

Media Release

OCD Awareness Week – Personal Experiences

This year the 22nd-28th of May is OCD Awareness Week. It aims to increase understanding around Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as well as tackle the stigma associated with this mental illness.

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). It is one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented of the anxiety disorders. It is also one of the most misunderstood.

It is not uncommon to hear the phrase “he/she is so OCD about that” in reference to someone who is neat or likes to keep their desk, home etc. ordered in a certain way. However language like that is both inaccurate and offensive and adds to public misunderstanding and stigmatisation of OCD.

As part of OCD Awareness Week this year WayAhead would like to help end the misinformation about Obsessive Compulsive Disorder through sharing the stories of individuals who have struggled with their own experiences of OCD.

Joanne is 17, and she has been living with OCD for most of her life and it effects every aspect of her day.

“Small things have had the change, for example my siblings know now that if they want a high five, it’s going to have to be a high ten instead, or when setting the table they know that because I can’t use knives. I’m terrified of cutting myself accidentally and being placed in the situation when I might have to cut myself intentionally to even the sensation, so they need to set the table differently at my spot. These things however have become part of the normal running of our house.”

Bé has experienced OCD for as long as he can remember and although he has now developed coping mechanisms to deal – including his recent uptake of Latin Dancing – it is a constant challenge for him.

Much of his obsession focuses on hygiene including elaborate cleaning rituals meaning that it can take him hours simply to wash his hands in the bathroom and the stigma and misunderstanding attached to OCD has made recovery a difficult journey.

“Sometimes it is lonely going through this pain and struggle and not being able to hear someone say “I understand”.”

As an educator for WayAhead Julie Leitch is passionate about increasing understanding about what Obsessive Compulsive Disorder really means for those who live with it and reducing the public stigma associate with it.

“The important thing to realise is that OCD I not trivial –it is a serious condition. Everyone can be quirky but unless there are thoughts of harm, contamination etc. associated then it is not Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.”

Clinical Psychologist Professor Rocco Crino explains that Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a condition characterised by “Intrusive, unpleasant or unwanted thoughts images or urges that intrude

into the individuals mind against their will”, these thoughts “create considerable anxiety or discomfort.”

So next time your friend says they want to clean the house before they go out, thank them for being a neat person and don't suggest that their tidiness is equivalent to OCD. This year's OCD Awareness Week is a time to work together as a community to stop the misconception and the stigma surrounding this mental health issue.

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Anxiety Website: understandinganxiety.wayahead.org.au

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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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