

## Overcoming OCD: How to Live a Fulfilling Life without OCD

### Foreword

He had me fooled. I had known Dave White for more than a year when he asked me to help him with a book. I figured that he was probably writing something about selling successfully, because that's what he does.

So, I was tremendously surprised when I learned that he was writing a book about his own struggles with OCD. I knew about the compulsive checking of locks and doors that's associated with OCD, but I was totally unaware of the depression that's often part of the disease, and Dave is the last guy I ever would have thought of as having issues with depression.

As he says in the book, he's a Type-A personality, and I never saw him without a smile and a hearty handshake. The Dave I know is a very personable and positive guy, so he's an excellent example of someone who has worked very hard to beat OCD.

If you're suffering from this disease, use Dave's experiences as an inspiration. Have faith that you can find healing, and work hard to attain it. Then people who meet you will be amazed to learn that you ever suffered with depression.

Bill Simpson-Editor

### Foreword #2

OCD ruled my young life. Through the help of family, friends, medical professionals, and God, I have overcome my disease. I now lead a wonderful life, and I'm able to enjoy my life.

The second clause of that sentence is a vital part of my success.

While I suffered from OCD, I actually led a wonderful life, but I couldn't enjoy it because OCD was holding me back. I could find the one cloud in the bluest sky, and I worried endlessly about things that seem foolish now. Back then, those foolish things loomed as insurmountable obstacles to my health and my happiness.

Now, however, I'm able to see those life-limiting fears for what they really are. I'm able to enjoy and treasure my life, and I'm truly grateful for all that I have. Life is not always easy for any of us but OCD is truly something that can hold one back.

So, my hope is to help you, my fellow OCD sufferer, move past your OCD problems and gain the ability to enjoy your life. I know how overwhelming your problems can seem, and I firmly believe that the steps that have worked for me, will also work for you.

It is my dream and it is very important to me that my lasting legacy will be that, during my short time on this earth, I helped others to feel whole again, by conquering their OCD and the other mental disorders that restricted their lives. This book can be read for generations to come to help sufferers first self diagnosis themselves and take care of the illness immediately.

You may not agree with all that I write, and that is understandable. But, if you take from this book some things, or just one thing, that changes your life, then I will have made a positive difference in your life.

“At the time you were born you were given an amazing gift - a gift that most of us forget about as we grow older. It’s the power to design your own unique life. You are an artist and the canvas is your life.” Author Cheryl Richardson

If I died tomorrow, my obituary in the local newspaper might read something like this:

David Barrett White, 38, the son of Nancy and J.B. White, died yesterday of natural causes. He was a simple man who loved watching football and enjoyed the outdoors and his family.

He had realized his football dream by working for the Philadelphia Eagles in Public Relations. He had previously worked as an intern with the Washington Redskins and later with the Florida Panthers. He loved his country music, especially the songs of Montgomery Gentry, Brooks and Dunn, and Travis Tritt, as well as the soft music of Neil Diamond.

As he grew up, he learned to love his family the most, and he learned many important life lessons from his mistakes. He was a resident of Lititz, PA and a graduate of Susquehanna University (Class of 1990). He was employed as a benefits consultant at a firm he loved - Richard J. Princinsky Associates, Inc., of Hunt Valley, Maryland.

Dave is survived by loving wife Gretchen, his son Justin 5, and his daughter, Jillian, who he called his Queen with Teeth, 2. He was known to have an A-Type personality and had a zest for life. If he was not playing sports, he was down at the bay fishing or fishing on a river, because he found his soul on the water.

His greatest accomplishment in life, though, was that he lived with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder for years and with the help of many, found a way to conquer it. He authored a the book “Overcoming OCD: How to Live a Fulfilling Life with out OCD.

I can write this book today because my fear of dying and my compulsions from OCD, have greatly dissipated. I understand why I felt the way that I did and I hope to show others why they feel the way they do. If you had asked me about dying fifteen years ago, when I was crippled by OCD, I would have told you that I was terrified and confused, and really saw no light at the end of the tunnel. Life became difficult to even want to wake up in the morning because OCD would come and go often in my life.

Now, I have gotten to the end of the tunnel and I see the light. Life is good, and I can tell you that I feel so happy inside. And, although OCD has been a constant battle, I have accomplished much in life and will continue to do so. I want you to be able to rid your life of OCD and by reading this book you are taking the first step to beat OCD.

I remember my Dad telling me that my grandfather had a favorite saying. It’s become the saying that I live by, “Once you die, they are going to bury you six feet deep for a long time, so make it happen in life.”

After all, we are all born unto this earth and we will all die someday, but the legacy that we leave is so important. And, we hope, we will all live a good life and live with God someday, to continue to be happy.

My biggest commitment to you, the reader, is to bring to you the results of my research and my personal experiences, to show you in simple way the ways in which you can understand OCD and walk away from it as I have. We can do this Together, with this book, so that your life will change only for the better.

I do not have all the answers for the sufferers of this debilitating disorder, but I do know that I have many answers because I have suffered from the disease and conquered it.

