

UNSTUCK: an OCD kids movie

By Kelly Anderson and Chris Baier

For more info: ocdmovie.com

Transcript:

KELLY: Ok so Vanessa, so just introducing yourself to me, and a few details about your life.

VANESSA: Ok. I'm Vanessa Baier. I live in Brooklyn, NY and I'm 10 years old. And, I have OCD.

JAKE: OCD is Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and it's obsessions and compulsions.

HOLDEN: The obsession is like something that you're scared of, and then a compulsion is something that you have to do because of that fear.

ARIEL: I didn't know what was happening, why I was having these thoughts. As soon as I would get home I would just go straight into my room and lock the door, and I would be there for hours doing rituals or crying, because I couldn't control the thoughts.

HOLDEN: Sometimes when I tell people I have OCD, they're like "Oh, I have it too! In my house, I just like to have everything clean."

JAKE: And like, I just look at them like, "You don't understand."

SHARIF: It kind of gets annoying because they don't really understand how frustrating it can be, and how harmful it can actually be to just, in life, try and do things.

SARAH: I just couldn't do anything without OCD popping up. I couldn't have a normal life and I would just cry, which is why I'm glad we're doing this documentary, UNSTUCK, about OCD and a kid's view, so other kids can understand what OCD really is.

VANESSA: When OCD first started bothering me, I got really scared of catching sicknesses and getting poisoned. I was just really afraid that any chemical entering anyone's body was going to get them really sick. I'd avoid things that I thought were poison, which was like gum wrappers, litter, plants that were old and brown.

There were two bottles, and they were both on trees, and one had orange in it and one had red in it, and I got afraid that it was poison in the bottle. And I would just avoid the trees everywhere I went. I remember one day my parents were trying to make me go toward one of the trees. My mom sat down on the street with me, and I was crying hysterically and yelling at her and she got so mad at me. It was bad.

HOLDEN: I was scared I was going to turn into a bodybuilder or something. Everything with my OCD interlocks to bodybuilding and strong things like the hulk or something. So the color green

I couldn't wear because the Hulk. I just couldn't go any places with like a GNC or Supercuts or anything that has strength oriented to it. Watching cartoons there might be some buff person that shows up, then if I looked at it and blinked, I'd have to blink again, if I breathed in the slightest bit, I'd have to breathe completely out, to where I almost pass out, and then I'd turn the TV off. But then the TV is contaminated, to where I can't be around it, if I look at it, any kind of stuff like that was really hard for me, so I totally avoided that thing. So there was a point where something would pop up on my iPad, then my computer, then our TV, and then I couldn't use any electronics. So I literally just sat around all day.

KELLY: For how long would it be contaminated?

HOLDEN: Forever.

ARIEL: I started having intrusive thoughts when I was in eighth grade. Some of the thoughts I had were people getting harmed, hurt, getting sick and dying. I would constantly have to do rituals such as checking the stove, checking to make sure the door was locked, I used to have to read the tags on my clothes a certain amount of times before I could put it on. I just had a bad feeling that something would happen, if I heard bad news the same day it would be my fault because I didn't read the tag on my clothes.

My aunt was sick in the hospital, and when my mom told me about it I automatically had a thought that she was going to die. She got sicker and sicker and I thought it was my fault, so I would have to do the ritual of praying over and over again a certain amount of times to get rid of that thought. But the thought would always come back.

JAKE: I just kept thinking "I'm crazy, no one understands, no one knows what I'm going through." I just didn't really talk to anyone, I didn't function at all. I had to do a certain ritual when I looked at a clock, I had to say the time inside my head and the date, and I just kept repeating that for every single minute that passed of the day. I would constantly be looking at the clock and then doing it, and it would just be so stressful. At school I had to touch certain walls when I walked through the hallways, and walk only on certain tiles, and then I had to do something with my desk every time I got into a class, and people noticed and then they pointed it out.

