



A personal journey of survival and recovery from Obsessive-Compulsive disorder.

PURE OCD: The Invisible Side of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

by Chrissie Hodges

Order the complete book from the publisher

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9020.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

PURE OCD



The Invisible Side of Obsessive - Compulsive Disorder

A Memoir by

Chrissie Hodges

Pure OCD

The Invisible Side of Obsessive-
Compulsive Disorder

Chrissie Hodges

Edited by Ethan Raath

Copyright © 2017 Chrissie Hodges

ISBN: 978-1-63491-991-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2017

First Edition

This memoir is dedicated to the fearless and dedicated advocates for mental health. In selflessly sharing their stories, they eliminate stigma and foster hope in those who suffer with mental illness.

The publishing of this memoir is dedicated to my partner, Sean David McLimans. It is through his love, compassion, and support that I can truly believe in the power of accomplishing anything I put my mind to.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: My Living Hell	1
Chapter 2: The First Obsession	3
Chapter 3: The Rituals.....	13
Chapter 4: Who is Chrissie?	21
Chapter 5: Baiting Obsessions	29
Chapter 6: The Fear that Stuck	35
Chapter 7: The Unthinkable	45
Chapter 8: Proof or Disproof.....	49
Chapter 9: If It Is Physical, It Must Be Real?	55
Chapter 10: Trapped By a Monster.....	63
Chapter 11: College: A Reprieve	67
Chapter 12: The Beginning of the End	71
Chapter 13: Small Cracks in a Hardened Shell	77
Chapter 14: Is It Time to Die?	83
Chapter 15: Is Fear Enough to Stay Alive?	91
Chapter 16: Goodbye Friends	95
Chapter 17: The How and When of Suicide	103
Chapter 18: The Pact with God	113
Chapter 19: In the Still of the Night	123
Chapter 20: Please Don't Shoot!.....	133
Chapter 21: Why Am I Still Alive?	141
Chapter 22: I'm Mentally Ill Now, so My Opinions Don't Matter.....	147

Chapter 23: I am NOT One of These Crazy People!	155
Chapter 24: You Don't Know What It Is Like to be ME.	163
Chapter 25: 'This is a Normal Brain. This is YOUR Brain'	169
Chapter 26: I Am One of These People.....	173
Chapter 27: Your Name is WHAT?	179
Chapter 28: I Am Worthy of Love	183
Chapter 29: Institutionalized	189
Chapter 30: Let's Pretend Nothing Happened!	197
Chapter 31: I Don't Need Meds Anymore!	201
Chapter 32: Can I Actually Control This?	213
Chapter 33: You Want Me To Do WHAT?.....	219
Chapter 34: Taking the Risk and Living with Uncertainty.....	229
Chapter 35: The Lessons of OCD.....	235
About the Author	239

Chapter 1: My Living Hell

“God Himself would reject anyone at Heaven’s gates who took the liberty to take a life rightfully God’s and God’s only to take.”

My mind drifted, recalling those sentiments in a sermon I heard years ago with the preacher damning any person succeeding in suicide to Hell. The image of him ranting on the selfishness and weak-mindedness tempting anyone to complete such an atrocious act became clear, even in my clouded mind. I faintly heard his words echoing around me. I shivered, not from the cold but from how those words impacted me. The memory burst wide open. I could almost smell the strong oak beams holding up the tiny chapel’s ceiling. Worship bulletins acted as fans to the congregation sweltering from the lack of air conditioning in the sanctuary. I pictured myself sweating and panicking in the creaky, wooden pew.

The shame and fear conjured up by the pastor’s words hammered me to a miniscule size. His eyes bore into mine, tearing open a bleeding heart, and shattering a soul already falling toward rock bottom at a rapid pace. He stared into me as if he could read my thoughts. *Does he know the secrets I carry?* I had decided long before that day in chapel suicide would be a welcomed option if I could no longer bear the brunt of the madness in my mind. *Maybe he knows?* His angry words shook my brain, sending a surge of fear up my spine. I felt guilty for hating him. The service concluded and I walked out of the small, backwoods chapel wondering if he was really speaking the word of God. I certainly hope not.

