

THE INNER TORTURE OF OCD

AFTER MARK WRIGHT'S CANDID REVELATION ABOUT SUFFERING FROM OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER, WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS CRIPPLING PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION

Mark Wright's recent confession that he has secretly been battling obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) came as a surprise to many – but the condition is far more common than most of us realise. The anxiety-related disorder – which causes obsessive thoughts and urges – affects up to 12 people in every 1,000, meaning there are thought to be around 750,000 sufferers in the UK at any one time. A-listers including David Beckham, Leonardo DiCaprio and Cameron Diaz have openly all admitted to being affected by OCD.

Speaking on *This Morning*, former *TOWIE* star Mark, 29, said: 'I have symmetry OCD – if I touch one leg in a certain place I have to do it on the same leg.' Mark, who is married to *Our Girl* actress Michelle Keegan, 29, also revealed that the condition runs in his family. 'Growing up as a kid, my dad had OCD, little habits he does, and so does my sister Jess,' he said. 'We all have little habits, we have to touch things a certain amount of times. I'll have to turn on a light at a certain time or the volume has to be at a certain level.'

Essex-born Mark, who has been working with mental health charities to raise awareness of the disorder, was also keen to stress that OCD is no laughing matter. 'The people I met recently have serious OCD. Some think it's funny but actually, when you meet these people, it's not funny at all.'

OK! spoke to leading psychotherapist Jasmine El-Doori to uncover the truth about OCD – and find out how it can be managed...

WHAT IS OCD?

An anxiety disorder, OCD causes people to obsessively perform certain rituals – such as repeated hand-washing. 'It's a form of suffering characterised by intrusive thoughts,' says London-based psychotherapist Jasmine. 'These thoughts lead directly to compulsive behaviours, and it becomes a vicious circle where people attempt to get rid of those invasive feelings. They are then left with a sense of being trapped.'

Jasmine, who's been treating OCD for 15 years, says there is no obvious cause. 'Like a lot of mental health issues, it is due partly to genetic predisposition and partly to environmental factors – such as being exposed to extreme stress as a child. It can also be a response

to a major life trauma. It's also much more likely in people who have some form of anxiety condition, and in my experience, OCD predominantly goes hand in hand with depression.'

Jasmine also says the condition is increasingly prevalent in younger people. 'Ten years ago, I wasn't seeing lots of teenagers or undergraduates, but now I am. People are less afraid to talk about it now, and it's great that Mark Wright has spoken about it, as raising awareness helps people reach out themselves.'

David Beckham is another sufferer. The former footballer, 41, has been open about his long-running OCD battle and once said: 'I have to have everything in a straight line or everything has to be in pairs. I'll put my Pepsi cans in the fridge and if there's one too many then I'll put it in another cupboard somewhere. I'll go into a hotel room and before I can relax, I have to move all the leaflets and books and put them in a drawer. Everything has to be perfect.'

TYPES OF OCD

'The most common kinds of OCD I see revolve around obsessive cleaning and washing,' says Jasmine. 'It's an underlying fear of contamination.' Another common behaviour is constant checking for safety. 'Some individuals will go home from work to make sure they haven't left the oven on. Others will have to check the windows are locked or that their straightening irons are switched off seven or eight times before they leave for work. To experience that kind of panic on a daily basis gives you as sense of what OCD is like.'

However, some tendencies can be very mild. 'Most psychiatrists would say that everybody has some OCD traits – such as the need to be incredibly clean and tidy,' says Jasmine. 'But most people don't tip over into extremes.' So while plenty of us religiously double-check the front



Above: Mark Wright has spoken frankly about his OCD. Below left: David Beckham is a fellow sufferer. Left: The illness may mean obsessively cleaning or checking things are even (bottom left)

door is locked, this is nothing to be overly concerned about. 'If we're going on holiday, we all check two or three times that we've got our passports, even when we know we have. But those minor aspects of OCD are liveable with.'

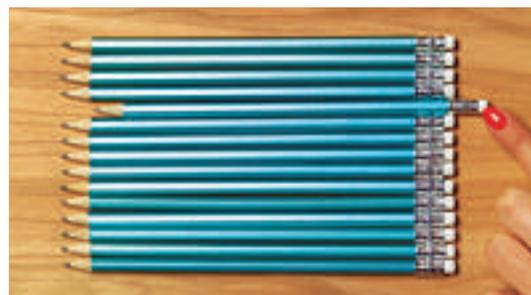
WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Jasmine believes that OCD becomes a serious problem when such persistent thoughts start impacting on your life. 'It can get in the way of relationships – people might feel they have to hide their condition or it can cause huge rows between couples. It's emotionally exhausting and it can also affect your professional life. I've seen people sacked because they're always late due to their repeated checking rituals.' At its worst, she says, OCD takes over a sufferer's life: 'It can be utterly debilitating. It's an inner torture.'

