

# ask Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

**Q** My friend has been diagnosed with OCD and is finding it hard to come to terms with it, consequently experiencing low mood and is avoiding contact with others. Please explain what it is and how do we go about helping him.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is a form of anxiety disorder wherein unwanted, unpleasant thoughts, images or urges (obsessions) repeatedly enter a person's mind and cause anxiety. These are followed by repetitive behaviour (compulsions) one needs to carry out to prevent fear of obsession coming true. Individuals often find it hard to contain the obsessions or compulsions, more so when they are under stress or in a fragile mental state.

It may be genetically inherited or be predisposed by environmental influences like strict upbringing in an overprotective family. Significant life events like bereavement, or loss of job, can trigger OCD in people who already have a tendency to develop the condition.

Untreated OCD affects mood, functioning and relationships. So the first step in helping your friend is giving education and advice about this condition and emphasising that it is treatable.

Please ensure that his problems are neither belittled nor reinforced, as both will affect his self-esteem and willingness to engage in talking therapy. Encourage him to seek professional help for formal therapy and medication. Treatment mainly entails cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which is proven to be effective in fixing disturbed

thinking and behaviour that accompany OCD.

Being supportive and patient is all that is required of you, in his hour of need.

**Q** Is overeating a medical condition? It seems like I have this recurring problem, particularly when tired, indulging in over eating and being unable to control weight gain. Please advice on how I may overcome it?

I think you are indulging in emotional eating aka 'Comfort Eating', a way of using food to make yourself feel better. If done repeatedly, comfort eating has the tendency to become a coping

style, resulting in close association between food and emotions. Therefore, one comes to rely on a quick boost of energy and feel good factor when overwhelmed with a situation, leading to higher intake of calories that contribute to weight gain and obesity.

I suggest that you write a stress journal - recording your emotional reactions in a variety of situations. Reviewing the journal will help identify trends and situations that press your comfort-eating button. When you become aware of the pattern, try to distract from the urge to eat and use alternative strategies to cope. If you must eat then break the routine with healthy snacks. Raise your stress threshold by regular exercise or walk, perhaps yoga thrice a week.

You will benefit by consultation with a mental health expert, who can evaluate possible lifestyle and psychological factors (such as anxiety and depression) contributing to your comfort eating. Additionally, I recommend you undergo general health check for rooting out medical reasons (for e.g. raised cholesterol) for your tiredness.



Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at [bpositiveQA@apollolife.com](mailto:bpositiveQA@apollolife.com) Or write to

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