly through the mouth
 - Wait 5 seconds and repeat until they are feeling calmer
- Blowing bubbles can also help as a panic-reducing breathing exercise
- Physical exercises:
 - Tense and hold the muscles in the body, as tightly as they can, and release. Repeat until the body is more relaxed.
 - Pushing away a wall – ask your child to stand in front of a solid wall and ask them to try and push the wall away. As hard as they can, for as long as they can, and when they stop, their muscles will relax – repeat as necessary.
- Counting:
 - Counting out loud can help, but instead of counting in order, ask your child to repeat numbers, out of order. Brains are used to the familiarity of them being in order, and when they are said out of order, it can confuse the brain enough to switch its focus from obsessive thoughts to confusion.
- Eating sour sweets – eating sour sweets can help your child's mind switch its focus from obsessive thoughts, to focusing on the senses

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) Coping Mechanisms



The Lotus Mental Health

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What is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder?

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a mental health disorder which causes a person's thoughts to be significantly interrupted by obsessions and compulsions. These obsessions and compulsions are unwanted and can lead to significant distress and disruption to daily life.

The obsessions are unwelcome and disturbing thoughts, images, doubts or worries that repeatedly and consistently enter the mind. They can appear with such force that they can make you feel extremely anxious.

Compulsions are repeated actions that a person feels like they **must** do in order to reduce the anxiety that's caused by the obsessions. For example – a person with OCD may have been asked to lock a door when leaving the house, but instead of locking it and walking away, they will return back to the door several times, each time checking and re-checking that the door is, in fact, locked.

What can you do?

Because OCD can and often does, impact many aspects of daily life, it can be hugely beneficial to have coping mechanisms in place.

It is important to find what works for you and your child, so here are a few examples to get you started...

Coping Mechanisms

If your child(ren) are feeling anxious, there are things that you can encourage your child to do that can help them. They are:

- Nobody should go through difficult times alone, and this is something that your child needs to learn to understand, because of this, it is important for your child to learn how to open up to people about how they are feeling. A parent, carer, brother, sister, grandparent, auntie, uncle, cousin, a trusted friend, a counsellor – it doesn't matter who, as long as your child feels comfortable talking to someone who they trust, about how they are feeling.
- Encourage your child to get the thoughts that are in their head – out. An effective way that they can do this by keeping a diary. Simply writing down how they are feeling can be really useful. Not only will that work because it helps them put a place for their negative thoughts, but it can also be used as a point of reference for any particular anxiety triggers that they didn't realise they had.
- Writing a letter – this might seem a bit daft, but if they can write letters to themselves, particularly after compulsions that they might have had, but not necessarily carried out, or thought about repeated OCD compulsions, they can use the letters to read back and see themselves, through their own words, that they have overcome their compulsions in the past, and therefore they know that they are capable of overcoming them.