



# Mattress Mack's daughter's 15-year battle with OCD

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Houston, TX-- Over the years, we've seen Mattress Mack's daughter Elizabeth McIngvale grow up before our eyes in Gallery Furniture commercials. For the last 15 of those years, though, she's been fighting a devastating illness-- obsessive compulsive disorder. She calls it a "living nightmare" that began for her in the 7th grade.

"Kinda overnight, I started having these strange intrusive thoughts," says McIngvale, now 27. "I started worrying about 'Was I cheating on an exam because during the study group the day before people had talked about the answers and questions that showed up on the test?' And if I wrote down the answer, was I cheating or copying their answer?"

Intrusive thoughts about the safety of those she loved began to overtake her life, too, along with rituals to deal with things like the extreme fear of getting sick and dying from her contaminated

surroundings. She began to wash her hands 600 to 800 times a day. At school, she would hoard the paper towels she used in her backpack. She would throw away her schoolbooks because they were too unclean to touch.

Elizabeth ended up dropping out of school that year and even went to live with her friend because she thought her own home was contaminated. That's when her parents found the place that would help her-- the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. The clinic has since relocated to Houston.

The doctors at Menninger taught her all about her OCD and how she could manage it. She has since has gone on to become a national spokesperson for the illness. 10 years ago, she started the Peace of Mind Foundation to help others find help for their mental illnesses.

Although she points out she is not cured ("You always live with a mental illness, but it's about learning to manage it"), she has been able to accomplish a lot despite her illness. She got married two years ago, earned her Ph.D. in social work from the University of Houston, started postdoctoral research at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and just recently accepted a teaching job at Baylor.

"Growing up as Mack's daughter, my parents easily could have said, 'You know, let's stay quiet about her illness. Let's get her the help she needs, and let's not talk about it.' And I can't explain the gratitude I have for them not doing that," she says. "When you talk

about it, and you help somebody else, it's the greatest gift of healing."

To learn more about OCD, check out [Peaceofmind.com](https://www.peaceofmind.com) or their self-help website [OCDChallenge.com](https://www.ocdchallenge.com). And for more on Elizabeth McIngvale's ongoing fight, pick up a copy of this month's [Houstonia](#).