

Emily's Grade 6 Speech

Did you ever feel like you had to wash your hands so often that your skin starts to crack? What about feeling like you have to shower all the time because you're not clean enough? Or having to count things or touch them a certain amount of times? Do you ever worry about getting or spreading germs?

Mrs. Jones and fellow classmates, I bet none of you have guessed what my speech is about. It's about people who have had those feelings. It's about people who have OCD. OCD stands for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. OCD is an illness in your brain that makes you have unwanted thoughts that stay in your mind all the time. Without help, you cannot get rid of these thoughts. About one of every thirty people has OCD.

People suffering from OCD are not crazy. They know what they are doing is different from what most people do. Even though OCD is a problem in your brain, it does not mean you have mental problems. It is nothing to be embarrassed about or ashamed of and nobody should tease you because it's not your fault.

Obsessions are thoughts or images that won't go away. At least once in everybody's lifetime, we've had a mild obsession like having a song stuck in our heads, spreading or getting germs, checking to make sure you did things, or hurting other people.

Compulsions are actions that someone with OCD feels that they have to repeat even if they don't want to. For example, you might need to take a certain amount of bites of food or make sure things are in the right spot and don't get out of order, or collect garbage off the ground.

I have a friend named Alexandra who has OCD. She stopped playing with her friends for a while because she was worried about giving them germs. She wanted to make things she did even, so when she was chewing food, it had to be in both sides of her mouth not just one. There were two doors into the family room in her house, so Alexandra had to go in the room through one door and out the same door. After a while she figured if she wanted to make things turn out even, she had to go in one door and out the other. If Alexandra coughed and blinked twice while facing the computer screen, she would have to do it again the exact same way or she had to keep going until she did it that way again.

At bedtime, she would make her parents tuck both sides of the blanket under the mattress so that the blanket with germs on it would not touch the ground. She would usually spend most of the day on her bed playing, and if she was sitting up too tall and over too close to the edge of the bed, she would be worried that germs may fall off her and land on the ground. She didn't know why she was worried about the germs or what they would do to anybody, but that did not stop her from worrying.

Alexandra also had certain toys that she would use because they already had germs on them and when all the germs were off her bed, she got rid of those toys. She would wear shoes around the house, and if she didn't, she would walk on her tiptoes. She would usually give her parents one hug and two kisses, but when her OCD got bad, she wouldn't even let her parents go in her room because she was worried they might get germs. If somebody sat on or touched Alexandra's bed, she would make them wash their hands or change their clothes.

Alexandra would also collect garbage around the schoolyard or on her way home from school. She was afraid to touch things so she would use her shirtsleeves.

After she went to a doctor and started to take medication, she eventually stopped worrying so much. And now Alexandra is almost one hundred percent over her obsessions and compulsions. For somebody that has OCD, it never completely goes away completely - it's always there, but people can learn how to deal with it like Alexandra did.

Oh, by the way, Alexandra's real name is actually Emily Smith – Alexandra is my middle name.