I truly want to help you. I know that you may be confused and scared, as I was so many years ago. I want to help you understand OCD and how to beat it.

You will beat OCD if you have the desire to work hard and if you will listen to your psychologist and take the proper medicine, if that is what your doctor prescribes for you.

Your life will change if you are willing to give yourself extreme self-care and to love yourself enough to say "I do not want to feel the pains of OCD anymore".

So read the pages of this book because no one deserves to live with OCD. I will always be here for anyone who wants my help.

Here is a quote which I read recently, and as you read the pages of this book keep it in mind. It reads like this and it was said by a man named Robert Half:

"Persistence is what makes the impossible possible, the possible likely, and the likely definite."

Persist and you will succeed.

## INTRODUCTION

Have any of these things ever happened in your life? Have these thoughts ever stopped you in your tracks and scared you so badly that you shook from your head to your toes and bothered you why you were having such thoughts?

Have you...

1. Felt for no reason that you might be dying from cancer, Aids, a brain tumor, or some terminal disease?
2. Felt that you cannot move forward because you're scared of the next move that you might make to live your life?
3. Moved things around on a table or desk several times until you felt comfortable with where you had placed them?
4. Felt that you had to clean everything around you, like your home or your car, and be organized all the time to be able to function in life?
5. Gone downstairs several times during the night to check the stove, or the locks on your doors, or your fireplace, to make sure the house would not burn down while you were sleeping?
6. Obsessed about religion and God and feared the subject of the Devil and the numbers 666?
7. Counted numbers incessantly in your head ( 1,2,3,4,5, etc.) in an endless number routine?
8. Seen a knife, felt a fear, and been scared that you had thought that you might harm one. Although this action rarely happens, the thought and why you had it really scared you.
9. Washed your hands many times because of the fear of having germs and contaminants on your hands?
10. Been on a plane as you hit turbulence and felt that as you were sure that the nose of the plane was going to turn downward and crash to the earth?
11. Gotten a fork in a restaurant and, even though it looked clean, been so afraid that it was infected with germs that you had to clean it before you

used it?

12. Hit a pothole and sworn that you hit someone, then driven back just to feel comfortable that you did not ?

If you've had these experiences, then chances are strong that you're feeling the insecurities that I felt when I was afflicted with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. You know that you shouldn't be feeling this way, and you wish you could control yourself from thinking these thoughts, but you just can't get them out of your mind. OCD is destroying your life, but there is hope.

Research described on a website called Brain Matters Imaging Centers has shown that OCD can occur because of a breakdown in the communication path between the front part of the brain, or frontal lobe, and deeper structures (the basal ganglia). Some studies that Brain Matter Imaging Centers mentioned showed that it takes an average of 17 years from the time OCD begins for some people to obtain proper treatment. This happened to me and I do not want it to happen to you.

I know these feelings of OCD, and I know that eight million other Americans are currently suffering from this debilitating condition. A report that I saw said, that perhaps one in fifty adults in the US may have OCD or have had it at some time. And, it's highly likely that millions more suffer from this disease but hide it from others because of the fear that people will think they are crazy. Another part of the struggles of OCD sufferers, is that many doctors do not have the proper training to diagnose it.

So, it's highly likely that millions of other Americans and people worldwide that have OCD, but keep the affliction their own personal secret. We all have our pride, and admitting a fault is one of the hardest things for many people to do.

I had a huge problem admitting to friends and family members, that I had OCD because it would make me look vulnerable and weak. So I fought the thoughts endlessly, until I finally went to my family and my psychologist and said that I was tired and needed some help.

OCD thoughts can scare a person to death because the person knows that the are thoughts and a big waste of time. But, if the person does not perform the OCD rituals - if he doesn't check the locks on the door 5 times or wash his hands 7 times - and if the person does not give proper attention to the useless thoughts, life seems to stand still and will not move ahead until he does go through his rituals.

When I finally opened up and acknowledged my problem, I felt like a person who one day admits that he is gay and comes out of the closet. The person then says, "This is who I am, and this is how I feel."

Finally, in my teen years, I opened up and talked about how I felt. I described the fears that had limited my life. I moved past the shame and accepted the fact that I had the disease called OCD. In my case, I had a severe case of the disease, and my first step in moving past it was to admit that I had it and to allow myself to accept help from others.

Now, after doing years of research on depression and OCD, I have learned that OCD can be hereditary. It can also begin because of a tragic event. The loss of a loved one, breaking up with a boyfriend or a girlfriend,

divorce, and a car accident are examples of things that can trigger OCD. If you suspect that such an event has brought on your OCD, or if you believe that it's hereditary, have confidence that you can heal and feel normal again.

I read many books written by wonderful psychologists and doctors and by other people who have dealt with OCD, and the books that touched me the most were from the sufferers themselves, because they actually lived with OCD and had many of the fears that I did.

Many of the books I that read were from psychologists who talked about their experience of dealing with patients. I knew how these patients felt because they had many of my fears.

However, I always wanted to read a book that would not only tell me about the effects of OCD, but which would show me how I could be cured. Because I never found such a book, I have chosen to write about my experiences and about how I have overcome my OCD. My hope is that my experiences will help you overcome your OCD.

