

# Opinion

— EDITORIAL —

## What OCD really looks like

We watched the latest Star Wars episode, “The Force Awakens” over the weekend. In it, the son of Han Solo and Leia Organa is a character named Kylo Ren. Ren has lived surrounded by the dark side under the influence of Supreme Leader Snoke. Solo, filled with love for Ren, only wants the relationship with him, and for his son to find happiness. Ren, immersed in the darkness for so long, is at last being given glimpses of the true “light,” which begins to turn his view of life upside down. He’s at a turning point—rise or sink back.

In a pivotal scene, Solo approaches Ren and explains that Snoke only wants him for what he can do for him, for what he can provide—a fact clear to all but Ren.

When Solo expresses his love, Ren cries, “I’m being torn apart inside. All I want is for the pain to stop.”

Solo tells him he would do anything to make that happen for him.

For a brief moment, there’s hope. The audience knows if Ren will only make the right choice and reach out to Solo, everything will turn out okay in the end.

Then Snoke sends one final wave of manipulation to Ren, who, without warning, plunges his light saber through his father’s heart. He is no longer torn between two factions. Ren’s decision is tragic—a fact visible to all but Ren himself—but at least for now, his pain has stopped.

This scene may be Hollywood dramatic, but it looks so much like how major life decisions look and often turn out for those suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

When most people think of OCD, they think of someone who has to line up the chairs just so, make sure nothing sticks up out of a drawer, position items in an exact location, count and recount ... And in many, those rituals are accurate.

Behind the scenes, deeper down, OCD doesn’t always only look like this, though. What OCD really is at its most basic level, is a problem with the decision-making part of the brain. In our research, one psychologist said, “OCD pits the brain against the heart.”

Most often the person with OCD knows deep down who he should be with, where he should be and what he should be doing. The problem is the short-circuit in his own brain tells him what he knows to be true is actually wrong. The guilt, anxiety and stress of a situation that might register a 2 or 3 on a scale for the average person, then registers a 9 or 10 for the person with OCD. Life changes that people handle every day are overwhelming to the person with OCD.

Those with OCD are marked by extreme difficulty deciding in favor of change, even when that change would be positive for them, even when the situation they’re currently in is unhealthy. The notion of change creates an anxiety that those without OCD probably can’t imagine.

OCD is characterized, according to the Mayo Clinic, with unreasonable thoughts

and fears.

Anxiety based on those unreasonable thoughts can surface as an instant “attack” which is short-lived—hours maybe—but, as it was once explained to us, leaves its victim wondering if they actually might die from it. The anxiety can also build over the course of days until it reaches a slow peak, which then ebbs over days as well. This is often worse, because when those with unmanaged OCD are in the middle of the latter type of anxiety buildup, they sometimes can’t recognize it as OCD-driven anxiety at all. They believe the stress and guilt will kill them physically and emotionally, and can turn to tragic decisions Kylo Ren-style just to make the pain stop.

There are several subsets of OCD, but two very common types are “Harm OCD” and “Scrupulosity OCD” according to experts at the OCD Center of Los Angeles.

Those with Harm OCD are convinced that their actions or decisions will cause a devastating amount of pain and suffering to certain others. Examples can range from beliefs like, “If I don’t wear this shirt, my dog will die” to other more subtle situations such as if a family member feels somewhat distressed over an OCD sufferer’s choices (say marriage, divorce, job change, etc.) the sufferer may reverse that decision entirely to his or her own detriment, due to overwhelming stress about that family member’s shock, rather than understand that in a day or a week, all would have been well with the family member anyway.

Guilt is another emotion that goes completely haywire with OCD. According to the Center, “Scrupulosity is a form of OCD in which the sufferer’s primary anxiety is the fear of being guilty of religious, moral, or ethical failure ... The individual experiencing Scrupulosity feels an overwhelming urge to take whatever compulsive action offers the promise of relief.”

Further, sufferers will “focus enormous amounts of time and energy on perfectly following a few specific rules or doctrines, while turning a blind eye to others that may actually be more important.”

And once an OCD scrupulosity sufferer has committed a sin, as all humans do—look out.

Toss a real-life person with Snoke tendencies into the mix, and who knows how to push all the right emotional guilt buttons, and bam—the perfect OCD storm. (Think Snoke to OCD is as dealer is to drug addiction, and you get the picture.)

We’re writing this editorial because OCD doesn’t have to be like this. While there is no “cure” for OCD, subclinical, mild and moderate OCD are treated in some amazingly successful ways *without* psychotropic medication, say most of the mental health professionals we found. With therapists who understand this mental illness, a month of treatment (Mindfulness, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Behavioral Therapy) can start to give hope and turn a life around. Three months can look miraculous. It’s crucial, if one is seeking a therapist, to find one who specializes in OCD and thoroughly “gets” it.

