

Shanna Trcka has been able to avoid using prescription medications and has managed her OCD through meditation and therapy

The Faces of OCD

**Katyites share their journey through
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and
give others a glimpse at life with
this debilitating disorder**

Written by Shetye Cypher

2.3%

**Of the US population
is affected by OCD
[ages 18 to 54]**

which translates into approximately
3.3 million Americans. An additional
1 million children and adolescents
have the disorder.

Source: The National Institute of Mental Health

Imagine...

shopping compulsively with no ability to stop yourself. Picture yourself unable to move on to tasks because the papers in front of you are not perfectly aligned. Katy residents Shanna Trcka and Lawson Garrison know what it's like to deal with some of these issues and have come to discover that they have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder or OCD. "For every upcoming event, I would stress out and go buy new clothes and shoes if we were going out, and then hide it from my husband," says Trcka, 41, mother of 8-year-old twins and a 14-year old daughter. Trcka, was diagnosed with OCD when she had sought therapy for her shopping compulsion just a year ago. OCD can also coexist with ADD, depression, eating disorders, and other anxiety disorders.

Obsessive Thought Patterns

"There have been times that I have turned around to make sure the garage door was shut. I will wipe the counters more times in a day than the average person, and I fix the pillows on the couch constantly. Most people don't know or realize it is something I have to complete so I can move on. But I can feel the stress overwhelm me if I do not do it," Trcka says. "The struggles I have are more severe with the compulsive shopping addiction. It is an act that at times I cannot help, or realize that I have done until after the fact."

The National Institute of Mental Health says OCD affects about 2.3 percent of the US population ages 18 to 54, which translates into approximately 3.3 million Americans. An additional 1 million children and adolescents have the disorder. "Once I received my diagnosis, my daily actions began to make sense. I have this to-do list that I have become so obsessed with. Everything has to be perfect," she says. "I have wiped counters tirelessly and have even turned around to go back in kitchen and make sure that items on the counter are turned a certain way."

The Costs of OCD

"I have gotten our family in debt many times due to my compulsive shopping. I've also been late for work and school several times because I made my kids clean up, or have had to go straighten pillows on the couch, or make the bed," says Trcka. "My girls have had to tiptoe around my needs, not playing with toys because it could cause a mess, and not having friends play in house. Trcka finds that it is a daily struggle to control her compulsions. She feels more in control even though she still deals with episodes from time to time. She sees a therapist as part of her treatment, which she admits is a huge challenge for her. Meditation is also a helpful way for her to deal with her compulsions.

"They (Trcka's family) have seen me control it and I am a bit more relaxed these days about cleaning and the house being tidy. I am more at ease now and less tense than I used to be. My husband and I have an open line of communication, and now that he understands the disorder, I feel more understood," says Trcka.



Mayde Creek senior Lawson Garrison struggles with extreme perfectionism which often impedes his productivity

When Perfection Becomes Obsession

Lawson Garrison, 17, a senior in high school, is currently undergoing testing at school for his condition. Whenever he is writing, if a letter does not look just right, he has to keep looking at it and he is unable to turn in the page until he feels like it is perfect. "Things at home have to be in exactly the right place. Everything has a certain system. If one thing is out of line, I freak out," admits Garrison.

Garrison says he does his best to not let OCD get in his way. However, he says it is worse at school than home. "I saw a poster in the hallway and something was misspelled on it. I had to scratch out the word and fix it," Garrison says. "My scantrons have to be perfectly filled out and I have to press down really hard so that my marks are really dark. My name has to be really small and even, and if one letter looks bigger than another, I have to erase it and start over. I fixate on items that others may not consider important."

The good news is that experts have determined that OCD is a treatable condition. Symptoms can be managed through medication, meditation, and therapy. Those afflicted with OCD tendencies often go on to lead productive and fulfilling lives. **KM**



SHETYE CYPHER is a freelance writer who has enjoyed living in Katy with her family. She is the journalism teacher and publications advisor at Mayde Creek High School.

OCD Checklist

Here are a few signs indicating you could have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

- ✓ Repetitive thoughts, feelings, ideas, sensations (obsessions), or behaviors
- ✓ Overwhelming feeling of lack of control
- ✓ Self-doubt about capabilities
- ✓ Believing that bad thoughts will become reality
- ✓ Constant worrying about minor details
- ✓ High standards for cleanliness, neatness, or order
- ✓ High levels of anxiety

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