

INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY'S OCD CARE TEAM

SEASONS GREETINGS, ONE AND ALL

Welcome to our inaugural Intrusive Thoughts OCD newsletter! The holidays can be a stressful time; high expectations for having the “perfect” holiday experience, stress around shopping and preparing for company, being around family, and not to mention the ongoing pandemic. We figured what better time to send out our first newsletter than a time when everyone could use a little extra support! So let me start with an introduction. My name is Emily Hemendinger and I am the lead OCD therapist and DBS coordinator with our program at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Dr. Rachel Davis began working with OCD at the University of Colorado in 2013, growing a caseload and program to help those affected by OCD and related disorders. While the program officially started in 2019 with just myself and Dr. Rachel Davis, we have quickly grown into an active and awesome team.

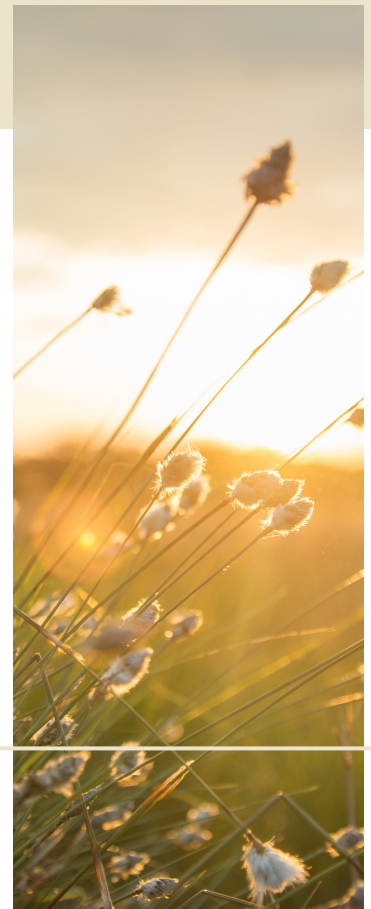
The OCD Program currently provides medication management and outpatient individual and group therapy. The team is made up of passionate and conscientious individuals dedicated to treating individuals with the utmost respect and care. We utilize evidence-based treatments, such as CBT, ERP, and ACT, while also making sure we individualize care for each client.

In this issue you will find unique exposures to practice around the holidays, reminders about flexibility during the holidays, a fun craft/art project for the holidays, and some fun facts.

Future quarterly newsletters will have tips, tricks, skills, and more about how to manage your OCD. If you have any ideas for our newsletter or would like to contribute, please let us know. We are excited to be sharing and connecting with you through the Intrusive Thoughts newsletter.

Happy Holidays one and all!

Emily, Stephanie, Scott, Abby, Anna, Rachel, Megan, and Travis



Department of Psychiatry

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

OUR TEAM

Dr. Rachel Davis MD - Medical Director and Psychiatrist

*Emily Hemendinger LCSW, MPH, CPH – Lead OCD
Therapist/Clinical Social Worker and DBS Coordinator*

Dr. Stephanie Lehto PsyD – OCD Therapist/Licensed Psychologist

Dr. Megan Dery DO – Psychiatrist

*Dr. Abigail Norouzinia PhD – OCD Therapist/Licensed
Clinical Psychologist*

*Anna Korbel MSW – Clinical Social Work Faculty
Fellow/OCD Therapist*

*Dr. Scott Cypers – Licensed Psychologist/Therapist
with Johnson Depression Center*

Travis Neace BASW – MSW candidate/OCD intern therapist

GROUP OFFERINGS

Mondays at 12pm

*For students (all ages above 18 years
old) with OCD and related disorders*

Tuesdays at 5pm (waitlist)

*For adults ages 18+ with OCD and
related disorders*

Wednesdays at 5pm (waitlist)

*For adults ages 18+ with OCD and
related disorders*

Thursdays at 4pm

*For adults ages 18+ with OCD and
related disorders*

Fridays at 4pm (waitlist)

*For adolescents 13-17 years old with
OCD and related disorders*

*We do have a waitlist for individual and
group therapy, however we can definitely
add you to our waitlist and/or send you
other referrals.*

*Are you a clinician who wants to know
more about OCD and ERP? We offer
trainings, consultations, and
supervisions!*

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE RESOURCES ON
OCD AND ERP FOR CLINICIANS AND PATIENTS](#)

“There isn't anybody out there who doesn't have a mental health issue, whether it's depression, anxiety, or how to cope with relationships. Having OCD is not an embarrassment anymore - for me. Just know that there is help and your life could be better if you go out and seek the help.”