It takes a huge amount of bravery to face the demons in one’s own mind and take that first step.

Those who are suffering also need to know there are some “Han Solos” out there in the world, and that while a choice to pursue healthiness and happiness rather than guilt and sickness is a tough one, it’s worth the leap.

—The Baker County Press Editorial Board

— GUEST OPINION —

## Finding those energy gluttons

By Sandra Ghormley and Susie Snyder of OTEC  
Special to The Baker County Press

Are you concerned that your electric bill seems unusually high? Chances are you follow this thought by contemplating the weather over the past few days, but conclude it seems to be warmer, and absolutely nothing comes to mind that you or your family has done differently to cause a jump in the bill. So, what changed? During or directly following the coldest periods or when the weather changes from warm to cool each year, Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) receives numerous calls from members concerned that their usage has increased. Fortunately, OTEC has several resources to help members investigate the energy gluttons and resolve high bill concerns.

When you call the office, OTEC’s Member Representatives will suggest you consider several factors. The first is to look carefully at your OTEC bill to determine the dates of the billing period, which is typically 30 days following the time of usage. Was the weather colder when the actual billing period occurred? Second, look at the number of days in the billing period. Was it longer than 30 days so the bill covered a longer period? Answers to these questions could explain increases. If not, OTEC can offer you a customized graph showing hourly or daily usage for the billing period in question, or over a series of months. Peak electric usage for the billing period can also be displayed as well as high and low temperatures to give you a good feel for what was happening inside and outside the home. The great news is you can access these graphs yourself at any time or day by going online to your account at [www.otecc.com](http://www.otecc.com).

Other questions OTEC staff may ask will be directed toward the number and types of electric equipment and appliances used during the billing period. Questions like, what is the primary heating in the home? Was it used more than usual during the billing period? What type of water heating is being used? Did you have extra guests in the home or was there an unusual amount of washing, dishwashing, showering, etc. taking place during the time in question? Was the electric range or dryer used more frequently than usual? Is your electric equipment working properly? Did you add any electric equipment during this period? A second freezer, a hot tub, an electric BBQ, etc.? Did you plug in your vehicle(s) at night because it was so cold? If so, was it on a timer to keep usage down? Do you have heated water troughs or bowls for your animals, or heaters in the barn to keep them from freezing? Is there any heat tape on any of the plumbing? Hence, often the answer to the high usage is recalling how the electric equipment was being used during the billing period.

Phantom power is another factor to consider. No, chances are your home is not haunted, but keep in mind that anything plugged in to a wall socket or hard-wired is going to use a small amount of electricity regardless that it is not actively being used. A heater may continue to draw electricity even when functioning at the lowest setting if not shut off entirely. Many wall

heaters do not have on/off switches, but instead only a low setting; hence, the heat comes on when it gets cold. It is important to consider all the consequences before shutting down a heating system as house pipes could freeze causing an even greater problem than the electric bill. Shutting off power at the meter or at your breaker panel is a sure way to eliminate

power usage, however, should be done with caution. Phantom power, as the name suggests, can be elusive, but does add to your electric bill. Nevertheless, if answering these questions still does not spark answers, OTEC has one more way to help you; contact our Energy Services team.

OTEC’s Energy Program Representatives (EPR) are certified, trained and experienced in home energy audits. They will review all the answers you provided the office and may ask many more questions before making an appointment to visit with you in the home. Sometimes finding an answer requires delving deep into usage behaviors inside the home, looking for the less obvious energy hogs. Each household’s power consumption behaviors are unique regardless the square footage of a home. For example, heating and cooling systems may be identical to a neighbors’, but one may set the thermostat lower than another or may keep doors and windows open longer all of which affects usage. One household may use the shower more often or longer or set the water heater controls to a higher temperature.

An OTEC EPR will spend time going around inside and outside your home asking a lot of questions to help you find new ways to conserve and at the same time working with you to locate possible reasons for the high usage. In our experience, high bill investigations rarely result in the same conclusions because the differences in usage, both highs and lows, relate entirely to individual lifestyles and behaviors in the home, and we know that no two are ever alike.

Remember this, regardless the type of heating system, lighting or electric appliances you choose, wattage and duration of usage are the two critical factors that affect your electric bill. And, if that unusually high electric bill happens, OTEC is a phone call away to help you catch and stop the energy gluttons in your home. After all, we want to put our energy to work for you, but only in the smartest way.



Submitted Photos

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