You really want to stop it because you don't want to hurt the people around you. Because OCD makes it feel so real that you don't want to stop because you're scared that if you stop it that what it's protecting will happen. I felt like if I didn't do the ritual that it would really happen.

SHARIF: My OCD was about things not being perfect and then me making a big deal about it. Like, in school, if I wrote an essay or something, I'd notice all these times where the letters go over and lines or under the lines, or the letters touch other letters. Sometimes I'd feel like I needed to erase it and rewrite the whole thing, and then I'd stay after class trying to erase and write, erase and write. I'd keep constantly blinking, or hit my face, crazy things which to

someone else would see, like, mental or something. Just a way to cope with something not being perfect.

SARAH: So when something was wrong, or something had to be “just right,” I would just know the feeling of OCD saying, “Ok, you have to do it this certain way.” And it was just like my own conscience speaking to me, even though it was OCD. Whenever I would have a conversation with my parents, they would just have to repeat their words, so I could hear it just right. They had to say the words in a certain tone or a certain amount of times. Like, if they were to say “Good morning.” I’d say, “No, say it again.” And then they would say, “Good morning. Good morning.” I would just beg them, “Please, just say it one more time, I want to get over with this.” And then they would just give up and not do it at all. And then that made my OCD really really mad.

I wasn’t able to go to school a lot because I would stay home trying to get my rituals done. And at that time my parents didn’t know it was OCD, so they thought it was just me being disobedient, so it was hard.

VANESSA: What do you think the hardest thing was?

CHARLOTTE: Well, at first the hardest thing was you didn’t tell me about it. I didn’t even know something existed called OCD. It was also very hard when you were kind of a little afraid of me. I used to get really bad stomachaches and Vanessa used to be afraid of me throwing up. When you find out that your sibling, brother or sister, is afraid of you, it’s kind of, like, what did I do to make her feel like this? And you’re just all confused with why she is, and what will happen because of this?

JAKE: It was very hard for my family because they were all tired. They tried covering up stuff so I wouldn’t have to do rituals, and they would do my chores for me, and they’d like have my breakfast laid out for me. When they saw me doing rituals they would really try and help, and I felt really bad for them because they were stuck in the rituals with me because they were alongside me trying to stop me from doing it.

TATUM: It definitely did impact our family a lot, because it becomes your life, it becomes the focus of, “Well, we can’t do this because Holden can’t do that,” or “We can’t go somewhere because Holden might see something.”

HOLDEN: It created so much stress because of me controlling their lives to that point, there’s a lot of stress.

TATUM: He would just yell at me and say really mean, harsh things. He would actually get physical with me and hit me. There were a lot of times where we were worried people were going to come and tell us he had to go somewhere, or take him away, because he was screaming so loud it sounds horrible, like something bad is happening, but we’re not doing anything.

HOLDEN: I think the worst was, I was in Hawaii with my dad and I had such a hard time because I saw something in the bedroom that we were sleeping in, so we couldn't sleep in there. At one point he started driving me to the hospital and he was on the phone with my mom, and she is crying, and so am I. That was probably one of the worst.

ARIEL: One day when I came home from my school my mom told me that I had a doctor's appointment. I kind of had a feeling we were going to see a psychologist, because it was like six o'clock, and I knew the doctor's office wasn't open around that time. So I was nervous the whole car ride there, and then I remember when we got into the doctor's office I was just really upset from my mom taking me there, I didn't want to talk to her about anything, I didn't want her to think I was crazy.

SHARIF: I thought it was like a waste of time. I was like, "How can she know anything better than I do when I'm the one that's been coping with this. And I thought, "I don't know how to explain all these things, how can she just automatically know?"

JAKE: When I first started going to different therapists, they didn't really know what was going on at all. They thought they knew how to do the therapy for OCD but then they really didn't know because a lot of them were more used to family issues and normal anxiety, but they don't really understand what OCD really is. The turning point was March 2015, I found this group in Manhattan. When I first heard about it I was really scared, I didn't want to go because I thought everyone would have a different kind than me and I'd still be like an outcast, but after the first group I really liked it and I wanted to keep going.

