

EXAMPLE SCHOOL LETTER FROM THERAPIST

[Date]

[NAME OF CHILD]

Date of Birth:

Clinical Summary:

I am currently providing therapeutic services to [STUDENT'S NAME] to address issues of OCD. There are several areas where [STUDENT'S NAME] OCD can impact his ability to function optimally in the school environment. In order to set [STUDENT'S NAME] up for success, it can be helpful for [STUDENT'S NAME] teachers to understand what is at the root of his behavioral struggles in their class. It might also be helpful to assess the need for a 504 plan to better support [STUDENT'S NAME] moving forward.

Below are some of his main struggles. Children with OCD are often embarrassed by their issues and do their best to hide their struggles in the school environment. You may not openly observe the struggles below, but that does not mean they are not there. These behaviors can also be misinterpreted as opposition, defiance, learning issues or ADHD. That is why [STUDENT'S NAME] parents want to bring this awareness to the school.

[STUDENT'S NAME] has issues with Moral OCD and "Just Right" OCD. This can present differently for each child. With Moral OCD, children have obsessive fears around being a "bad person." They often have compulsions to rid themselves of this intrusive thought.

With "Just Right" OCD, children will feel extreme discomfort if something is not "just right." Similar to Moral OCD this can present very differently for each child.

Below I have outlined how [STUDENT'S NAME] OCD impacts his daily functioning.

Moral OCD

Intrusive thoughts:

[STUDENT'S NAME] can get fixated on lying or cheating. This is a common Moral OCD thought. He will worry he is cheating, worry he is not a good person and will get distressed by any actions that can be misconstrued as lying or cheating. He also worries about making mistakes because he fears being a "bad" person.

Compulsions:

[STUDENT'S NAME] will admit wrong doing if confronted, even if he is not the one doing the behavior. He might even voluntarily confess behaviors like cheating due to compulsions related to intrusive thoughts. When he is being redirected, or if the class as a whole is being reprimanded, he might be consumed with intrusive thoughts that he is a bad person and might excessively apologize to the teacher.

How this impacts his learning environment:

[STUDENT'S NAME] will often confess behaviors he did not do. For example he might raise his hand and tell the teacher he is sorry for not listening, even when he is paying attention. He will often get disciplined for these "confessions," which creates even more intrusive thoughts and distress. He will excessively apologize

and will continue until the other person accepts his apology. This can cause a disruption in the class or with his peers at times. It can also be misconstrued as negative behavior.

Just Right OCD

Intrusive thoughts:

[STUDENT'S NAME] worries that he doesn't fully understand what he reads. He worries that his words don't look just right.

Compulsion:

[STUDENT'S NAME] will write and erase things over and over again until they feel just right. He will read and re-read until he feels he "fully" understands what he is reading.

How this impacts his learning environment:

[STUDENT'S NAME] will get "stuck" on having things feel just right. This impacts his ability to complete assignments on time. It impacts his writing as he spends much of his time erasing his work and rewriting it. It impacts his reading, as he is unable to complete reading assignments without frequently rereading. It impacts his test scores due to the constant re-writing and re-reading.

Suggestions

Kids with Moral OCD do not respond well to traditional discipline. In fact, it often exacerbates their OCD. Telling him to go outside, tracking his poor behavior and taking away recess, are all counterproductive to his clinical condition and can in fact worsen it.

It is recommended that [STUDENT'S NAME] behavior is not addressed in front of his peers or processed in great detail by a teacher. It could be helpful if an email is sent to his parents to communicate his behavior in the class the day it occurs, so that it can be addressed in therapy and at home.

Ongoing communication with [STUDENT'S NAME] parents via email is key to his success. [STUDENT'S NAME] does not want to be "bad" and in fact the idea of being a "bad kid" triggers his Moral OCD. He is highly motivated to work on these issues in therapy, so feedback will be important.

It can be beneficial to develop a 504 plan to address [STUDENT'S NAME] struggles with completing assignments on time due to the current acuity of his OCD. As we work on this OCD theme in therapy, it might benefit [STUDENT'S NAME] to have accommodations around reading and writing so it does not impact his academic success.

[STUDENT'S NAME] was recently put on Zoloft, an SSRI to address his OCD. We are also actively addressing these issues in therapy. Hopefully [STUDENT'S NAME] will begin to reduce these behaviors, but it is best to be proactive and have a plan to support him and his educational progress.

Sincerely,
[Therapist's name]
Child Therapist