

What I Wish I'd Known

People who have OCD tend to suffer with it for years in silence. Once they receive proper treatment and find relief, they often look back and think "If I had only known [x, y or z] I would have done things differently, sought treatment sooner, etc..." With this in mind, we have gathered "What I Wish I'd Known" from several individuals with OCD, in hopes of helping other OCD sufferers and their friends and families.

For 9 years I thought that having disturbing, unwanted, intrusive thoughts about sexuality meant I was a bad person. I was in my own private hell, struggling with these thoughts in silence. Instead, I now know that they are a symptom of OCD, and I'm not a bad person.

I was told that I was just a perfectionist and didn't love myself enough and had a low self-ego, but I wish I had known that in fact my thoughts, actions and ways I interacted with people were because of my OCD.

I was diagnosed with OCD but didn't get treatment for 2 years. Over that time my OCD got worse and worse—it snowballed exponentially. I wish I knew that getting treatment right away could have reduced all this suffering.

I sat in a presentation at the national OCD conference and heard the presenter say, "You definitely shouldn't ask for reassurance." I thought, "What do you mean? Asking for reassurance that the stove is off, the fridge is closed, and that the house isn't going to burn down is how I get through the day!" I wish I had known that asking for reassurance actually makes OCD worse by helping me avoid facing my anxiety.

I wish I had known that there are therapists who specialize in treating OCD, who could have helped me get better so much faster.

OCD is an insidious parasite, and I know now that I have to confront my compulsions to keep OCD from creeping up on me. I know now that I need to stay vigilant.

I wish I would have known to tell my therapist all my obsessions and compulsions, even if they are really embarrassing or I wasn't sure that they were OCD-related. I kept things from my therapist, because I was so reluctant to share them. But my therapist can't help me with them if he doesn't know about them. I would have had more faith in my therapist and would have told him every, single thing.

I wish I would have known how OCD was affecting my relationships with others. If I had, I would have had different, better relationships.

I wish I had known about exposure and response prevention therapy. I was treated for OCD on and off for 11 years and had never once been told about ERP. As soon as I heard about it I found an ERP treatment provider, and the difference it made in my life was tremendous.

People got mad at me for getting things in late my whole life. I felt like I was lazy and had such terrible self-esteem. If I had known what was going on, that my lateness was due to symptoms of my OCD, I would have given myself a break. And, I would have found a solution to my problem through therapy.

Once I was diagnosed with OCD, I was so scared to do exposure and response prevention (ERP) homework, because I thought deep down that it would make my OCD worse. After all, I was trying to get away from my intrusive thoughts, not actively think about them! But eventually I did do ERP and it worked. I wish I would have known and believed earlier that ERP can work.

My immediate family members didn't understand my condition, and I was almost resigned to my fate and almost gave up. But I didn't. I persisted in finding the right treatment for myself and it's made all the difference. But I wish I would have known sooner that even if my family didn't understand what I was going through or support me, I could still get treatment.