



Explaining & treating OCD

This activity will help you to...

- Understand how OCD/OCB can be explained and treated.
- Apply general psychological perspectives to specific types of behaviour.
- Develop evaluation skills by thinking about evidence and how theories can be tested.

Applying general perspectives to specific behaviour

Any psychological disorder (or, in fact, any set of behaviours) is capable of being explained by one of the general perspectives in psychology. For this activity we will focus on the following perspectives:

- Biological
- Psychodynamic
- Behaviourist
- Cognitivist

Each of these perspectives makes its own assumptions about the causes of human behaviour. When applied to a disorder like OCD, each will produce its own distinctive explanation.

Explaining OCD

You will be divided into groups and each will be assigned one of the above perspectives. In your group, you need to discuss answers to the following questions, which you will be explaining to the group as a whole.

1. What general assumptions does your perspective make about human behaviour?
2. How might your perspective explain obsessive compulsive behaviour?

Looking for evidence

Psychological explanations must be tested against empirical evidence to see if they are valid. Because each perspective emphasises different types of psychological process, each makes different predictions (or hypotheses) about how OCD patients will be different from the clinically normal population.

3. What types of research method would your perspective use to obtain evidence to test its hypotheses?
4. What would you expect to find if your perspective was correct?
5. What sorts of problems might there be with the validity of the evidence?

Treating OCD

The assumptions a perspective makes about the nature of the problem determine how the problem should be solved. Consequently, each perspective leads to a different treatment for OCD.

6. How would your perspective recommend that OCD be treated?
7. Can you foresee any strengths or weaknesses of these treatments?