



Jac has always liked things to be 'just so' and organises her belongings in a particular way, hates making mistakes and starts a page again if she does. Her parents had a conversation with the teacher about the length of time her homework is taking. Her teacher mentioned concern with handwashing and excessive checking. Jac's parents made an appointment with their GP, were referred to a psychologist and regularly update the school with progress.

Small Steps for Jac

1. Teacher and parents support Jac to practice strategies for calming her thoughts that work for her e.g. a stretch, a walk, moving around, breathing strategy, puzzle, book, fidget toy, etc.
2. Her PDHPE class learn a breathing technique – this benefits everyone as they learn about how breathing techniques reduce stress hormones.
3. Jac and the Learning and Support teacher work out a plan for when she needs to use a timeout for an agreed activity break – breathing technique, mindfulness (e.g. puzzle, book); fresh air, etc.
4. With empathy and patience, Jac's Year 7 Advisor and L&S teacher and parents encouraged her to stick to the plan she is working on with her psychologist, e.g. setting an achievable goal for the number of times a compulsion is carried out.
5. Jac's network of support have regular catch ups – teachers, support staff, parents to ensure the plan can be reinforced and supported at school and home.

Obsessive compulsive disorder

Obsessive compulsive disorder can be described as anxiety which includes intrusive thoughts (obsessions) which can only be relieved by carrying out actions (compulsions).

Some common obsessions include, fear of germs, dirt, poison, fear that illness, accidents or death will happen to their loved ones or themselves.

Compulsions include excessive handwashing, checking of locks, appliances, applying rigid rules to placement of objects, touching, tapping a certain number or rhythm or reciting numbers or words in a particular way.

Working as part of a network of support, teachers can reinforce the work being done by mental health professionals. This may be a plan developed on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy principles, (CBT).

As visits to the practitioner may be fortnightly or even monthly, reinforcing the plan at school can be very helpful to the process as repetition and practice are key to success. Teachers can ask for assistance from their L&S teacher or school counsellor/psychologist.

OCD Bounce: <https://kr.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/articles/2024/01/ocd-bounce-bridging-treatment-gap>

Kids Helpline: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd>