

Media Release

OCD Awareness Week 2016 – Family Accommodation

This year OCD Awareness Week runs from the 22nd-28th of May, and WayAhead – Mental Health Association NSW is focusing on reducing the stigma surrounding Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is an anxiety disorder characterised by ongoing unwanted/intrusive thoughts and fears (obsessions) that lead to individuals feeling the need to carry out certain rituals in order to feel less anxious (compulsions), and it causes considerable anxiety and discomfort in those who experience it.

However, it is still often misunderstood by the general public and indeed by the friends and family of consumers, and part of OCD Awareness Week's campaign is to help stop people from using the label "OCD" incorrectly and inappropriately.

One of the focuses of this year's campaign is to raise awareness around this issue of "family accommodation" for those living with OCD.

Clinical Psychologist and Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University, Rocco Crino describes family accommodation as "where individual family members are involved in some way in the person's rituals."

It has long been acknowledged that family accommodation is an issue amongst children and adolescents living with OCD however research is not suggesting that an issue within all age groups.

Mr Crino says that most family accommodation is motivated by a desire to lessen the individual's distress however "it can be associated with an individual's lack of progress in recovery and symptom severity."

For individuals who are living with OCD asking – either directly or indirectly – for their family to accommodate their obsessive compulsive behaviours can be a means of coping with the associated anxiety.

Julie Leitch, an educator at WayAhead who has a lived experience of OCD said that before being properly diagnosed family accommodation rituals were a major part of her life.

"Over time I had to get my husband to check more things...as he became more involved he could see that I was very distressed and needed things to be checked to have reassurance."

However, family accommodation is detrimental to the recovery of those living with OCD and Professor Crino recommends "gently disengaging" with activities that accommodate obsessive compulsive behaviour.

There are multiple avenues available that OCD consumers and family members can take including attending one of WayAhead's anxiety support groups.

Family accommodation is becoming a more widely discussed topic in relation to OCD with ABC's "All in the Mind" program on Radio National featuring this issue in their upcoming story Sunday May 22nd at 5pm.

Additionally over the course of OCD Awareness Week WayAhead is offering a series of events and talks to help increase understanding and reduce the stigma surrounding OCD including the issues

associated with family accommodation. It has also produced a series of free resources that are available on its website.

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Anxiety Website: understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au

For Media enquiries: Matthew Keighery

Ph (02) 9339 6000 | Mobile 0408 203 511 | matthew.keighery@wayahead.org.au

Additional Resources:

[OCD Awareness Week Website](#)

[Resources](#) – posters and other print resources

Articles:

[Book Review - The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B](#)

[Family Accommodation](#) – new research and the dilemma for carers

Personal Stories – [Michael, Pure Obsessional OCD](#) [Lather, scrub, rinse, repeat](#)

Video: [Professor Rocco Crino on OCD](#)

[WayAhead](#) - Mental Health Association NSW is an 80 year old mental health charity. WayAhead champions mental health and wellbeing through education, support and advocacy

WayAhead provides support for Anxiety Disorders with 35 [Anxiety Disorders Support groups](#) operating in NSW. We also run 12 week CBT [Self Help Anxiety Courses](#).

We provide free mental health education through Understanding Anxiety Forums, [Small Steps seminars](#) for primary school teachers and parents, and through our WayAhead websites and [fact sheets](#).

We promote better mental health through programs such as October's [Mental Health Month](#), the [Mental Health Matters Awards](#), Stress Less Tips and Perinatal Depression and Anxiety Awareness Week, the [Workplace Health Promotion Network](#) and the [Young and Parenting Project](#).

WayAhead run free information services such as the telephone services; Mental Health Information Line - 1300 794 991 and the Anxiety Information Line - 1300 794 992, as well as the [WayAhead Online Directory](#) of mental health services.

WayAhead websites:

www.mentalhealthmonth.org.au www.wayahead.org.au

www.understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au www.directory.wayahead.org.au www.whpn.org

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