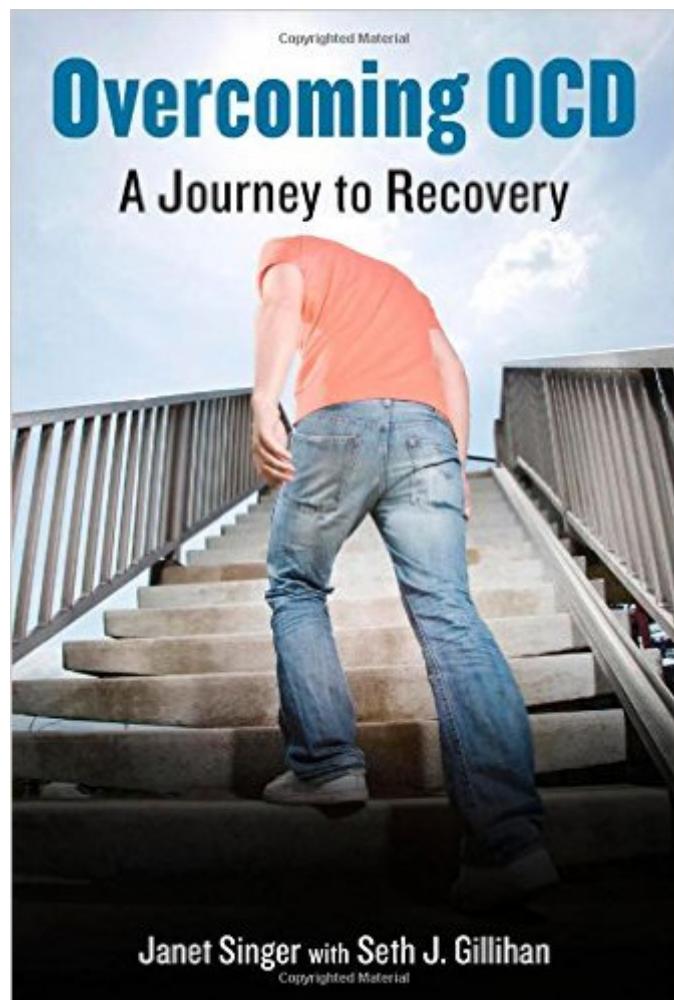


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# Overcoming OCD: A Journey To Recovery



## **Synopsis**

Daniel Singer hadn't eaten in a week. Hunched over with his head in his hands, he'd sit in his office chair for hours, doing nothing but shaking, mumbling and moaning; he was in the throes of severe obsessive-compulsive disorder. Dan went from seven therapists to ten medications to a nine week stay at a world renowned residential treatment program. His parents worried he'd never again be able to function in society, or even worse, survive. Overcoming OCD: A Journey to Recovery is a mother's account of the courage and perseverance of a young man who at times was hindered by the very people who were supposed to be helping him. It is a story of hope and the power of family, as well as a useful guide for all those whose lives have been touched by this often misunderstood and misrepresented disorder. Weaving expert commentary and useful information about OCD and its treatment throughout, the authors are able to offer not just a personal account of how the disorder can affect sufferers and families, but also a glimpse into the possibilities for diagnosis, clinical approaches, and successful outcomes. Today, thanks to Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) therapy, one of the available treatments for OCD, Dan is a college graduate working in his chosen field and living life to the fullest. He is living proof that even those with the most severe cases of OCD can not only recover, but triumph.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (January 22, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442239441

ISBN-13: 978-1442239449

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (22 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #76,915 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Allied Health Services > Caregiving #16 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Addiction & Recovery > Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) #88 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Compulsive Behavior

## **Customer Reviews**

Kudos to Janet Singer for addressing such a delicate subject with compassion, intelligence, and yes, even a little humor. In Overcoming OCD: A Journey to Recovery, Ms. Singer provides a

mother's perspective of her son Dan's struggles with his illness. From initial diagnosis to the success of Exposure and Response Prevention therapy, she chronicles the heartbreak, frustration, fear, and uncertainty that Dan and his family suffered through. And yet, a mother's unyielding belief in his strength and thus his ability to recover from such a debilitating disease always shined through. It is a story written from the heart. The book chronicles Dan's road to recovery. Inpatient treatment. Medication. More medication. Counseling. Decisions. Letting go. Taking control. Enabling. Acknowledging. Medication withdrawal. The complex dance of doctors, patient and parents trying to figure out what is best, what is right. It reads like a novel, but it educates like a primer. With the help of thoughtful commentary by Seth Gillihan, the reader is provided with a greater understanding of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, its treatment and how family and loved ones can help.

