



**Thank you for taking the time to answer the feature questions below.**

**For the readers; please introduce yourself with a short biography:**

Hi Everyone,

My name is Hermione, I'm 46 and I have four grown up sons and two grandchildren, oh and not forgetting a very loving husband. For the past thirteen years I have been living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and fighting back. I now have my OCD under control, which has taken a lot of help from my family and family doctor as well as my therapist's and a psychiatrist, along with medication.



During that thirteen years I have written articles for various women's magazines and newspapers on the subject of OCD. I have appeared on television twice talking about the subject with Philip Schofield and Fern Britton and been interviewed by Jeremy Paxman. I have recently had a children's picture book accepted by sanity publishing on the subject of anxiety, which will be published in the new-year. My book "Living with OCD and Fighting Back" was self-published through Amazon in 2013 and in print through lulu.com.

**Would you please share how and why you got involved in mental health?**

The Main reason I decided to get more involved with mental health was to give a little something back and help others on their road to recovery. Taking that first step, knowing that you need help and then asking for help can be the scariest thing. I wanted to help to break the stigma attached to mental health illness and to show people that there was nothing to be afraid of. I have discovered first hand that people are afraid of what they do not understand. So the more information available to the public can only result in a positive outcome for those that are suffering with a mental health illness and help them to reach out without fear of being labelled mad or mental.

So when I heard about The Good Mental Health Cooperative and their human library, I jumped at the chance to volunteer to become a human book. I know this sounds strange, but in reality it is an amazing opportunity to talk to people in your local community and further, about mental health illness. I have been doing this for about a year now and have attended many different events and have spoken to hundreds of people with and without OCD. The feedback I have had from these people has been amazing and knowing that I could be helping someone else take their first steps to recovery or even helping someone to understand mental health illness is an amazing feeling and to know that you are not alone is a great comfort.



**Please tell us a bit more OCD; in general; what are the triggers, what is it like; how does one start on recovery?**

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) can be seen as an over exaggeration of normal everyday thoughts and actions. A person with OCD can find it difficult to get worrying thoughts out of their head. These thoughts are known as intrusive thoughts and when they cannot be shifted, the sufferer may feel compelled to carry out an action to relieve the thoughts. These actions are known as rituals. The sufferer knows that these rituals are unnecessary, but they will make you feel less anxious once carried out. That is until the thought reappears, of which it will and so begins the obsessive cycle. The more the ritual is carried out the stronger the thought becomes and the higher your anxiety will go. It's like a nagging little voice in your head that keeps telling you to repeat these actions or something bad will happen to your loved ones. One of my worst obsessions was the fear of contaminating people with my germs and illness, so to combat that I would constantly wash my hands, even when they didn't need cleaning. This resulted in very sore and bleeding hands and I would not allow people to shake my hand or touch me. I feared that something bad would happen to them because they had been near me or touched me. The fear was overwhelming as was the ritual and the obsession. It becomes very hard not to touch people when you have four children to look after and take to school. This resulted in my total breakdown and realising help was needed.

OCD can be very scary and frustrating for the sufferer and their family. It is not an illness that can be seen, so to anyone else you don't look ill. I found I was able to put on a front and pretend all was well when people were around me. It was when I was alone or with my husband that the rituals would have to be carried out to relieve my anxiety of the intrusive thoughts. Even with my husband around I would try to disguise my rituals, but he soon noticed that I was not my normal self.

The biggest trigger for me is stress, if I am overloaded with work or there is an illness or death in the family, my anxiety levels will go through the roof. Even if I'm tired my OCD can be triggered. I have had to learn to listen to my body and not to over-do it. I was always one of those that if I started a job I had to see it through to the end, no matter how tired or stressed I was. I have now learnt that it is okay to have a break and then come back to whatever I was doing.

The road to recovery can be a long and frustrating one. The first thing that you need to do is to admit that you need help. Then see your doctor and explain to them how you are feeling and what you are doing. I found it easier to take my sister with me for support and she ended up telling the doctor my symptoms as I promptly burst into tears and could not speak. I remember feeling very scared on that first trip to the doctor. I believed that he would think I was mad and section me or have my children taken away from me. However he did not think I was mad or mental come to that, and he knew straight away that I needed



help. It was such a relief to know that I had an illness and that I was not mad after all. I knew I was going to be able to get better with the right kind of help and medication. I began medication and therapy sessions. In my therapy sessions I found it easier if I wrote about how I was feeling and then gave it to my therapist which then turned into a discussion. Writing became a big part of my recovery process and led me to writing my book, "Living with OCD and Fighting Back." I didn't actually start writing the book until I was in recovery. I used all my notes from the therapy sessions to help me.

**Please tell us a bit more about your book – "Living with OCD and fighting back" and your journey in writing it?**

In the book I share many bizarre incidents that happened to me while I was trying to understand what was going on. I share the emotions and frustrations that go hand in hand with this disorder. It is an account of how this illness has affected me and my family and how we have come to terms with it. My only hope is that it will help to break the stigma that is still attached to mental health illness. I feel very proud that I was able to write this book and share it with others.

**Do you have 'coping strategies' that you use on a daily basis or in your life at all?**

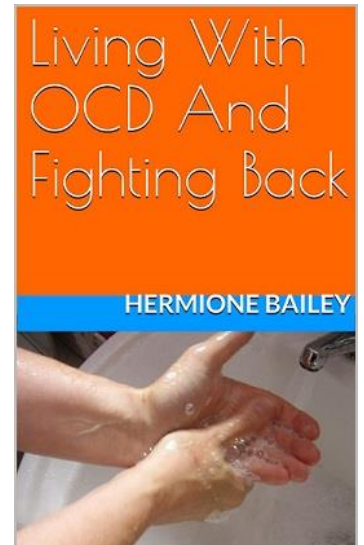
I still use coping strategies on a daily basis mainly that I do not take on too much work or stress. I used to have a very stressful job in catering working full time, but now I only work part time and with animals at a dog groomers. I find being around dogs is very relaxing for me. I now share the household duties with all my family instead of trying to do it all myself and I don't feel guilty about asking for help when I need it. If I find myself compelled to carry out a ritual I can now talk myself out of it, well nine times out of ten.

**May I ask what are your personal beliefs surrounding the explanation of OCD and mental health experiences?**

I strongly believe that OCD could be caused from traumatic incidents in childhood and early adulthood, as well as the imbalance of serotonin in the brain. I also believe that there could be a genetic link too, as my mother and my sister have OCD and one of my sons shows signs of the disorder too.

**What does the future hold for you?**

My future is looking bright and I believe I have learnt a lot from my experiences with mental health and that it has made me a stronger person. I never take things for granted anymore.





### **Favourite Quote?**

Which leads me to my favourite quote,

*“...Enjoy each day as if it was your last...”*

If you would like to find out more about my life with OCD and my book please contact me, Facebook or [hermione.bailey@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hermione.bailey@hotmail.co.uk)

My book is available through [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) as an E book for £2.28 or through [lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com) as a printed book. You can also contact me with you details if you wish to purchase a printed copy for £5 plus £1.99 postage.

Best wishes to you all.