To me, the difference between a book on OCD by a psychologist and a book about OCD by a sufferer is similar to the difference between a book about hurricanes and a book by someone who has lived through a hurricane. Classroom theory and real-life experience are drastically different. Both have value, but a person who has been there can certainly provide valuable insights that someone who hasn't been there can't possibly offer.

I suffered from OCD, so I have firsthand knowledge of the disease. In addition, I was actually in Florida on the day when Hurricane Andrew brought horrific destruction. The experience of being in a house and wondering if you'll survive those 130 MPH winds is infinitely more terrifying than watching a hurricane on television. And, just as the person who watches a hurricane on TV doesn't really know what it's like to wonder if you'll live to see another day, the person who studies OCD doesn't really know what it's like to live with the disease .

I had only lived in South Florida for a couple of weeks when Andrew came ashore. I remember vividly the smell of the air the next day and disruption of lives and the destruction of property suffered by so many South Floridians. I remember driving through Miami, the next morning and seeing the looting of all the businesses and driving almost thirty miles down the Florida Turnpike, and not seeing one house standing. That is a whole other subject, and I could write a book about my experiences with Hurricane Andrew. What it really showed me, however, is that only someone who has actually "been there" can truly understand what a hurricane victim of an OCD victim is experiencing.

I believe that reading my words will help you to realize that you are not alone with your feelings of OCD. I have been where you are in your life, and trust me, from the bottom of my soul when i say that you will feel wonderful some day, even though right now you can't believe that you will never feel normal. Of course, if you feel that OCD is your "normal", then look forward to a much better life ahead.

Sometimes, I feel that I missed out on some important things in the first 30 years of my life. I don't dwell on those thoughts, but I do use them as

motivation to make up on some lost time in my next thirty years. You can do the same.

In this book, I am going to describe every thought that I had and every painful experience that I had during my OCD years. Although my experiences may be different from yours in some ways, I know that they're similar in their power to fill us with fear and to take so much of the joy out of our lives.

So, good luck and keep the faith because you will make it and beat OCD. I did. You will too.

David White  
Lancaster, PA  
2006

### Acknowledgments

I read a quote a day, wherever I am, and a lot of them are in my day timer. This daily organizer is truly a book, and I would be lost without it. It has thoughts at the top of the daily pages for its users to stop and think about, before their day begins. Many of the quotes, which I have read there have really had strong impacts on my life and have made me think about life. One, which I read recently, really had me stop and think and appreciate two special people in my life, my wife, Gretchen, and my own mother. This is the quote:

"We bear the world and we make it... There was never a great man who had not a great mother- it is hardly an exaggeration- Olive Schreiner.

I read this and could not help but think of my own Mom and the mother of my own children, Gretchen. Both of these women, have enough love in them for ten women and have shown me what true love is. From the time I came into this world, I have never been loved by someone more than my own mother, Nancy White. She has been my security blanket and my personal bodyguard, all wrapped into one. If she could help it, she refused to allow anyone to hurt me.

When I was a young boy, she lifted me up and constantly let me know that I could accomplish anything that I put my mind to, and she made me feel that I was a remarkable young man. Because of her unending dedication and support, I have been able to accomplish so much in my life.

As I grew up, she felt a need to leave my father for several reasons, but mainly because she could not live with a man who did not have the same love in his heart for me, as she did.

There was no one who would ever harm me while I was in elementary, high school, or college, and she instilled in me, that I was someone who could succeed in life, even though others did not believe in me. It was she, who supported me in sports, in education, and in life, and it was she who persuaded me to see the psychologist who would diagnose my OCD and get me the medication that I needed to feel normal again. No parent is perfect but my mother is pretty darn close.

Later on, Gretchen and I married and became the parents of two wonderful children. Justin is 5 and Jillian is 2, and I treat our children with the love that my own Mom gave to me as a youngster. My wife is beautiful on the outside and, most important, she is more beautiful on the inside and has been there along the way when things were going well and when I was low and needed her support. Thank you, Gretchen, for being you.

Thanks to my brother Chris, my womb mate, or should I say twin brother, and to my sister Heather, who have always loved me for who I am.

We may have been separated as kids but with the help of God and our parents we were later reunited as one. I thank God for that because without family it is tough to conquer this thing we call life.

My brother and sister helped also to make me who I am today. My brother Chris, is also the first person, who helped diagnosis me as potentially having OCD because of his background in psychology. My sister Heather has always just been a phone call away to ask for advice on things, and I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

Also, thank you so much to author Jon Gordon, who, after I read his book Energy Addict, has become a good friend. He allowed me to realize that positive energy is the way to live life and succeed in life. He is the inspiration that enables me to think and complete this book. I read his book on the way home from a business trip in North Carolina and never thought reading a book would change my life, as it did. I want this book to be a book that will change lives. Jon's life and his writings on maintaining energy spiritually, mentally and physically, have helped me to look at life in a different perspective.