Today, lying alone and scared in an ice cold creek bed, I questioned if he may be right about going to Hell? I held my hands over the open wound in my stomach, protecting it from splitting open any farther. It wouldn’t matter anymore if it did. I passed the point of pain from the self-inflicted knife wound half an hour ago. My rational mind intervened, confirming whatever Hell may be, it could not be

worse than living inside my tormented mind. I would gladly accept a physical Hell for eternity, than live one more day in the hell I had experienced since I was 8 years old.

Chapter 2: The First Obsession

It was a typical Thursday in third grade. Nothing out of the ordinary happened in the weeks leading up to this particular day. I was having a normal day as a social, outgoing, and energetic student cracking jokes with classmates as usual. Sometimes it got me in trouble, but generally I was a good student with good manners.

We filed into the classroom after lunch, settling into our seats. The teacher had us working quietly at our desks before resuming afternoon classes. Our classroom was organized into rows from front to back and side to side with spaces in between each desk. Mine was positioned by the pathway to the door of the classroom. I sat 4 seats back on the left side facing the door. I was focused on a reading assignment when a kid in my class named Jeff bolted past me from the front of the room. This was not out of the ordinary, but today my internal antenna warned me something bad was happening.

A tingling sensation on the back of my neck began radiating into my head. It felt like a heat wave in my neck, traveling down into my chest, arms, and hands. My forearms and hands became numb and my breathing began to quicken. My brain was screaming to run away, but I didn't understand what I would be running from. I looked around feeling like the walls and ceiling were closing in on me.

Don't look back, Chrissie...Stay focused, Chrissie...Keep breathing, Chrissie.

I heard the teacher urgently telling Jeff to run quickly to the bathroom. I closed my eyes tightly, holding my breath. I felt his energy sprinting up the pathway toward the door. My body cringed and everything slowed down as he approached my desk.

Oh God, please make it past me, Oh God, please make it past me.

My prayers were too late. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him bend over and throw up inches from my desk. In one swift motion, my legs powered me as far away from Jeff and his sickness as possible. When I finally opened my eyes, the boy sitting next to me was desperately trying to push me off his lap. I was in a fetal position between him and his desk, feeling unable to breathe. He finally shoved me onto the floor, and I hit the ground with a hard thud.

I was sweating profusely, terrified by what just happened. I looked up to see the majority of attention was not on Jeff and his sickness, but on me. The teacher was in my face shaking me and yelling, but I couldn't hear her words. All I could hear was my heartbeat and labored breathing. As the world came into focus, my teacher was asking if I was okay. All eyes were on me. I was humiliated. I needed to figure out what just happened, but I didn't know if I could talk. I worried if I said what I felt out loud, it may happen again.

I was shaking as my teacher helped me stand up. I heard a few snickers from students and I shot them a threatening look. This wasn't my fault, but I was embarrassed. I wanted to crack a joke or something to make everything look okay, but I was too overwhelmed and shaken up. I couldn't look back at my desk. Every time I thought about what happened, I felt the hot feeling and tingling in my neck again.

Why is this happening to me? What is this weird physical feeling? Am I going to throw up? Does this mean I might throw up? What if this feeling happens again in front of everyone?

I could feel the heat rising in my chest and my hands started to tingle.

OH GOD, HERE IT COMES AGAIN, WHAT DO I DO? HOW DO I GET OUT OF HERE?

I wanted to run as fast as I could out of the classroom. I wanted to run as far as I could away from school, my teacher, and the student who threw up. I hated everyone in this classroom. How could everyone be so calm after what just happened? Why are people acting like nothing happened? Why didn't anyone else care as much as I did? Why do I care so much?

