

Intrusive Thoughts

INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT ARE INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS?

Intrusive thoughts are unexpected images or thoughts that seem to pop into your head out of nowhere. These thoughts happen to almost everyone from time to time.

Sometimes these thoughts and images can be unwanted and unpleasant. The content of them can often be aggressive or sexual in nature, or can be a sudden thought about a mistake or worry.

In most cases, intrusive thoughts do not have any particular meaning although, sometimes, people who experience intrusive thoughts become worried about what they mean. The thoughts are against the individual's nature which causes the distress they often experience. This can lead to someone trying to control or stop the thoughts. People may also feel ashamed and want to keep them a secret. As long as you recognise that these are only thoughts, and you have no desire to act on them, intrusive thoughts are not harmful.

When Intrusive thoughts become distressing and begin to impact on an individual's day-to-day life they have become a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

It's important to get some support if you are struggling to manage your thoughts and/or are being consumed by the content of your thoughts.

Medication can be an option when treating intrusive thoughts although with the right therapy, intrusive thoughts can be successfully managed.



YOU ARE NOT
YOUR THOUGHTS

TYPES OF INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

There are several different types of intrusive thoughts. Some examples are:

- Contamination, germs and infections
- aggressive or violent acts, or causing harm to others
- doubting themselves; doing tasks wrong or leaving tasks incomplete
- religion, blasphemy, or being an immoral person
- sexual acts and/or situations
- acting out or saying the wrong thing in public
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It is also possible to have other types of intrusive thoughts that do not fit into these categories.