I would be remiss not to mention such great friends that have crossed my path in life. Frank Tanki, Pete Serell, Al Giacoio (did not come to my wedding but made my book), Keith Mekenney, Brian Floyd, and Chad Houck, Tommy Bold, Gary Lamb, Lynne Watson (my boss), Dr. Bruce Miller, Ph.D, who always accepted me for who I was. Even though my OCD troubled me at different times in my life, I had friends to talk with and accept me for who I was. I love all of you for that.

And last but not least I would like to thank the Good Lord upstairs, because without him in my life, I am nothing. He is the power who gave me the family and friends I have in this lifetime. All these great people made me the man that I am today.

## Chapter 1

### A Surreal and Scary Summer in the NFL

"Is Life worth living? Aye, with the best of us, heights of us, depths of us- Life is the test of us!" Lorraine Roosevelt Robinson

Since I was young, the NFL was my passion, and it has remained that way all my life. I have been lucky enough in my lifetime to work for the Washington Redskins, the Florida Panthers in the NHL for a year, and, for the last six seasons, for the Philadelphia Eagles.

I did not play football in high school because I played baseball and soccer, but all I ever thought about was football and someday working in the NFL. I was lucky enough as a 20-year-old kid to gain an internship in the NFL with the Washington Redskins, and it was a summer I will remember for the rest of my life. I was in training camp with the

Redskins, a year after they won the Super Bowl, and there was so much excitement in the air when I arrived at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA that summer of 1988. It was, to that time, the highlight of my young life, and it proved to be the greatest summer of my life. I was young and learning a lot about professional sports, and quite frankly was fulfilling a dream. It was also time when OCD showed its ugly face unfortunately.

A week before I left to go to training camp, I was down at the shore in Avalon, NJ, partying with some friends like I did every summer. Unfortunately I was wrestling with Derrick, a buddy of mine. It got rough, he cracked my head into the side of a wall by accident, and I sustained a mild concussion. I was slightly confused most of the rest of the trip and very dazed for days. I remember getting home and lying in bed, and I continued to be confused. The room was spinning, and I was scared. I was also planning to leave for the Redskins' training camp in only a couple of days.

At that moment, most people would have accepted it as nothing more than a slight concussion and moved on, but not I. This injury scared me to death, even though I had been an athlete and had had concussions in the past.

This time, however, a mild concussion had me fearing that I might be dying. I let this incident bother me for the week before I left for camp and it lasted through some of training camp.

Here I was, fulfilling a dream of traveling with a team on flights and living in a dorm with them for weeks, and I let a bruise to my head scare me beyond belief. Sure, I had a great time, but I spent a lot of unwanted time worrying about a mild concussion. These kinds of things happened to me a lot when I was young, but why when I was at training camp with a professional team?

I needed to be reassured that I was all right, so I had the Redskins' doctors check me two or three times to be certain that I did not have a brain hemorrhage or bleeding on the brain. The doctors repeatedly told me that I had probably shifted my brain a little bit, and that was why my equilibrium and balance was off and why I felt a little confused.

I had the assurance of some excellent doctors that I was fine, but I had to keep checking and seeking reassurance that I would be all right. I think I was so excited to be in camp and it was so surreal to be with the Redskins, that the concussion made my OCD go somewhat out of whack.

I was frustrated with myself because I was allowing myself to feel so worried even though I had gotten confirmation that I was all right. Despite the assurances from the doctors, I obsessed about my concussion a lot while at camp.

I remember being so angry at times because I was working long days with the Redskins and giving it all I had, but then I would worry that something was seriously wrong with me. I was so high and then at times low.

This experience is certainly familiar to many of the readers of this book. Someone with OCD can drive himself nuts worrying about his health. I was a hypochondriac at that time, and OCD can make hypochondria 10 times worse. I would worry about my health and then question why I allowed my life to be caught up in worrying about my health.



Despite all of that, I ended up meeting a girlfriend at training camp. She was an athlete and a beautiful girl, and we had a lot of fun together at the camp.

When I was with her, it seemed that I could forget about a lot of the things that I was worrying about - thank God. I had been dating a girl before I went into camp, and we broke up the week I left because she was fearful that I would have too much fun hanging around with the players. I guess I could not blame her because the players were young and had a lot of fun and I had so much fun with guys not much older than I was.

The girl I meet in Carlisle was a cute blonde who was working for the summer in the cafeteria. I was sitting with some other interns and I said to them, "Watch this. I am going to ask that blonde in the hat out."

They said, "What do you think - you can get what you want?"

I said, "What the heck! I work for the Redskins and maybe if I invite her to the scrimmage tonight against the Pittsburgh Steelers, down at the stadium, she may show up." She agreed to meeting me at the game and we ended up dating for about a year. Thank God she was there at the time, to allow me to relax and not think about some of the things that were bothering me.

When you have OCD, you obsess about your health because you want to try to get control of your feelings and of your life. That is what I was trying to do when I was in camp that summer. I think I was so excited about being with the Skins and just wish OCD had not shown its self well I was there. I tell you this story so you realize you are not alone with your OCD situations.

