

# Preface

This book describes the conceptualization, assessment, and psychological treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) using the empirically supported cognitive-behavioral therapy procedures of **exposure, response prevention, and cognitive therapy**. The development of effective problem-focused treatments for psychological disorders such as OCD has created an enormous need for the dissemination of treatment programs, such as this one, to mental health professionals who want to know how to use such techniques with their patients. This book builds upon psychological principles of behavior change. As such, it assumes basic knowledge and some training in psychotherapeutic intervention. It is written for psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, students and trainees, and other mental health care practitioners. It is intended not only for those specializing in OCD or other anxiety disorders, but for those clinicians who wish to learn how to manage OCD effectively in their day-to-day practice.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter describes the clinical phenomenon of OCD, differentiating it from other disorders with similar characteristics and outlining empirically supported diagnostic and assessment procedures. Chapter 2 reviews what is known about the leading theoretical models of the development and maintenance of OCD, and their treatment implications. In Chapter 3, I present a framework for conducting an initial assessment and for deciding whether a particular patient is a candidate for the psychological treatment program outlined in Chapter 4. Methods for explaining the diagnosis of OCD and introducing the treatment program are incorporated. Chapter 4 presents in detailed fashion the nuts and bolts of effective psychological treatment techniques for OCD. There are numerous case examples and transcripts of in-session dialogs to illustrate the treatment procedures. The chapter also reviews scientific evidence for the efficacy of this program, and describes a number of common obstacles to successful treatment. Finally, Chapter 5 includes a series of case examples describing the treatment of various sorts of OCD symptoms (contamination, fears of responsibility for harm, etc.). A variety of forms and patient handouts for use in treatment appear in the book's Appendix.

OCD is a highly heterogeneous disorder. For example, some patients experience fears of germs and contamination, while others have recurring unwanted anxiety-evoking ideas of committing heinous acts that they are unlikely to commit (e.g., running into pedestrians while driving, murdering loved ones). It is rare to see two sufferers with completely overlapping symptoms. Although a systematic and multicomponent treatment approach is advocated in this book, this manual is not intended as a cookbook. Instead, the clinician is guided in tailoring specific treatment components to individual patients' needs. This manual provides a practical and structured approach with supporting didactic materials for both clinicians and patients.

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This book is dedicated to all of the patients and research participants who have come to our clinic seeking help and, not knowing what to expect of treatment, found the courage to confront their fears and defeat their anxiety. They believed in us, confided in us, challenged us, and educated us.

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## Dedication

To my parents, Ferne and Les Abramowitz—*my only creators*