One of the arts of parenting grown children--particularly emerging adults who are just getting their independence-foothing--is to keep from interfering in their lives, to practice detachment parenting, to become an advisory parent instead of one involved in their everyday decisions. When a child becomes seriously ill, how do we walk that line: making sure they are getting appropriate care and still letting them be in charge of their lives? Writing in the first person, Janet Singer addresses these issues in "Overcoming OCD." While it was written to be a helpful tool for other parents whose children or loved ones are ill with OCD, the book is also about the struggle between child and parent, for the adult child's need for independence and the parent's obligation to know and act on what's best for their child. Singer is frank about the emotional roller-coaster of parenting a 19-year-old child whose illness could curtail his lifelong dreams and ambitions (since childhood, her son has wanted to be an animator; the art college he was attending did not allow for a break in the course series) and his ability to live a fulfilling and independent life--to say nothing of enjoying the pleasurable socializing of college life. Who makes decisions about his future. Is it the young man under the influence of his therapists, or his parents? In Janet's case, the therapists specializing in her son's OCD condition (at a residential facility), recommended he not return to art college, arguing that returning to school would take away from the continuity of his recovery--even though not returning meant he would have to give up on his ambition to be an animator. Her son had voluntarily entered the residential facility during the summer to undergo intensive therapy so he could return to college in the fall. Wavering on that goal when under the care (and influence) of his therapists, he told his parents he was dropping out of college--he wanted to relieve himself of the pressure to keep up with the course work and concentrate on recovery. At the same time, though, he wanted to go

back to the college town and live with his friends and roommates in a house they had all rented. "I need to be independent," he told his parents. "I want my freedom." A good chunk of the book revolves around the role of the parents in this decision ("who knows the whole person better?" a psychologist-adviser reminds Singer.), the emotional ups and downs of deciding whether to intervene and how. It's her honesty about the struggle with her ill son and her belief in his future that hit home. In one way or another, we have all been there.

Janet Singer has accomplished more in her book, *Overcoming OCD: A Journey to Recovery*, than a hundred scientific publications filled with facts, figures, and charts. To live with OCD yourself or in your family, the ordinary human needs lay speak. Janet does that in her book with authenticity, emotion, and compassion. Janet lives knowing her adult son has OCD and is challenged in many ways to cope and engage in a normal existence. Most frustrating to Janet and her husband, Gary, are the many attempts by professionals at treating Dan's symptoms. Trying one drug after the other, sometimes prescribing one on top of the other. Often there were interactions between drugs which were unbearable for Dan. Despite their conversations with his doctors, Janet and Gary never seemed to be able to get through to the medical community that they really know who Dan is. In my opinion, Janet has done a tremendous favor for those living with OCD or with a loved one who has OCD. The picture offered is a realistic image of their family's struggles with Dan's illness and treatments. Janet does not spare anything in laying out the facts of their life, their struggles with the medical and psychological communities, their attempts to help Dan. Standing alongside and contributing to Janet's book is Seth J. Gillihan, Ph.D., a clinical assistant professor of psychology in the psychiatry department at the University of Pennsylvania. The beauty of Dr. Gillihan's contributions is found in their placement in the book. As Dan and his family face another crisis, Dr. Gillihan writes information on drugs, treatment plans, and other scientific information in lay terms. This balance between the realistic story and the medical information available provides a perfect resource based in truth for coping with and treating OCD. Janet Singer has written a poignant and powerful memoir plus a resource to guide others to an understanding of OCD and how to manage it. This book shares encouragement and enlightenment in equal measure, a powerful combination indeed. **My Recommendation:** *Overcoming OCD* is a story of struggle for Dan and for his parents. Janet and Dan's love for him and their wish to improve his life is palpable. In sharing their story, Janet has gifted to many a measure of hope in coming to terms with OCD and its many crises. Anyone living with loved ones suffering OCD, or who know someone with OCD, or who could give a copy to a local library will help spread Janet's words and unknown number of people may benefit

from the Singers' story. Share a ray of hope, a glimmer of better days, and new and innovative treatments.

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