Many of you who are reading these pages probably today suffer from what I suffered from years ago. Trust me when I tell you that you will feel whole again and that you will not worry about your health forever. Trust me when I tell you that I obsessed about my health that summer and for many years afterward, but I do not obsess today. I certainly take care of my health, but it's no longer an obsession.

Now, I let life take its course. I understand that I am healthy, and since going on the right medication, I do not worry about my health, like I once did. If you feel like I did that summer, do yourself the most important favor you can do and reach out to a doctor or a psychologist and do not wait. They can help you. Your silent suffering will strip you of so many special moments and waste some precious years of your life, and you cannot get those years back.

If you experience constant stress or are struggling with depression, a regular checkup with a doctor, is something that you owe to yourself and to your body. If you are ever diagnosed with depression, make it a point to check in with your doctors on a regular basis so they can make decisions on your health.

It is good to have your blood pressure checked and have your weight checked for fluctuations and to allow the doctors to know if you are sleeping and eating right. Changes in your health could be a sign for the doctors that they need to change your medications. I know because I have have done and worked closely with my doctors for the last couple of years, and now I feel so good every day. In fact, people who meet me now find it quite surprising to learn that I have struggled with OCD and depression.

## Chapter 2 The Day of Reckoning

“Peace of mind is that mental condition in which you have accepted the worst” Lin Yutang

For as long as I can remember, it seemed that I lived with a partner on my shoulder called OCD (Out of Control Demon). This demon, AKA Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, would never leave me alone in my thoughts and actions. Wherever I went, and wherever my thoughts went, OCD always came along, an uninvited and completely unwelcome guest whose only purpose was to take the joy out of my life.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a problem that I share with nearly eight million other Americans. That number shows that OCD is a very common mental disorder today, and because OCD is now so common, sufferers no longer have to feel that everyone else is normal and they are alone in dealing with their demons.

People with this disorder experience different kinds of obsessions, which come in the form of unwanted thoughts that can control their lives. To combat the unwanted thoughts, they have to complete compulsive rituals such as checking locks or repeatedly washing their hands just to relieve them of their unwanted thoughts.

My condition was mild enough that, as a young man, I was able to hide my feelings from friends and family and even from my psychologist for a long time. Deep inside, however, I knew that something was wrong. I continued to think some scary and bizarre thoughts, and I did rituals to chase those thoughts.

When I was growing up in the 1970's and 80's, little was known about OCD. Because it was such an unknown disorder, explaining how my OCD made me feel weird and isolated from everyone else. I knew I was not feeling right with my thoughts and found it very difficult to tell people exactly how I felt.

I would sit in a psychologist's office and explain that I sometimes felt out of control and that I was washing my hands and checking things in my house to alleviate my weird thoughts. I would talk with him about the nights when I would lie in bed and then make my way down the stairs to check the stove, fireplace, and locks to make sure the house was secure. Unfortunately, one-time checks were not always common. More frequently, I would perform my rituals two or three times during the night.

My best friend Keith, whom I have known my whole life, would stay over, and I would also ask him to check doors, locks, stoves, and refrigerators. To this day he and I can now laugh but those expeditions I would take thru my house before bed. It was amazing that he didn't think that I should be in the funny farm.

I remember Keith speaking at my rehearsal dinner, the night before my wedding. My Mom asked all my tightest friends to speak about something that they always remembered about me. I remember Keith standing up and speaking at my dinner and saying that I always took on the father role in our family and would check doors and locks and windows to protect my family. I remember sitting next to my beautiful wife at the dinner and thinking, “Man, I snowed him.”

I may have checked the doors for burglars but the other stuff was done to feel sane again and to chase my obsessive thoughts. Anyone with OCD, because we are like a family, will totally understand why I did what it was that I needed to do.

My psychologist at the time was a man named Bruce Miller and through the years, I have always had him to talk to when my OCD symptoms have gotten tough or when I have had fears in my life. Bruce knew that I sometimes struggled with control issues because of my upbringing of coming from a divorced family and because of not being able to grow up with my twin brother. He basically knew me inside and out.

It wasn't until I was in my thirties, that this same psychologist and my own brother would collectively diagnose me as having symptoms of OCD. I had gotten married and two years later had a son. I visited Bruce because I was feeling scared with having a new baby in my life. I was scared to death to be a Daddy and I knew that my life was going to be changing drastically.

I was anxious because I was entering a new stage of my life and this brought on some OCD feelings. It was at that moment, that I said to Bruce that my brother and I had been talking a lot and that I thought I definitely had symptoms of OCD. Like throwing yourself before the mercy of a judge, I threw myself before Bruce and let him know I was struggling and needed help.

This was the first time he talked to me about starting to go on medication called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRI's. At first I said there no way was I going to take a medication like Paxil or Zoloft, and I could beat this mental disorder on my own. Why not? I had done it for nearly fifteen years and I could beat it myself, or so I thought.

For me, as with most men, admitting that I had a problem was not an easy thing to do. Bruce told me that he strongly suggested that I should have some blood work done and talk with my doctor about the ramifications and benefits of taking a anti-depressant

I clearly remember walking out of his office, through the door that I had walked through so many times before, and thinking that maybe we were finally on to something.

