OCD

Abi Harrison-Nye

Symptoms

- Unwanted, intrusive thoughts causing anxiety.
- Anxiety is relieved through repetitive physical or purely mental actions.
- The relief is temporary, then the anxiety cycle returns.

Age & Gender

- Can start in childhood, but normally begins in late teens or early adulthood.
- Affects males and females roughly equally.
- The average diagnosis occurs 9 to 13 years after initial symptoms start.

Misconceptions

- It’s a serious condition, not just liking things neat.
- People cannot simply 'snap out of it' or choose to stop.
- People with OCD often know their fears are irrational but still feel the anxiety.

Diagnosis

- GP refers to a specialist mental health team for a detailed assessment.
- Doctors use medical criteria to identify obsessions and compulsions.
- Diagnosed when symptoms significantly impact daily life.

Support options

- CBT with exposure therapy helps face fears without rituals.
- Antidepressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) can reduce symptom intensity.
- Peer support groups help reduce isolation.

Support

- Do not criticise or rush them during a ritual.
- Do not join in with their compulsions or offer reassurance.
- Keep a calm atmosphere to help lower general anxiety levels.

This information isn't a diagnostic tool. If you recognise these symptoms in yourself or others, please contact a doctor.