Although many people may feel unsure whether they need medical help or not, Jasmine stresses: 'There's an element of common sense, so you have to ask yourself how unsafe and unsettled you feel if the rituals are not performed. For instance, some people have a pathological fear that the people they love will be harmed if they don't carry the rituals out.'

HOW IT IS TREATED

Many mental health experts believe in treating OCD with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which seeks to challenge and eradicate the obsessive thoughts. However, Jasmine says: 'Although CBT can work for some, I work in a more analytical way, focusing on the underlying cause of the anxiety. With CBT, the symptoms often tend to come back, because psychotherapists are not surgeons who can simply remove the problem. By instead exploring someone's



deepest, darkest fears, we often find that there are lots of other things going on.'

But Jasmine doesn't advise self-help techniques, saying: 'I always say seek professional help. Go and see a couple of different practitioners to see which kind of therapy might work for you. There's no one

formula for everyone.' She adds: 'People often live in denial and feel this is how their life is going to be, but it doesn't need to be like that. Therapy really can lessen the distress and improve your quality of life.'

SEE PSYCHOTHERAPY4YOU.CO.UK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON JASMINE'S PRACTICE.

FROM HOTEL LEAFLETS TO DOOR KNOBS -A-LISTERS WITH OCD

MEGAN FOX

Revealing a phobia of public toilets, actress Megan (right), 30, once said: 'I have an illness, this is not okay any more... Every time someone uses a bathroom and they flush, all the bacteria is shot into the air.' Megan also admitted having obsessive-compulsive tendencies about restaurant cutlery. 'Putting my mouth where a million other mouths have been, just knowing all the bacteria that you carry in your mouth? Ugh!'



LEONARDO DICAPRIO

Oscar-winning *The Revenant* actor Leonardo (left), 41, has revealed he is often compelled to walk through the same doorway multiple times, and he used to walk obsessively on chewing gum stains on the pavement. But Leo insists he can control his thoughts these days. 'I'm able to say, okay, you're being ridiculous, stop stepping on every gum stain you see,' he said. 'You don't need to walk 20 feet back and put your foot on that thing. Nothing bad is going to happen.'



CAMERON DIAZ

The Mask actress (left), 44, revealed in 1997 that she once had a phobia of germs which meant she became obsessed with cleaning the doorknobs in her house - eventually causing their paint to fade. Despite having successful therapy, she has also described herself as a 'frequent hand-washer'.



JULIANNE MOORE

Julianne (right), 55, once admitted she was obsessed with a 'lucky walk', which meant she had to leave her apartment at the same time every morning, and time her walk so she only got green signals at traffic lights. Although her compulsions are less severe now, she is still 'fanatical about straightening furniture and lining stuff up'. **OK!**

FEATURE BY ANNA POINTER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES, REX

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Rebekah's DIARY

28 WEEKS PREGNANT

FOOTBALL HERO JAMIE VARDY'S WIFE WRITES EXCLUSIVELY ABOUT HER WEEK



Last week was half-term and we haven't got a nanny at the moment so it was a mad house with three kids, two dogs and a hormonal pregnant mummy! But I took the kids to KidZania at Westfield and they loved it. It's like a version of the grown-up world. The children can go to work at Capital Radio, they can be musicians or train to be midwives or doctors in an intensive care unit, it's brilliant!

We held a Peppa Pig-themed second birthday party for Sofia last week, which was amazing. We had 30 kids in a marquee in our garden, which was covered in purple and pink lights. There were toys for the younger ones and the older kids had an entertainer, a cake [top right], a disco and karaoke - so they all sang songs from *Frozen*.

Sofia was running around trying to sneak all the sweets off the candy table. She got a tiny white Range Rover she can drive [above], which she loves.



BODY TALK

I've ordered furniture for the nursery from Adorable Tots - they have beautiful stuff - plus I'm getting more Belly Bandit maternity control tops, which support your bump [left]. I'm obsessed with them. Someone tweeted last week saying: 'Your thighs are disgusting, I can't believe Jamie is still with you!' I'm happy with my thighs so I didn't get



offended, I just blocked her. I don't stand for social media bullying, I don't think anyone should.

PROUD WIFE

I'm so proud of Jamie as he's been named on the 2016 Ballon d'Or award shortlist for the world's best player. And he's the only English player to be nominated since Wayne Rooney in 2012.



I HOPE IT'S TRUE

There's definitely a baby boom in showbiz at the moment. There are rumours that Cheryl [left] is pregnant and if it's true I'm very happy for her and Liam Payne. I just want them both to confirm it! I'm going to try and find out what's going on from our friend Louis Tomlinson when I next see him!