The next day I got up the courage to call my doctor and make an appointment.

I remember the secretary saying, "And what do we need to see you for?" I conjured up my strength and manly attitude and said, "I need to see the doctor for something really personal and I would really be comfortable just coming in and talking with him." She calmly said she understood and said, "OK, Mr. White. That would be fine. And can you come in at 9 a.m"?

I remember going in to my doctor before work the next day, dressed in a suit. I had a knot in the pit of my stomach, and I was shaking like a leaf. A nurse checked my weight and took my blood pressure, stating that it was a little higher than normal. Little did she know, I was holding fifteen years of pent-up frustration and aggravation that was not going to be hidden any more.

She calmly stated again, "And what are we here to see the doctor for?" I had hidden my feelings for fifteen years, so why not for another five minutes? Ma'am I said, "I am here to talk with the doctor about something really personal and I was not comfortable communicating it through the office."

She responded that she totally understood and would get the doctor.

The nurse took me back to the room and probably thought I was there with a sexually transmitted disease or something that I was only comfortable to talk with a man about. He calmly came in and took a seat and said, "What is going on, Dave? We have not seen you in a while."

I remember driving to the office, practicing what I would say, and that I would sternly say, "I have a problem and I think it's something mental."

Instead, like my daughter Jillian, wanting a snack, my body went limp, my eyes welled up, and tears came down my face. Fifteen years of frustration, which I had as a youth and through college, all was coming to a head, and I opened up to my doctor that I did not want it anymore. I told him that I truly believed that I was struggling with OCD and I was so tired of fighting it.

I did not hold anything back and I explained to him my symptoms of the fear of dying, my compulsive checking of things, and my many obsessive thoughts. I told him that I was there to say, "No more!" I remember him looking at this 6'2" 235 pound guy with tears of compassion in his eyes and saying, "Lets see what we can do for you." I handed him my psychologist Bruce's business card and said, "He thinks it's about time you and he talk and do this for me."

Without hesitation, my doctor asked a nurse to draw some blood to check on enzyme levels in my liver and promised that he would call my psychologist Bruce and talk with him. He left the room and came back with samples of Paxil, because he felt that he would try this medicine first with me. He said that we would try some different SSRI's if need be, to see which of them would work the best for me.

He explained that I would try some of the Paxil (20 mg.)for two weeks and then come back for more blood work in two weeks. He told me that they would periodically check my liver function to make sure my liver was correctly absorbing the medication. He told me that we would start on some low doses and see if after two weeks I noticed if the OCD that hampered me for so long would subside. I remember thinking did he say that we would see if the OCD would subside some. I could not believe that it might actually go away.

I remember that after the doctor's appointment I went into the bathroom and fixed my tie in the mirror and thought I was doing something special for me and that a weight seemed to have come off my chest. I walked out of that office with a smile you might see on a quarterback after winning a Super Bowl. I had decided that I wanted to conquer OCD head on and that the time to start was now and the road to recovery was just starting.

After the two weeks, to my disappointment, I was not perfect, , but I noticed that my symptoms had definitely gotten better. Everyone is different and the prescriptions can react differently with others, but I felt like a new man because I was getting better.

### Chapter 3 OCD and the Right Occupation

"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.

Benjamin Franklin

In this journey called life, we all have to work to provide for the loved ones in our lives, and I've always believed that your occupation can dictate the peace that you have, or do not have, in your life. Being in the wrong job, even if you make lots of money, can take a terrible toll on your happiness. That's true for everyone, and for an OCD sufferer the disease adds another layer of difficulty to the challenge of dealing with the wrong job or with a bad boss.

I love the challenge and the excitement of sales, and I've worked in sales most of my life. In addition to my work with the Eagles, I've been selling telecommunications, employee benefits, and insurance for many years.

Let's face it, most of us work nine- to eleven-hour days and spend as much time as possible with our children. When you spend that much time working at your job and rearing children, it's critical that when you have OCD, you learn to love what you do. Stress and anxiety from your work can lead to a lot of OCD incidents.

I've earned nice incomes in sales, but the price of making that money has often been a high level of stress. A salesman is only as good as his most recent performance, so I could sell a million-dollar deal on Monday, but if I don't land anything on Tuesday, the boss will want to know what I did wrong. That's stress.

Salespeople have quotas and goals. Meet them and you'll be successful. Exceed them and you'll receive bonuses and recognition. Fail to meet them, and you may soon be looking for a new job.

There was a recent article by Jim Citrin, on Yahoo Finance website, that stated that the Gallup polling organization compiled after doing a workplace interviews. Citrin says, "the poll found that an employee's job satisfaction is the key determinant of their happiness and their effectiveness inside that organization." The research stated something I found quite intriguing. It said that if you had a best friend at work, it could correlate to an individual's happiness with his or her jobs. The Gallup research showed work needed to be a place of trust, nourishment, and a place where you had friends, to be satisfied with your job. If you do not have this where you work and I am sure many people do not, you need to sit down and clearly think about your career path.

