



Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)

When the Constant Need for Control Leads to Self-Medication

What is OCPD?

Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) is a mental health condition marked by a rigid need for order, perfectionism, and control over every detail of life. People with OCPD hold themselves and others to impossible standards, struggle to delegate or trust, and often sacrifice relationships and wellbeing in pursuit of “getting things right.”

What Does it Look Like?

- **Rigid Perfectionism**
Nothing is ever good enough, and they spend excessive time on tasks others would consider complete.
- **Inability to Delegate**
They insist on doing everything themselves because no one else can do it correctly.
- **Preoccupation with Rules and Details**
Lists, schedules, and procedures matter more than the actual purpose of the activity.
- **Emotional Constriction**
Feelings are suppressed or controlled; warmth and spontaneity feel threatening.

How Does OCPD Contribute to Relapse?

For someone with OCPD, the constant pressure of perfectionism creates chronic stress that substances can temporarily relieve.

- 1) **Perfectionism Builds Pressure**
Living under impossible standards creates anxiety that builds until substances offer the only release.
- 2) **Short-Term Programs Lack Depth**
Rigid thinking patterns developed over decades cannot be restructured in 30 or 90 days.
- 3) **Without Treating OCPD, Relapse Risk is High**
They return to the same perfectionism and need for control, with no new way to manage the pressure.

Prevalence:

7.9% of U.S. adults¹

Co-Occurrence:

29.1% of individuals with multiple SUDs meet criteria for OCPD²

Relapse Risk:

Significant

High risk of treatment dropout and relapse³

Sources: ¹ Grant et al., NESARC Study, Journal of Psychiatric Research (2012). ² The Co-Occurrence of Personality Disorders and SUDs, PMC (2024).

³ Psychiatry Online: OCPD Symptomatology and Functioning (2023).

Long-Term Treatment for OCPD and Addiction

Clients with OCPD have difficulty tolerating uncertainty and imperfections. As a result, they struggle in any program that asks them to let go and trust the process. Long-term treatment provides the time needed to slowly challenge the perfectionism driving both their distress and their resistance.

Our **long-term, progress-based model** allows clients to advance when they demonstrate genuine flexibility in their thinking and relationships. For them, recovery means learning to tolerate imperfection.



“Underneath the need for control is usually profound anxiety. Until we address what they’re so afraid of, the perfectionism serves as protection. That work takes time and trust.”

 **Meghan Bohlman, LPC-S, LCDC, EMDR-Trained**
Executive Clinical Director, Burning Tree Ranch



Dual Diagnosis Treatment for OCPD

When OCPD and addiction co-occur, treating only one leads to relapse. The perfectionism and need for control drives substance use, which further disrupts the rigid structures they depend on.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**
Without addressing the underlying perfectionism, the pressure that drove substance use remains.
- **Building Distress Tolerance**
Accepting imperfection and uncertainty is essential for recovery.
- **Providing Enough Time**
Rigid patterns built over a lifetime require extended treatment to meaningfully change.

Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation’s only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

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