



SA Federation for
Mental Health

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE PERSONALITY DISORDER

What it is:

Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder is characterised by a preoccupation with rules, perfectionism, order and personal control. This behaviour often comes at the expense of efficiency and flexibility, and can be present in a variety of contexts. This should not be confused with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, or OCD, which revolves around true obsessions and compulsions.

Individuals with this disorder are obsessed with rules, lists, schedules and organisation, often to the extent that the major point of the activity is lost. For example they could spend so long trying to write the “perfect” schedule, that the activities on the schedule are never performed. The individual will also often display a level of perfectionism that interferes with the completion of tasks, as they are unwilling or unable to complete something unless it meets their unrealistically high expectations of perfection.

Individuals with obsessive-compulsive personality disorder will often be so devoted to work and productivity that their personal relationships with friends and family will be neglected. They will also deny themselves leisure time because they always feel there is work that needs to be done. The individual may have very strict and inflexible personal or moral rules according to which they live, and they may expect others to live accordingly. Individuals with this disorder may also be unwilling to discard old or worthless objects or appliances, and they may be considered stingy and chose to live below their means in order to save for future misfortune.

Common symptoms:

1. An obsession with rules, organisation, personal control and order, to the extent that it interferes with productivity
2. A level of perfectionism that interferes with the completion of tasks
3. Extreme devotion to work, to the detriment of personal relationships and own leisure time
4. Unable to delegate tasks or work unless they will be completed exactly as the individual demands
5. Rigid and strict moral or ethical values

6. Inability to discard old or worthless objects, even when they have no sentimental value
7. Stingy when it comes to money matters, believes money should be spared in case of future disaster



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Causes:

Research has found that there may be a link between obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and bipolar, depressive and eating disorders. Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder also appears to be diagnosed more in men.