

# That OCD Christmas Sweater

By Kyla Cathey



I follow the International OCD Foundation on Facebook, mainly to see news about new OCD research but also because they seem like good people. In addition to research, they sometimes post articles like this one about a Christmas sweater sold by Target.

*Many individuals and organizations have shared their disappointment and frustration with a [Christmas sweater available now](#) in Target stores across the US that declares whoever wears it a sufferer of “OCD: Obsessive Christmas Disorder.”*

<http://blogs.psychcentral.com/overcoming-ocd/2015/11/that-ocd-christmas-sweater/>

*But, why stop at OCD? Just think of all the funny holiday sweaters we could make out of other debilitating diseases and disorders.*

They demonstrate what they mean by coming up with other Christmas “jokes” about SARS, PTSD and bipolar disorder, which people generally don’t joke about.

(Side note: Unfortunately, bipolar disorder is probably not a great example for that list. I’ve seen and heard too many jokes about it. In fact, just a few days ago, I saw “Elf: The Musical” with my sister. While it was mostly cute, festive, and very entertaining, there was one extremely cringe-worthy joke about the elves being bipolar because they’re “crazy about Christmas.”)

Back to the point. OCD jokes are a dime a dozen. As a cat lady who loves clothing warning people that I will bust out photos of my furry roommates at the slightest provocation, I’ve seen dozens of different “Obsessive Cat Disorder” T-shirts. And who hasn’t seen the meme, “CDO: It’s like OCD but with the letters in the correct order”? (Which doesn’t even make sense.)

All of these jokes are pretty insensitive, not to mention based on a thorough misunderstanding of what OCD is and what its symptoms are. I did have a horrible spike in OCD symptoms one Christmas, for example. It didn’t involve tinsel, but sheer panic that because I could not go to Christmas Mass that year, I was going to die in an accident before I could confess and go to hell, since missing Mass on a holy day of obligation is a mortal sin. Not a fun Christmas.

So maybe what I’m about to say next will sound weird: If that shirt was sold by an OCD (the mental illness) foundation like IOCDF, I would buy it in a heartbeat and wear it everywhere. (The cat one, too!)

Why?

1. I believe every OCDer has *earned* the right to be lighthearted about this crap disease that constantly tries to screw up our lives. Especially during the holiday season.
2. Even though a lot of people probably wouldn’t get it, it might offer an opportunity to talk about OCD if we want to. If someone comments on the shirt, we could stay silent, or we

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could seize the opening to say, “It’s sort of a joke, because I have OCD.” If we felt up to answering questions, we could really educate people.

Plus, if they were sold by IOCDF, money from the shirts could support OCD research, and mostly people with OCD, their friends and family, and people with an interest in mental illnesses would know about and purchase the shirts, probably.

But that’s not the case. And I’m just not okay with a major corporation like Target profiting off of a joke about mental illness, especially when it’s unlikely the sweater was designed by someone with OCD. It seems more like someone was trying to make a cutesy joke using an illness, and that’s just not cool.

If other OCDers want to buy it or think it’s fine, then I don’t really blame them, but it makes me very uncomfortable, and I can see why people are creating petitions and writing letters to get their point across.

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Photo by [TheUglySweaterShop](#) 

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