Bosses can be tough, but the boss is never a salesman's toughest critic. Every salesman expects to close every deal, and when he doesn't close one, he has a feeling of failure. If he doesn't close a deal for a week or a month, he can start to wonder if he'll lose his job. For a person with OCD, it's important to be able to manage these feelings.

Most people are not fortunate enough to have the perfect job, but working with good people and for good companies can alleviate a lot of undo stress. Stress in life or in the workplace can lead to marital conflict and health problems, and, according to a study done by the USA Today newspaper, 75% of Americans are dissatisfied with their jobs. That means that you have to learn to have patience and a positive attitude in order to survive in today's workplace.

For many salespeople, their jobs involve a lot of driving to appointments, jumping on airplanes, working with difficult customers, and spending countless hours to close a sale.

New sales drive a company, and without new sales most companies cannot survive and flourish. So, as a salesman with high expectations, I've had many times in my life when I've had to put the company ahead of my mental well being. For doing so, I've often paid a painful emotional and physical price. Job-related stress can trigger bouts with OCD, and I know that stress led to many of mine.

One particular incident stands out above all the others. When it occurred, my OCD became so bad, that I truly believed that I was going to die. This incident was terrible when it happened, but it turned out to be a good thing for me because it motivated me to get myself out of a job situation that was hurting my emotional health and my family. If you see yourself in my story, have the courage to put your life above your job.

Several years ago, I worked for an insurance company, and someone looking at me from the outside would have thought that I had the perfect life. I had a great income and did not pay anything for health benefits, that covered my entire family and me. I also had a high car allowance. If money were all that mattered in my life, I would have had the perfect job.

I worked for this company for a little over three years, and we had an outstanding product. However, management was unreasonably demanding, and most employees felt that we were micromanaged in every facet of our jobs.

Even though I had a lot of stress while I worked at this job, I think the anti-depressant I took, which was Paxil, gave me balance in my life and helped to curve some of the stress. In my younger years in high school and college, I had never been on any anti-depressant to help curve my fear of death and to control many of my confusing thoughts. I also had a lot of fears of the devil and with religion. I would always try and do the right things, in all aspects of my life, because of the complex fear that I could end up in hell someday. When I was with this company, there was constant pressure and a fear of failure and that you could loss your job at any moment. This was not the best company for me to work at with my condition because stress can bring on my episodes with OCD.

Management knew that many employees worked full days and then were working most nights, as well. The company's managers were completely aware of how hard we were working, but they felt that it was just a part of our job, and the welfare of their employees was not a worry to them.

Working in that office was an uncomfortable situation, and when we would be in sales meetings, many of the employees would be afraid to speak out because of the way they would be perceived.

That atmosphere created bad company morale, and even though we were paid well, many people resigned. They were making good money, but their lives suffered terribly. We were working all the time and not spending enough quality time with our families or loved ones.

For most of the time I worked there, I was putting in eleven- to thirteen-hour days. The company expected me to work that many hours, but I didn't want that life for me or for my family any longer. Then, something happened that would forever change my life. It helped me to look at the world in a different way, and I reflect on it often.

I'm a Type A personality, and I can go and go and go. I had been working 65- to 70-hour weeks for many months, and I went on a business trip to the

Eastern Shore of Maryland. My assignment was to go to explain a new employee benefits program to the professors at a small college.

I was four hours from the comforts of home, and I suddenly found myself feeling just flat out exhausted. I can go and go for weeks at a time, but sometimes that approach catches up with me, and I shut down physically and mentally. For months, I had felt unappreciated, and the stresses of the job had been mounting. Still, I always kept a good frame of mind because I was making good money.

I began that trip in high spirits, but then I found myself taking a lot of deep breaths, and my nerves were shaky. I remember vividly that my OCD symptoms were at a high level, and I found it hard to concentrate on anything. I was worrying about a lot of things in my life, and I simply was not feeling good inside.

On the day after I arrived on the Eastern Shore, I did a presentation on the new dental insurance plan the employees would be offered. I had done this presentation a million times, and I was perfectly prepared for it, but it just didn't flow smoothly.

A person with OCD is hardwired to complete things to the end, but on this day I struggled with the meeting. Because the meeting didn't go well, I felt extremely dazed and almost confused. It appeared that my body had shut down, both physically and mentally, and I felt almost powerless to turn it back on.

I have always been known as an outgoing and energetic person, and suddenly I was a guy who couldn't focus on anything. Almost instantly, my personality had changed. I became very quiet and seemingly in my own world. I was flat out scared to death that something was seriously wrong with me, but I absolutely could not make sense of the way I was feeling.

After the meeting, I went out to lunch with the college's Human Resources Director and some others with whom I had been working. Many of them noticed a complete change in my personality, and they kept asking if I was all right or if something was bothering me.

I just smiled and told them that I was fine, but they saw the change in me and, out of concern, continued to ask me questions. Everyone was trying to include me in the conversation because the 180 degree change in my personality had made them uncomfortable, but I simply was not talking with anyone. Believe me when I tell you how rare that is for me.

Inside, I was scared to death. I could barely form words, and my face was flushed. I was frightened and I just did not feel like myself.

