



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) can tear apart a family. Often family and friends have tried to “stop” a loved one’s OCD - with little success. This is the *first* book specifically for the *family and friends* of someone with OCD.

Family can also get caught in the “merry go round” of:

Obsessions (intrusive thoughts) such as:

- fear of harm to oneself or loved ones
- fear of dirt or contamination
- intrusive sexual thoughts
- recurrent blasphemous images

Compulsions (ritualistic behavior) such as:

- continually rechecking doors and locks
- repeated handwashing and bathing
- repeated ordering and recounting
- hoarding useless materials

HELP is available! Here our book presents:

1. *A program for the family* — what loved ones can do for the sufferer as well as themselves.
2. When ‘helping too much’ can actually hurt.
3. Resources for OCD

“Will fill a tremendous need with patients with OCD and their families...you have my full support.”

Wilmer Betts, M.D., Obsessive Compulsive Foundation Advisory Board

“This loving book is an inspiration and will be considered way ahead of it’s time in years to come.”

Janet Greeson Ph.D. - Founder, President of “A Place For Us” and “Your Life Matters”
Author of “It’s Not What You’re Eating, It’s What’s Eating You”

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OCD—A Survival Guide For Family and Friends

By Roy C

Until now, most of the literature on OCD has focused on the individual with "the problem." Rarely has mention been made of the families and friends who live/love a person with OCD. Often these families suffer greatly along with the person with OCD. The purpose of this new book is to help families recover from the battleground of OCD even if their loved one doesn't get better!

A family member may be thinking right now, "How can I enjoy my life especially if my loved one is still suffering with OCD?" Much of family time might be spent fighting with OCD with little time left for the family. Many families, in an attempt to "keep the peace," have completed rituals for the individual with OCD or have answered obsessive questions repeatedly. Or, perhaps, anger has entered into the picture as the family member screamed at the person with OCD to "JUST STOP!" These responses are not effective against OCD and just escalate anxiety for everyone involved.

The AlAnon program, created in response to alcoholism, has developed three simple principles which can be applied to OCD:

- 1) Family didn't cause OCD.
- 2) Family can't control OCD.
- 3) Family can't cure OCD.

At first these principles may seem radical to someone trying to "control" another's OCD. But these simple statements allow families to distance themselves from the illness and to unload the accumulated guilt.

As many people know, there are several treatments for OCD today—behavior therapy, medications, and support groups like OCA. Families can show their loved one where this help is available but it is up to the person with OCD to actually try these options. Family cannot force anyone to work on their recovery—in general, the person with OCD has to be willing to do the work.

Family can find it shocking to see the person with OCD reluctant to try these options despite their obvious suffering. If this is the case, it is imperative that the family doesn't "enable" the person with OCD. With OCD, "enabling" is when you protect someone from the consequences of their illness. It is not the family's responsibility to make excuses for the person with OCD if they are late due to their illness. It is important not to make the environment "OCD free" or to disrupt the family's normal routine to satisfy OCD rituals. Instead, the AlAnon principle of "detaching with love" allows family members to love the individual while pulling away from their disease.

Now about family dynamics. Years spent with OCD takes its toll on families. Unhappy patterns of relating develop and a

healthy two-way relationship proves impossible over time. Usually the person with OCD "shuts down" emotionally while at the same time relying on family for their most basic needs. This inability to form a natural give-and-take relationship can lock a family into a "comfortable misery" with little chance for change. The solution is to shift the focus off the illness and onto taking care of oneself. All the family members are entitled to time for themselves which can include activities long ago abandoned for the OCD.

Lastly, families can find it helpful to try the "Twelve Steps" which so many have found to be a bridge back to life. These steps help them to see things honestly and, most importantly, let them recognize how they have contributed to the disharmony in the household. While families didn't cause the OCD, there seems to be certain personality traits present in families with a member with OCD. Families need to acknowledge control issues where individual freedoms and desires are not allowed to be expressed. Also, perfectionism and impossibly high standards seem to fuel OCD symptoms. A family consumed with fear where everything is a crisis certainly makes healing difficult. Excessive anger and blaming of OCD also leads to nowhere. In the Twelve Steps these issues are addressed and changes can be made. Some find the discussion of a "Higher Power" in the steps a stumbling block but the steps are only suggestions—no one is making family members or friends believe in anything.

These suggestions will, hopefully, help make life a bit easier and a relationship with the person with OCD more rewarding.