

HOW A FAMILY MEMBER CAN BEST SUPPORT A LOVED ONE WITH OCD

Melissa Mose, LMFT

OCD SoCal, Board of Directors-
President

Mother of Claire

mmose@ocdsocal.org

Liz Trondsen, RD

OCD SoCal, Board of Directors -
Event Coordinator

Mother of Chris

etrondsen@ocdsocal.org



FAMILY ACCOMMODATION OF OCD

FA is a “well intentioned” attempt to prevent or reduce anxiety in our loved ones.



It works to decrease distress and reduce OCD's immediate impact on the rest of the family



However, FA only temporarily reduces anxiety and prevents:

Experiencing naturally occurring anxiety reduction

Learning that anxiety can be tolerated while acting in a way that is consistent with values

Learning natural consequences of OCD behavior



ACCOMMODATION PITFALLS

Reinforces the OCD

Sends the message that anxiety is intolerable

Allows the child to avoid their situation rather than face it – no natural consequences

Contributes to treatment resistance



FAMILY ACCOMMODATION EXAMPLES



Provide reassurance

Tell our loved one that everything is okay, respond with facts to dispute fear (not ill, didn't hit anyone, didn't leave on stove)



Participate

Excessively wash our own hands, check appliances



Assist

Help the family member avoid germs by turning on faucet, lie about absences, avoid saying certain words



Facilitate

Buy extra soap, paper towels, household cleaners, wait for the individual to complete rituals



Modify family routine

Drive our family member to school or work, schedule around rituals



Take on extra responsibilities

Clean room, wash clothes, do homework



Modify leisure activities

Vacation in "clean" places, limit hobbies



Modify work responsibilities

Call the family member during work hours to provide reassurance or check on them, get to work late, cancel meetings



FAMILY INTERVENTIONS FOR OCD:

ACCOMMODATION AND OVERINVOLVEMENT

Reduce involvement in rituals and disengage from OCD behavior

Slowly relinquish our family member's chores and tasks

Limit reassurance

Re-establish normal family routines

Reduce intrusive concern and overprotection

Tolerate anxiety - both theirs and our own



SPACE PROGRAM KEY CONCEPTS

Family members (parents) come to therapy, but SPACE treats the person (child) with anxiety.

1. Childhood anxiety is viewed as more **systemic** and **interpersonal** than adult anxiety. Children signal threat to a protector. Parents are not to blame. We are wired to protect our young.
2. Supportive language = Compassion and Confidence
3. Accommodation is natural, but counterproductive so take Unilateral Action: Through non-violent resistance, we can focus on **changing our own behavior** in such a way that the family member's anxiety is reduced. You can't force your loved one to do CBT homework or change their behavior, but you can change what you do about it.





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