

The 12-Step Program and OCD Recovery

by Roy C.

It was January '99 when Obsessive Compulsive Anonymous (OCA) celebrated eleven years of fellowship! As some 50 fellow OCA members and friends gathered in a local restaurant, I reflected back on our first meetings and how much OCA has grown since then. What is it that OCA offers for OCD that keeps people coming?

Clearly, recovering from OCD is no easy task. Certainly, doctors can help us greatly; without them, many sufferers would be lost. For most of us, though, this is only the beginning. OCD is so much more than obsessions and compulsions. OCD is a way of "being" that can be changed over time in OCA.

The OCA program has some simple suggestions discussed in our text, *Obsessive Compulsive Anonymous—Recovering From Obsessive Compulsive Disorder* (available both through the OC Foundation and OCA). Quite simply, "getting active" in OCA will facilitate recovery. OCA meetings follow a format similar to other 12-step programs. We rotate between step meetings (reading and discussion of one of the 12 steps), topic meetings (issues common to OCD such as perfectionism, anger, control, self-pity, etc.), qualifications (a person tells their story and how they use the OCA program for recovery), and story meetings (reading and discussion of one of the stories found in the OCA text).

We have found this focus much more helpful than "obsessively" comparing symptoms and treatments that some non-OCA groups get stuck doing. Some newcomers find the mention of a "Higher Power" in OCA hard to digest, but OCA only asks that we have an open mind concerning the spiritual aspects of our program. Clearly, many OCA members have found that by incorporating a belief in a "Greater Good" (or more traditional God), we have been able to "let go" of more OCD related issues.

Often, we are asked, "How does OCA work?" The answer is usually, "Pretty well." A healing occurs in our meetings that defies explanation. Some have called OCA "cognitive behavioral work with a spiritual foundation." With the help of others in OCA and our Higher Power (some choose the group as their Higher Power), we change our day-to-day living and thinking.

A favorite topic in OCA is resentments and how they poison our lives. As one woman describes in our book: "I wrote my resentment list and realized that everybody and anybody that I had ever known was on the list. I wondered if it could be all these people or could it also be me." Too high expectations of others (and ourselves) fuel our resentments and, consequently, increase our OCD as well. We cannot afford to hold on to our resentments too tightly if we hope to recover

more fully. On the flip side of the coin, we find acceptance of others important in recovery. In the past, we might have spent countless hours trying to convince others to change as we saw it. Today, we, instead, can focus on our own lives and see others behaving as they choose to.

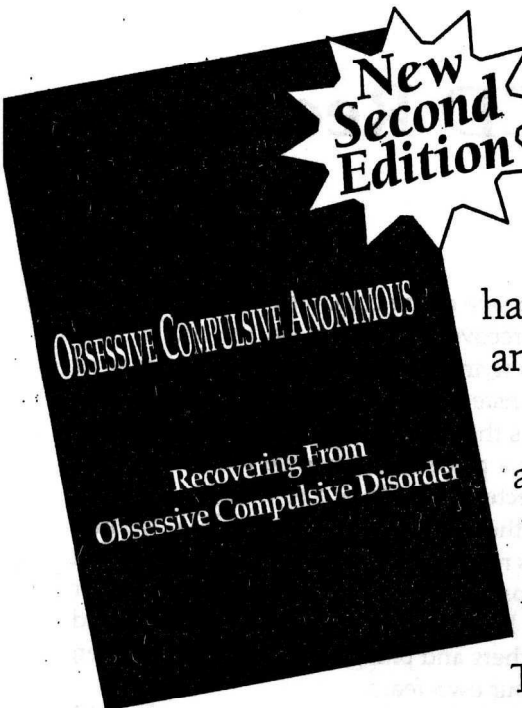
OCA also provides a place where people recovering from OCD can get reconnected with life. For so many of us, OCD has isolated us from the rest of the world. In OCA, we find that by helping others recover, our personal struggles take on less importance. The paradox of 12-step programs is that our recovery improves by helping others. OCD is a self-centered illness—by helping others and plugging into a Higher Power, we move away from our own fears.

Equally important in the 12-step program and OCD recovery are family issues. Once again—OCD does not exist in a vacuum—family issues and long-term concerns are addressed in OCA. In my book, *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder—A Survival Guide for Family and Friends*, family is the focus when looking at recovery from OCD. Previously, other self-help books have focused on the individual with OCD, barely mentioning the impact on the family. Here, the family is guided on what it can do (and can't do!) to help someone recover. Most importantly, family members are shown how they, too, are suffering and how they can heal, even if their loved one does not recover. Family members have asked "How can I enjoy my life, especially if my loved one is still suffering with OCD?" While there are no easy answers, the *Family Guide* moves its readers through behavioral techniques, 12-step tools, and co-dependency issues that impact family recovery. Obviously, family members need help and support too—over 2,000 *Family Guides* have been distributed by the OC Foundation alone.

Anyone interested in finding out more about OCA does not have to wait. We have a 24-hour telephone number (516-739-0662) that people can call for meeting information across the United States. If you would like to write to us, please include a self addressed, stamped envelope and mail it to OCA, P.O. Box 215, New Hyde Park, NY 11040. We also attend the OCF Annual Conventions where we hold OCA meetings and workshops.

Until then,
Roy C.

(For a recorded message of 12-Step Support Groups, call 516-739-0662.)



We, of Obsessive Compulsive Anonymous (OCA), have all felt the fury of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). OCD, with its crippling power, had left us physically, emotionally and spiritually sick.

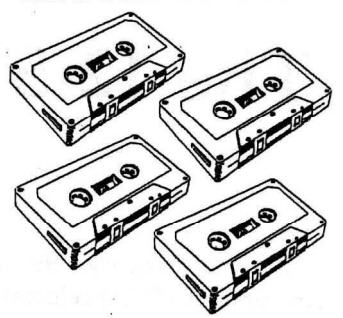
Fortunately, the medical and psychological communities now have effective treatments for OCD. For many of us, though, this wasn't enough. The 12 Step Program of OCA has

proven to be an important part in our continuing recovery from OCD.

Our book contains:

- The 12 Step Program for OCD
- Endorsements from psychiatrists and psychologists
- 33 of our personal stories of OCD
- How to start an OCA meeting
- Resources for OCD
- Slogans and tools we use

RECORDED LIVE



OCA 12 Step Workshop for OCD

Join longtime members of OCA as they guide the listener through our recovery program. If you are new to OCA or if your meeting is struggling with the question "How does the 12 Step program work for OCD,?" these audio cassettes will help! Recorded live at the Queens, New York meeting.

Please send the following:

- "Obsessive Compulsive Anonymous - Recovering from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder" (2nd edition)
@ \$19.00 per book*
- "OCA - 12 Step Workshop for OCD"
@ \$35.00 per set of 4 cassette tapes*

Sub total _____

Sub total _____

Total enclosed _____

*All prices include shipping and handling

Mail payment to:

OCA World Services

P.O. Box 215 • New Hyde Park, NY 11040 • 516-739-0662

Please make check or money order payable to "OCA World Services" - U.S. Dollars/U.S. Bank

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