

Phobias and OCD

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover several types of anxiety disorders, specifically:

1. Phobias
 - a. Types
 - b. Treatments
2. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

1. Phobias

Anxiety disorders are disorders in which a person feels nervous or uneasy in some pervasive, particularly strong or unnecessary way, which can impair their life as a result. It can cause psychological stress on the person as well as physical symptoms.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Sweating, rapid heart rate, upset stomach, dizziness, and trouble concentrating are possible symptoms of an anxiety disorder.

Phobias are a type of anxiety disorder. The word phobia comes from the Greek word *phobos*, which means fear. It is also the name of the Greek god of fear. A phobia is any strong, irrational fear of specific things or situations.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Hematophobia is a fear of blood, and coulrophobia is a fear of clowns.



TERM TO KNOW

Phobia

A strong, irrational fear of specific things or situations

1a. Types

Specific phobias can also refer to a condition where a person has a fear that is rational, but is stronger than it really should be.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Arachnophobia is a fear of spiders. Spiders *can* hurt you; however, a person that has arachnophobia can have a serious or debilitating reaction to them. If this person sees a spider, they might run screaming and not be able to control themselves until they get away from the spider.

One common type of phobia is **social phobia**, which is a fear of being in social situations and interacting with others in a public place--a phobia that can have adverse consequences for a person.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If a person has a social phobia, they might decide to stay at home all the time, and may not be building personal relationships.



TERMS TO KNOW

Social Phobia

Fear of being in social situations and interacting with others

1b. Treatments

There are different kinds of treatments for phobias. Desensitization is a behavioral treatment where a person is gradually and increasingly exposed to the thing that they're afraid of. This gradual exposure helps to teach them that it's not something to necessarily be afraid of.

➞ **EXAMPLE** If a person has arachnophobia, they might first be shown a picture of a spider. The next step may be being placed in a room with a spider on the other side of it. Gradually, the person might move closer, and may actually end up holding the spider.

2. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Another type of anxiety disorder is **obsessive-compulsive disorder**, or **OCD**. This is a disorder where a person becomes especially preoccupied with certain thoughts or feelings, and has a strong motivation to perform certain actions--a result of the preoccupying thoughts and feelings.

These thoughts and feelings are called **obsessions**, and they are often unwanted and intrusive. Usually, these thoughts are negative, and they can create intense feelings of anxiety or worry in a person.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A person might constantly have a concern or fear of being hurt by something, or they might constantly feel unclean and have a compulsion to get clean in some way.

Compulsions are actions that a person performs repeatedly, to reduce the feelings of anxiety they have. Usually, these compulsions are irrational. The actions don't actually prevent the person from experiencing their fear, but they do help to distract the person or push those thoughts out of their mind in some way. Sometimes the compulsion must be enacted in a certain way or in a certain number.

➞ **EXAMPLE** A person might have a sudden fear of being hurt that goes away when they count certain things like heart beats or footsteps.

Another form of obsessive-compulsive disorder is hoarding. A person may feel the need to keep everything or certain types of things.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For instance, a person might feel like they need to keep every kind of cereal box in order to keep their anxious thoughts at bay.

OCD is often treated with cognitive behavioral therapy. The person learns to refrain from certain kinds of compulsive behavior and to recognize these irrational thought processes. Gradually, a person will learn to reduce their stress and anxiety, and to realize that the compulsions don't necessarily help with their obsessions.



TERMS TO KNOW

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

A disorder in which a person becomes preoccupied with certain thoughts or feels a strong motivation or requirement to perform certain actions

Obsessions

Thoughts or feelings that are unwanted and intrusive and create intense anxiety or worry in the person

Compulsions

Actions that person feels compelled to perform repeatedly to reduce feelings of anxiety from obsessions



SUMMARY

Anxiety disorders are disorders in which a person feels nervous or uneasy in a pervasive, strong, or unnecessary way. **Phobias** are a type of anxiety disorder in which a person has a strong irrational fear of specific things or situations. This is often treated through desensitization. **Obsessive-compulsive disorder**, or **OCD**, is another type of anxiety disorder in which a person has an obsession which leads to compulsive behavior in an attempt to reduce the anxiety caused by the obsession. This is often treated with cognitive behavioral therapy.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart.



TERMS TO KNOW

Compulsions

Actions that person feels compelled to perform repeatedly to reduce feelings of anxiety from obsessions.

Obsessions

Thoughts or feelings that are unwanted and intrusive and create intense anxiety or worry in the person.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

A disorder in which a person becomes preoccupied with certain thoughts or feels a strong motivation or requirement to perform certain actions.

Phobia

A strong, irrational fear of specific things or situations.

Social Phobia

Fear of being in social situations and interacting with others.