

## 2 Major Signs Of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (M)

### What really underlies obsessive-compulsive disorder?

Confusing imagination with reality and being out of contact with reality are linked to OCD, a study finds. People with OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) are known to dissociate themselves from reality.

Instead they rely heavily on their imagination.

A survey of 75 people with OCD found that they experienced 'inferential confusion': essentially getting fantasy and reality mixed up.

Dr Frederick Aardema, who led the research, said:

"It seems that people with OCD are so absorbed by their obsession due to inferential confusion that there is a break with reality.

Specifically, we found that individuals no longer rely on their sensory perceptions or common sense but on their imagination.

For example, they are afraid that their hands are contaminated with germs, so they wash them over and over again because they are convinced that their hands are dirty even though they are visibly clean."

Ms Stella-Marie Paradisis, the study's first author, explained the nature of 'inferential confusion':

"First, inferential confusion is a reasoning process in which obsessive doubt takes hold.

Individuals make subjective connections between different elements.

For example, the person believes that the water in a municipal swimming pool is contaminated because chlorine has been put into it, so inevitably there are bacteria in the water.

Second, schizotypal personality is characterized by bizarre ideas, rigid belief, lack of discernment, and a tendency to overrely on imagination.

For example, individuals are convinced that what they hear on the news or read in the newspaper concerns them personally and directly.

Finally, dissociation is characterized by loss of contact with reality and memory lapses in certain situations — a phenomenon that can be observed especially in people who display checking behaviour.

Some people feel that they can behave so differently depending on the situation that they are two different people."

Dr Aardema said:

"Theories about OCD stipulate that it is not the content of thought that is involved in the development of obsessions but the way these thoughts are interpreted by the person.

While most people will dismiss an idea if they feel it has no meaning, people with OCD will say that if they think that way they must be a reason.