Every year kids get sick in the classroom and I've never reacted or felt this way. My sister will throw up if you look at her the wrong way and it has never bothered me. I've thrown up and while I don't find it exciting, I've never felt this way about it. What happened to make things different today? Was it the student? Was it because it happened so close to me? It doesn't make sense. Why all of a sudden am I feeling this way about throwing up?

I pressed my face against the cool window, staring at the playground. How I wished I was outside in the open air instead of breathing contaminated throw up air. I looked over at my chair and my body began reacting again. I couldn't breathe. I needed to control this feeling right now. I started counting my breaths to distract myself. How many breaths does it take for this bad feeling to go away?

One breath...two breaths...three breaths...four breaths....Okay, the tingling feeling is going away...five breaths...six breaths...Okay, I can breathe normally now.

My teacher put her hand on my back, leading me to the chair in front of her desk. She asked me questions, but I didn't want to tell her what happened. For some reason I felt embarrassed and ashamed. Wouldn't she think I was an idiot? Also, wouldn't saying it out loud

prove it really happened? I don't want to believe it was real. It couldn't have been real. Maybe I imagined it? But, whenever I looked toward my desk, the hot feeling started again. I counted breaths to make it stop knowing it only takes six breaths to stop it. I had to stay at six. I had a feeling anything over six would be bad. If I couldn't get things under control by six breaths, there is no telling what could happen?

Just as I began feeling calm and prepared to go back to my desk, Jeff came back into the room. He was walking toward me and the teacher's desk. I started panicking. I didn't want to breathe the same air he was breathing. *Oh God, I cannot be near him. Oh God, what if I throw up? What if I catch whatever he has and I throw up later today or tomorrow? HOW CAN I GET OUT OF HERE? I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE!*

"Excuse me, I need to go to the bathroom, please it's an emergency," I told my teacher, already getting out of my chair to avoid the student.

"Okay, Chrissie. Are you okay?" she asked.

I bolted from the classroom without answering. I needed air. I was trapped in there with Jeff and his throw up. Why is this happening? Everything was fine before Jeff got sick. I hate him so much! I will never talk to him again for what he did. He has ruined my life!

I splashed water on my face and looked at myself in the bathroom mirror. My chest and neck were covered in red splotches. I felt scared. Seeing physical evidence meant what happened was real. I wanted to believe it was a fluke. Maybe it's just a bad day? How could everything be different in one second? What did I do to deserve this? I prayed for God to have mercy on me and take these bad feelings away. Maybe God was doing this to me? How could He let something

this horrible happen to me? Did I do something wrong to make Him mad at me?

I stayed in the bathroom peeking around the corner at our classroom until I saw Jeff being escorted out with his books. He was going home, so it was safe to go back to the classroom. I returned to class and a few kids looked at me in a funny manner. I made a wise-crack pretending nothing had happened hoping people wouldn't think I was weird. It felt awkward. The teacher asked me if I was okay, and I lied telling her I was fine. I made an excuse about being worried he got sick on my jacket. She squinted at me like she didn't believe me. I reassured her it was true, reluctantly returning to my seat. I didn't want to look like a crazy kid, so I had to pretend everything was okay and act as normal as possible.

I performed the breathing ritual as I approached my desk. The janitor was cleaning up the sickness on the floor. I felt relieved I didn't have to deal with the physical throw up next to me. But for the remainder of the day, I contemplated whether or not the air had been contaminated by his sickness and what the odds were I may 'catch it'. I also kept a close eye on every student making sure no one 'looked' sick. If anyone got out of their seat to go to the back of the room, I would feel the heat in my neck and need to count breaths to calm down. I didn't want anyone to know I was doing this, so I made sure I was acting as normally as possible. Even when the bad feelings happened, I made sure my face stayed neutral and normal. When my classmates asked me what happened earlier, I made jokes about how gross Jeff was and how I wanted to get away from him. For some reason, everyone bought my lies. I felt terrible for being mean about Jeff, but I didn't know any other way to excuse what really happened.

