

What is Compulsive Behavior?

Behaviors that can become compulsive include:

- ◆ Alcohol and/or drug use
- ◆ Eating
- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Lying
- ◆ Working/no play
- ◆ Sexual activity
- ◆ Gambling
- ◆ Exercising
- ◆ Internet or Blackberry use
- ◆ 'Checking' behaviors (excessive worrying and checking about things such as turning off the lights, the stove, locking the doors, etc.)
- ◆ Organizing or cleaning

The words 'compulsion' and 'obsessive-compulsive behavior' have made it into our general vocabulary. Many people use these words casually, but what do they really mean?

A compulsion is a behavior that a person is driven to because he or she feels he *has to* or *must* do it -- even if it results in negative consequences, and even when the individual would like to stop. Logic doesn't work -- the compulsive person isn't easily talked out of his or her behavior.

At first glance, some compulsive behaviors may seem enjoyable, but for the compulsive person, it's anything but fun. Often the individual feels trapped by their compulsions, but feels helpless to do anything about his/her behavior. Compulsions may start out as a way to enhance one's mood and provide escape from uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. At some point, the compulsion begins to control the individual, and it creates new problems.

Compulsions are sometimes the result of obsessive thoughts, such as the fear of dirt or contamination, of losing control, of injury, or of other circumstances in which the individual may feel helpless.

Compulsive behaviors and disorders hurt not only the individual, but can affect the entire family. Professional help may be needed.

The following resources can provide additional information:

www.nimh.nih.gov

www.webmd.com

Consider seeking professional help if:

-You experience repeated unwanted thoughts or behaviors that you can't control and that cause distress

-You find yourself repeating the rituals over and over, such as washing your hands, checking locks on doors, or needlessly repeating the same steps to a task

-The repeated thoughts or behaviors are interfering with getting to school or work on time, or preventing you from engaging in activities that you enjoy

-The repeated behaviors are causing financial problems, problems at work, or problems in your relationships.

Contact Workplace Solutions today for free, confidential assistance.

Professional counselors are available 24/7 by calling 800-327-5071.

A variety of educational and supportive resources are available online at www.wseap.com.