– Howie Mandel

MYTH VERSUS FACT

Myth: OCD sufferers love cleaning

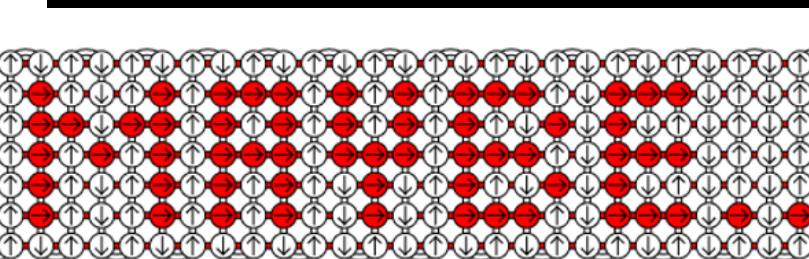
Fact: While it is true that many people with OCD experience triggers related to cleanliness and have compulsions around cleaning and washing, people with OCD can actually experience obsessions related to a wide variety of things including losing control, hurting others, unwanted sexual thoughts, a hyper sense of responsibility and many more.



Myth: Everyone is a little OCD

Fact: This is false and statements like this can be very harmful for those who truly suffer from OCD because it diminishes their suffering and creates a joke out of something very serious. While many people like things a certain way or become obsessed about certain things these personality traits, thoughts and behaviors are actually very different from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE MYTHS VERSUS FACTS ON OCD](#)



THE MAYBE BRACELET

If you struggle with uncertainty, a “maybe bracelet” can be a helpful reminder to lean into uncertainty. Below you will find a pattern (generated at freindship-bracelets.net) for creating maybe bracelets and three completed bracelets.

[CLICK HERE FOR BRACELET TUTORIALS](#)

FALL/WINTER EXPOSURE CONNECT 4

Lets play exposure connect 4, see if you can get 4 exposures in a row in any direction. It's a game that you can play alone or have your family join. If any of these are above a 3 out of 10 (mild to moderate anxiety) on your anxiety meter, then go ahead and do it. If it does not cause you anxiety, feel free to substitute a new exposure to make your connect 4.



Combine Pumpkin Spice with a Food You Eat All the Time For Breakfast (ex. Eggs and pumpkin spice)

Wear a Halloween Outfit Out in Public not on Halloween

Karaoke to a Fall or Winter Themed Song

Touch a non-poisonous Spider

Do the Monster Mash Dance in the Middle of a Store

File a Complaint with a Store/Restaurant that they have not gotten into the holiday spirit enough

Ask Someone To Go to a Haunted Corn Maze with You

Watch a Scary Movie

Bob for Apples in the Middle of the Market (Make sure you pay for the apples after)

Touch a Cobweb with your Hands

Share a Scary Story to a Group of Strangers

Order a Pumpkin Spiced Latte from a Store But You Can't Use Words to Order

Take a Poll of 5 People About The Best Foods to Eat in the Fall

Dress Up as a Superhero for a Day Not During Halloween

Eat at a Restaurant without Using Your Hands

Handout Halloween Candy Early and Share With People Happy Pre-Halloween

Go On A Scary Amusement Park Ride

Return an M & M bag to a store as the orange color is not Halloween orange

Play a Halloween Prank on Someone

Ask Someone to Share Something that Scares Them

Watch A Video of A Blood Draw

Tell Someone A Personal Anxiety Horror Story (what your OCD/anxiety tells you could go wrong)

Put Your Hand in a Dirty Trashcan for A Minute and not wash it for 10 minutes after

Buy A Pumpkin Pie and then Smash Your Face In It Right After You Purchase It

Walk Around A Spooky Place at Night with a Friend

A MESSAGE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays can be a time of celebrations, family, fun, great food, and special memories if we allow for the flexibility needed to enjoy them. However, for many people with anxiety and OCD, the holidays can bring up a lot of anxiety and distress. It is so easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle, the striving for the perfect house, the perfect gift, the perfect meal, and frustration when things don't go according to plan or usual routine. It can feel hard to give up control and let your aunt bring her style of mashed potatoes (lumps vs. no lumps!), to let little ones "help", or to let your partner blend some of their family traditions with yours. Planes get delayed, people show up late or sick, pies don't always turn out, and sometimes the stuffing is just a little bit too mushy. It can all feel like too much, sometimes even to the point where you might want to avoid the holidays altogether. Maybe you avoid going to visit family or you avoid allowing loved ones to visit you. It is so easy to want to dig in your heels for the sake of your routine, your way, and your standards because uncertainty and unpredictability feel out of control, but the question is whether these things bring the peace, joy, and relationships that you crave the most.

Might I encourage you to make "flexibility" your motto this holiday season? Yes, flexibility feels costly in the short-term. It feels hard to sit with the emotions that arise when things are out of order, out of place, or seemingly out of control, but think of what you could gain in memories, relationships, and peace-of-mind if you relinquished that control. Do you long for any of these things? If so, harness this desire for more of something that matters as the motivator to try on flexibility. Use these little concessions of control as mini exposures to give you something better long-term. So, in the name of flexibility bring together the traditions that make everyone feel special, let your family feel like they have a part in the meal, the décor, the planning, and let your kids lick the batter out of the bowl or off the spoon-maybe you can even join them! Wishing you a flexible holiday season that brings you deep joy and beautiful, warm memories.