Using breathing techniques and monitoring student's faces for signs they looked sick or not helped me through the rest of the day. I also repeated prayers to God asking that no one else throw up. I

apologized profusely to God for whatever I must have done wrong to make this happen. I reasoned good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. So, I had to believe God must be punishing me for something bad I had done. Why had I not felt anything like this before? Maybe I had done something deserving this harsh punishment? I prayed for forgiveness repeatedly hoping God would hear me, be merciful, and take this away.

The bell rang and I felt relieved to get out of the classroom. I was mentally exhausted. That classroom had felt like a prison. I had afterschool program before mama picked me up, but at least I was far away from the throw up air. I met my friends at our usual spot in the cafeteria for roll call and announcements. As all the students began to file in, I didn't feel I had enough time to look at everyone's face to make sure no one looked sick. There were too many kids to track and the bad feelings began again. Was the room big enough so if someone threw up, I wouldn't be near the bad air? Could I get out of here easily if someone throws up near me? What if there is a virus going around? What if I cannot get away? *Start the breathing ritual, Chrissie. You can control this in 6 breaths.*

My friend Dani looked at me quizzically and asked if I was okay. I must have looked panicked. *Dang it, I don't want anyone to know!* I quickly put a 'normal' face on making a quick excuse to cover up. She didn't seem to buy it, but I concentrated on looking normal and tried distracting her with a joke. I started the breathing ritual and prayed to God no one would throw up this afternoon. I bargained with God, telling Him I would be the best Christian I could possibly be as long as He would not let someone throw up near me.

We filed out of the cafeteria onto the playground and I started feeling the hot, tingly feeling for so many reasons I couldn't keep up with them. Everywhere I looked, I would see reasons for bad feelings. Someone ran past me and I worried they were sprinting to the

bathroom. Someone bent over and I feared they were heaving and throwing up. Kids were spinning on the tire swing and I worried they might get dizzy and throw up. Kids ran toward the teachers' chairs and I worried they were asking to go to the bathroom to throw up.

I was hypervigilant and suspicious of anyone possibly throwing up. I constantly checked kid's faces, breathing my six breaths, and praying to God. I did all of this while managing to keep it a secret from my friends. No one suspected anything. I wanted desperately to tell someone, but I was afraid they would think I was stupid. I was also scared saying it out loud would prove it was real. I wanted to believe this was temporary. I wanted to believe whatever I did to offend God, I could remedy it with prayer and He'd take it away. I couldn't imagine things could change so drastically and quickly without a reason. Maybe it was just a bad day. Maybe I did something wrong and just need to remedy it. Maybe this would all be gone tomorrow.

My stomach had been in knots all day from stress. When the bad feelings began, I was unable to decipher whether they were just the bad feelings or if it was a sign I was going to throw up. They felt very similar. I was in a constant state of anxiety trying to figure out if what I was feeling were bad feelings or actual stomach/throw up feelings. I would feel temporary relief when the breathing ritual worked because it proved I wasn't going to throw up. But each time it would surface, I'd feel the doubt of what if this time you really are going to throw up? It was confusing and exhausting, but I engaged every time to prove it was or wasn't me actually getting sick.

My last friend left afterschool program around 4:45. I couldn't believe I fooled them into thinking I was fine. I had spent every moment today in this stupid thought process, but was able to maintain 'normal' Chrissie to everyone. I was relieved to wave goodbye to her because I was so exhausted from the façade I was compelled to put on. I sat alone on the swings. I put my face against

the chain, breathing in the metallic smell that had rubbed off on my hands. I dropped my face down and felt the cold chain link hit the inside of my mouth. I tasted metal. My head popped up in panic. I just had my hands all over the chain and now it was in my mouth.

What if there are throw up germs on the chain from other people's hands and now they are in my mouth? What if I swallowed someone's germs who may get sick tonight or tomorrow and now I am contaminated? What if there were throw up germs on MY hands and I just got them in my mouth?

