



UPDATES FROM SCIP

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Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in Children

All kids have worries and doubts. But kids with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) often can't stop worrying, no matter how much they want to. And those worries frequently cause them to behave in certain ways over and over again.

What is OCD? OCD is a type of anxiety disorder. Kids with OCD become preoccupied with something that could be harmful, dangerous, wrong, dirty, or preoccupied with thoughts about bad things that might happen. With OCD, the brain sends false messages and the affected person needs to perform rituals to shut off the voice delivering the message. Because OCD is a vicious cycle the voice doesn't get shut off — it becomes louder and more insistent. The condition affects at least one in 100 American children, with the average age of onset being 10 years old.

OCD can make daily life difficult for the kids that have it. The behaviors and/or rituals often take up a great deal of time and energy, making it more difficult for affected kids to complete tasks, like homework and chores.

Kids with OCD worry **a lot**. Sometimes they feel afraid that bad things could possibly happen to them or to the people they love; sometimes they feel like they have to get things "just right" and have to check and re-check to make sure. They feel they need to do things over and over again to keep bad things from happening. Some kids believe even thinking bad things could make them come true.

The good news is that OCD is highly treatable. Most people with OCD are able to retrain their brains to ignore the false messages until they just stop getting sent. But how do you know if a child has OCD? Kids often become experts at hiding their symptoms because they feel humiliated and scared.

What you can do is make the child feel safe and comfortable and watch them carefully for any of the following signs:

Obsessions:

- **Contamination** — excessive concern over germs, disease, illness, contagion.
- **Harm to self or others** — irrational fears such as causing a car crash, stabbing him or herself or another person with a knife or other sharp object, etc.
- **Symmetry** — need to have possessions or surroundings arranged symmetrically or to move in symmetrical ways.
- **Doubting** — becoming convinced that he or she hasn't done something he or she is supposed to do.
- **Numbers** — fixation on a particular number or series of numbers or lucky and unlucky numbers; performing tasks a certain number of times regardless of sense or convenience.
- **Religiosity** — preoccupation with religious concerns such as the afterlife, death or morality.
- **Hoarding** — stockpiling of useless or meaningless objects such as old newspapers or food.
- **Sexual themes** — obsessive thinking about sex; disturbing writing or doodling of a sexual nature.

Compulsions:

- **Washing and grooming** — washing hands until they are red and chapped; brushing teeth until gums bleed.
- **Cleaning rituals** — house, toys, and room.
- **Checking** — returning to check more than once that the door is locked, appliances are off, homework is right.
- **Symmetry** — need to have socks at same height on each leg; cuffs of exactly equal width.
- **Counting** — counting of steps while walking; insistence on performing a task a specific number of times.
- **Repeating/redoing** — performing a mindless task repeatedly until it "feels right;" redoing a task that has already been acceptably completed, such as erasing letters on a page until the paper wears through.
- **Hoarding** — hiding food under the bed; refusing to throw away soda cans or gum wrappers, for instance.
- **Praying** — excessive, time-consuming repetition of protective prayers or chants.



Remember That No One's at Fault!

You must know and believe that a child is not trying to aggravate you with obsessive-compulsive behavior, no matter how annoying it may be. It is OCD causing the problem, not the child; he or she can't help it. OCD is a biochemical "brain glitch", not a psychological condition, and the behaviors most likely annoy the child even more than they annoy you. While it can be difficult for parents and teachers working with an OCD child, understand that you are not helping the child by participating in his or her obsessive-compulsive rituals. The best thing you can do is help the child learn to stop. It can be helpful to keep family and school routines as normal as possible; though it is also important to not let OCD be the "boss" of the house or classroom.



Dangers of Sexting: Teens at Risk for Felony Charges

Before you snap that picture or record that video — Before you hit send — **STOP & THINK!** What you may think is a harmless act, may in fact result in felony legal charges.

Following a spate of recent incidents involving teens in which sexually explicit images of other teens were shared, Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) and the Lincoln Police Department (LPD) drafted a letter to parents urging them to talk to their children and make sure they understand that possessing or distributing sexually explicit photos of minors can be a felony. They want them to realize both the legal ramifications and emotional trauma caused by transmitting such images.

The incidents involved:

- Someone allegedly taking pictures of a nude 16-year-old girl, with her consent, and sharing them; it was reported to police, but no pictures were found and no one was cited.
- A teenager videoed two fellow teens having sex at a party, then sent it to others via text message; resulting in charges being filed against the teen for generating child pornography.
- A 16-year-old boy sexually assaulting another 16-year-old boy in a locked bathroom at a gathering. Video was taken of the assault through the bathroom window when other teens couldn't get in. The video was turned over to police. Taking video of an assault for the purpose of turning over to the police as evidence won't result in charges — however, if the video was shared with other people, the teen could be charged.



In 2009, Nebraska lawmakers created an exception to the state's child porn law, providing a defense for minors who willingly share images of themselves or receive them from a partner, known as sexting. BUT the exception doesn't apply if the images are then shared with others, if the child depicted is younger than 15, or if more than one child is included in the image. Any encouragement by the recipient — even a text message requesting an explicit image — can be construed as coercion, which also eliminates the defense. The Lancaster County Attorney's office noted that after contact with parents whose teens had shared explicit images, parents who thought they were closely monitoring their kids' online activity actually were ignorant of ways their children could elude them.

Many schools don't specifically address sexting in their code of conduct, but it might be something schools want to look at doing. Omaha Public Schools added a section to its code of conduct 3 years ago that specifically says photographing or sharing nude or sexually explicit images is grounds for discipline and will be reported to police.

With permission from LPS, we have included below the letter to parents, which you may wish to duplicate and send to your students' parents.

(Source: Lincoln Journal Star, 03-11-12)

Letter to Parents

"This is (insert school administrator) (calling/contacting) our families and parents with an important message from (insert school) and the (insert local police department, if applicable).

In light of the increasing use of social media, cellphones and mobile cameras, we are suggesting that you have a difficult but critical conversation with your student about a commonly misunderstood activity.

Please remind them: In Nebraska, teenagers who send or receive sexually explicit photographs by cellphone or computer are at risk of felony child pornography charges. Child pornography includes depiction of someone under the age of 18 engaged in sexually explicit conduct — such as actions, poses or nudity.

Even if the student was not there to capture the photo or video, it is against the law to be in possession of such photographs — or to share such photographs with other students.

Possession and distribution of child pornography carry serious penalties that will affect the future of our students.

In addition, there are real risks that sexually explicit pictures, meant to be shared with a friend or partner, will make their way into wider publication on the Internet.

Students who come into possession of child pornography immediately should contact a trusted adult and notify police. Students should not delete the image or video, because that would destroy potential evidence. They should save the images to share with police."

The letter closed by advising anyone with questions to contact their school administrators or the police department.

SCIP
SIDELINE

Prescription Drug Take Back

The fourth DEA National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is scheduled for April 28, 2012.



SCIP staff will once again partner with the Lincoln Police Department to staff collection sites, provide information on prescription drug abuse, and raise community awareness of the SCIP Program.

At the last Take Back in October, 2,932 lbs. of unused or expired prescription medications were collected throughout the state.

For more information, or to inquire about hosting a collection site in your area, contact your local law enforcement agency or go to the DEA's website:

www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

SCIP Team Training!

The annual SCIP Team Training for 2012 is scheduled for July 10-13 in Lincoln.

We will also be doing an additional training this year in Norfolk to accommodate the teams in that region. That training is scheduled for June 20-22.

The trainings are for school staff new to a SCIP Team, or as a refresher for current members. More information and registration forms will be sent out in April.