I was having an OCD episode like no other that I had ever had in my life, and I felt as though I had no control over my thoughts and feelings. Anyone who has ever had an OCD episode like this will understand.

The combination of working so many hours, being so frustrated with the company, and having OCD was like mixing like oil and water together. So, my body finally said, "OK. I'm shutting down now."

My drive home was awful. I drove for four hours and could barely focus on anything. My anxiety was so bad that my hands and legs were shaking most of

the way. I thought in my mind if a police man was to pull me over he might think I was either drugged or on something because I was so wiped out.

Somehow, I made it home, but as I came into the house, I had tears in my eyes. My wife saw me and was immediately as concerned as I had seen her in a long time. I told her that I was not feeling well at all, that my heart was racing, and that I really felt as though I was going to die.

She wanted to get me to the hospital, but I told her that I just needed some down time. As I lay in bed, I had a fear that I might not wake up the next morning, and I was scared to go to sleep.

Eventually, I did go to sleep. I also woke up the next day, but the feelings that I had in Maryland were still with me in Pennsylvania, and they lasted for a couple of days. I continued to work because I refused to let those crazy feelings beat me and because my job demanded it, but I was struggling.

Two weeks later, I reached my emotional limit. I told my wife that I could not continue to follow my crazy lifestyle, no matter what kind of money I was making. I told her that if I continued to live like that, I feared that it would kill me. My body was telling me that with my OCD, I had to make changes or it might really shut down for good. So, I made a career change a week later. That change has been great for me and for my family.

I also made some huge changes in my life after resigning from the insurance company I worked for. I made sure as always that I stayed on my Paxil and also started my regiment of taking Omega 3 fatty acids on a daily basis. As I will mention later, continued research is showing that people who are depressed, might have low levels of Omega-3 fatty acids. I also started to work out 3-4 days a week, during lunch breaks, which helped to me to have a more positive outlook on the day and raise my serotonin levels in my brain.

I also changed my diet and more and more research is coming out that eating the right foods might help with depression. I started to eat more fish like Tuna and shark and fruits like bananas, that have a lot of Vitamin B in them, and this vitamin has shown to relieve some forms of depression. Some other foods that have good sources of Vitamin B are broccoli, cauliflower, poultry and meat and potatoes, and mangoes. All of these changes, have enabled me to live a much more happy life.

Today, I still work in insurance sales, but now I work for a great company. This is a company, where management, truly cares about and respects all employees that work for them. The days of micromanaging and not caring about the well-being of employees, have gone away, and I enjoy my work and my life again, like never before.

The lesson from my job change is a simple one. Your life will suffer if you're miserable in your job. Having OCD, will make a bad job situation even harder to bare. So find a company that expects you to work hard, play hard, and live for your family. After all, even if you're rich and miserable, you're still miserable.

I've found a job with a positive atmosphere, and that's vital. I still make a nice income and support my family, and I enjoy life again. I knew that things were really going right when I went for a doctor's visit recently and had my blood pressure checked. My blood pressure was the lowest it had been since I was much younger and in high school. Numbers can tell it all.



So can some seemingly small events in our lives. Recently, as I was writing this book and preparing to go on vacation, I received an email from my boss, Lynne. It read, "Dave, you are doing very well. Try to remember that life is short and you need to devote as much time to good mental health and family as you do to business."

Let's just say that it had been a long time since an employer had said something like that to me, and it made me feel that I had found the right place to work.

I share these stories with you because I know that all people with OCD have their own stories of times when they knew that something was not functioning right in their minds, times when they knew that something was wrong.

I've also opened up because I want others to know that they are not alone in their fears and anxieties concerning OCD in their workplaces. The career that you choose for your life, can dictate your happiness with life, because of the amount hours daily you are at work.

Please consider this chapter and my job-related experiences as something important when you evaluate your life and what is really important for your mental well-being. Making money is important, but not so important that you should trade in your peace of mind.

Your job is something that you do every day, and my advice is that if you suffer from OCD, find an occupation that will drive you and energize you, not one that will destroy you mentally and physically.

You deserve a good boss and a positive workplace. If you don't have them now, do your best to find them. That's what I've done, and it's been an important step in controlling my OCD.

## Chapter 4

### Optimism And A Positive Attitude

"Optimism is the one quality more associated with success and happiness than any other." Brian Tracy

"We are all the captains of our own ship. We can either sink the ship or crash through the waves and make it out to a sunny port we call life." Dave White

Most of my life, I have been an optimist at heart, even though I had OCD. Through it all, so many people told me that I enjoyed the little things in life. I fought with my OCD, but always remained optimistic that things would some day take a turn for the better. Many studies have been done that show that people who have a great outlook on life are more healthy physically.

By a great outlook, I do not mean being a phony and always appearing to be happy, but that you truly are happy with your life. You have to truly and genuinely feel it in your actions and in your gut. You have to feel it all the way to the core of your soul.

We are living in a society of pessimists and what author Jon Gordon calls "Energy Vampires," - people who only care of their own well-being and not of anyone

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