ARIEL: She explained to me what it was, how the thoughts that I was having were called obsessions, and the things that I have to do to make myself feel better were the compulsions or rituals. And they explained to me how OCD is a cycle and you have to learn to break that cycle.

JAKE: We did these things called "hierarchies," from 1 to 10, 1 being the easiest for you to do and 10 being the absolute hardest. You would list all the things that were giving you trouble, in sections, we'd have easier ones for a certain thing, and then it would get up to the tens. We would write them all down and do different exposures for it.

VANESSA: Exposures are like challenges that you work up to doing, and you do to help yourself.

HOLDEN: Like since I was scared of bodybuilders, when I saw one on the computer or something my anxiety would go up, but if I stayed and looked at it, then it would slowly come down. And the more I watched it, it would go to where it was not very noticeable anymore.

ARIEL: The first exposure that I had was to put on my clothes without reading the tags on them. So at first they cut off the tags, and it took me a long time to do it because there wasn't a tag on my clothes. And then eventually they started making me put on clothes that had tags without reading the tag over again.

This is the binder that I kept at the clinic. They had me write curse words in the Bible, and rip pages out of the Bible.

SARAH: My evening routine had to be five minutes or less. They only could say goodnight to me one time.

HOLDEN: Watch video clips of superhero, watch movie of superhero, dress like a superhero, wear a Hulk mask.

SHARIF: When I'm writing, maybe purposely put an "e" under the line, or if I have to switch the light switch on five times, then purposely doing it only four times.

VANESSA: My therapist came to my house. She took a leaf and she had me touch it, she took a berry and she had me touch it, she took some dirt and she had me touch it, and I worked up to touching the tree, putting my cheek on the tree, and then hugging the tree.

ARIEL: I stayed at the clinic 6 hours a day, and I started doing really well, so they moved me to a 3-hour program. I was very happy about that, because I started getting better, and I was able to do my exposures faster.

HOLDEN: These are some of the picture I would have to look at. They put my head on a bunch of different body builder things, this one is my favorite because it's just funny.

I completed 71 of my things out of 72, and that last one was hugging a bodybuilder. We went to the bodybuilder gym, found the biggest guy there, and explained the OCD thing to him. And then asked him for a hug, so then he hugged me, and he picked me up, and it was cool.

VANESSA: My therapist showed me an island, and my island was like invisible, and OCD's island was like the world. It was kind of like, every time you fought against your fears, your island gets bigger and OCD's island gets smaller.

SARAH: I can take a shower, I can wash my hands, I can read a book, and now I can actually have a normal conversation without all the troubles of having to repeat all the time.

JAKE: I used to have to cover up all three of these clocks, and I couldn't look at my phone clock or this clock or any clock, but now I can stand here with four clocks and fine.

VANESSA: I don't think it ever goes away, it's always in you. It can just happen out of nowhere, where you'll just get a blast and you just kind of have to work through it.

JAKE: Since I got the majority of my OCD away, I'd catch myself doing the ritual, and I'd be like, "You don't want to do that again, that wasn't fun." And I'd go and figure out an exposure to do for myself inside my head, and I would just work on it and it would be gone.

SHARIF: OCD is like, instead of it being a devil on my shoulder, it's kind of like a flea buzzing around me. It's not a constant battle in my mind with me trying to deal with it. It's like, "This is bad, I shouldn't do this."

ARIEL: I learned that everybody has thoughts, but those thoughts don't really define who you are. I just sit with the thought knowing that it doesn't necessarily mean it's going to come true, or I'm not a bad person for thinking that thought.

SARAH: Sometimes I just think, "Why did this hard OCD trial have to come to me? Why couldn't it have gone to someone else?" I just like this quote because, well, I'm just strong enough to deal with it!

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