



Scientific review paper highlights the talk therapies that work best for youth with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD): Cognitive-behavioral therapy tops the list

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A [new article](#) published this month in the *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology (JCCAP)* by Jennifer Freeman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Psychiatry & Human Behavior, The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and her colleagues provides a thorough review of the best psychological treatments for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) in children and adolescents. OCD affects between 2 to 3% of children and adolescents and causes significant and distressing impairment for these youth. A [brief video](#) with information for parents is available on www.effectivechildtherapy.com.

The authors examined almost 50 peer-reviewed articles, suggesting that our understanding of which treatments work for OCD in children and adolescents is improving. Using a five level ranking system, with the first level representing treatments with the *best support* and the fifth level representing treatments with *no support*, the authors were able to categorize five different treatment approaches. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) with the individual youth or with the family both were ranked as “probably efficacious” treatments, the second best ranking. “Possibly efficacious” (i.e., Level three) therapies included two different group-based CBT approaches: one involving youth only and the other involving families. Finally, technology-based CBT (i.e., Internet-based interventions) was rated as “experimental,” suggesting that this approach is just beginning to show some promise. No other psychological treatment met scientific standards to suggest that it could reliably or meaningfully reduce symptoms of youth OCD.

[JCCAP](#) is the flagship journal of the [Society for Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology \(SCCAP\)](#), Division 53 of the [American Psychological Association](#). SCCAP is a non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage the development and advancement of clinical child and adolescent psychology through integration of its scientific and professional aspects. SCCAP promotes scientific inquiry, training, professional practice, and public policy in clinical child and adolescent psychology as a means of improving the welfare and mental health of children, youth, and families.

For more extensive descriptions of CBT, interested readers can go to www.effectivechildtherapy.com. In addition, the website offers free videos on a variety of child/adolescent therapy topics, including an extended video describing [CBT for OCD in children and adolescents](#) presented by John Piacentini, Ph.D., ABPP, Professor of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the UCLA School of Medicine.