I spit saliva on the ground and wiped the inside of my mouth with my clothes trying to get the germs out of my mouth. My stomach dropped and I felt a strong urge to go to the bathroom. The tingling started in my neck and I began walking fast toward the teacher. *Oh my God, I have the throw up sickness. It's happening right now. My breathing counts won't help. This is for real. I'm going to really throw up.* I didn't want to run because I worried running would prove I was really going to throw up and I wanted to believe it wasn't real. If I walk, maybe it will prove I really don't have to throw up and it isn't urgent. My breathing rituals went past six breaths without calming me down, and I worried it was 'proof' this time I was really going to throw up.

I quickened my pace while grabbing the bathroom pass. I could smell the metal from my hands and with every whiff, the hot feeling in my neck reminded me I had ingested germs which may or may not be throw up germs. I pulled open the school door quickly rounding the corner to the bathroom. I bolted into one of the concrete stalls. I couldn't close and lock the door fast enough. I had to go to the bathroom badly and was terrified it was because I was getting sick from ingesting throw up germs from the swing. I tugged on my overlapped cloth belt stuck in the metal loop at every angle, but couldn't get it loose. I hated these belts because I could never figure

out how to get them undone. I pulled furiously at the loose end, but it wouldn't budge. The anxiety was overwhelming, and sweat was running down my face. *Isn't this physical 'proof' something is really wrong and it isn't just bad thoughts?* I started crying and screaming at my belt. My desperate screams echoed off the tall, concrete stalls. I prayed out loud no one would hear me in the hallway.

It was too late. I couldn't hold it any longer. I grabbed the side of the concrete wall knowing I pooped my pants because of my stupid belt. I sobbed uncontrollably. I finally ripped the belt off, yanking my pants down completely embarrassed for myself. I undressed shamefully. I threw my undies in the trash and cleaned up as best as I could. The front of my t-shirt was soaked with tears. I put my pants back on and looped the stupid cloth belt together. I didn't want to face anyone. What kind of 8 year old poops her pants? Did this mean I really am sick? Does this mean I will get sick? What is happening to me? Everything made sense this morning. Why did my whole life change in one instant? What did I do to deserve this? Will anything be normal again?

I was riddled with fear, anxiety, and exhaustion. Nothing made sense anymore. I wanted to go back to yesterday. I wanted to be somebody different. I wanted this horrible day to be over. I wanted to be normal Chrissie again. I leaned back heavily against the concrete wall and slid down until my bottom hit the cold floor. I wrapped my arms around my knees and wept into my shirt.

What did I do to deserve this? What kind of person am I? What if this never goes away? I can't live like this. I don't want to live like this.

My watch read 5:20pm and I knew mama would arrive at any moment. I couldn't wait to see her, but I didn't want her to see me like this. I wanted her to hold me. I wanted to smell her perfume and remember how things used to be before today. I wanted to tell her

everything so she could make it okay, but I knew I couldn't. She would be ashamed of me for thinking these stupid thoughts. She would be ashamed because I pooped my pants. She would be embarrassed if she knew she had a daughter who was such a horrible person with bad thoughts and bad feelings. She would be ashamed if she knew I was such a bad person God had to punish me this way. Also, she probably wouldn't believe me. I could barely believe it myself. I had become a different person in the blink of an eye. I feared my life would never be the same. The Chrissie who existed yesterday was no longer here. There was a new, horrible, and miserable Chrissie. I hated this Chrissie. I wanted the old Chrissie back.

I pulled myself up begrudgingly, washed my face, and slowly walked back to the playground. Mama was waiting for me. A feeling of relief came over me. I wanted to run to her and have her hold me while I cried. I wanted her to reassure me it would be okay. But, I couldn't. Instead, I forced a smile, quickened my stride toward her, and prepared myself to pretend I had a great day.