Is it OCD, *or is it me?*

Repetition can look alike from outside and feel very different inside. OCD is more common in autistic and ADHD people, but autistic interests and routines are *not* OCD.

FEELS LIKE PART OF ME — FEELS UNWANTED OR STUCK

	Special interests	Routines & stims	OCD obsessions & compulsions	Rumination
HOW IT FEELS	Part of me. I'm drawn in.	Part of me. Familiar and steadying.	An intruder. Thoughts that clash with who I am.	Stuck on replay. The same worry, over and over.
EMOTION AROUND IT	Joy, curiosity, flow.	Calm, comfort, safety.	Fear, doubt, disgust, or "not right."	Heavy: worry, guilt, sadness.
IF I HAVE TO STOP	Disappointed, but okay.	Unsettled, more so with sudden change.	Dread that something bad will happen.	Hard to switch off. My mind drifts back.
WHAT IT'S FOR	Joy, learning, rest, connection.	Regulating my body, senses and energy.	Making fear or doubt go away, for now.	Trying to solve it, but it rarely lands.
WHAT HELPS	Time for it, and people who get it.	Protecting them; notice before changes.	Naming the loop. ERP therapy, ND-affirming.	Grounding, movement, talking it through.

Research with autistic adults found autistic repetition tends to feel like "part of me," while OCD feels like "an intruder" driven by fear (Long, Cooper & Russell, 2024). Everyone's mix is different.

Quick check

Mark where it sits for you, today.

Does it feel like me, or like an intruder?

Part of me — An intruder

Is it driven by joy and regulation, or by fear?

Joy, regulation — Fear, doubt

Does my life feel bigger or smaller with it?

Bigger — Smaller

Any mix is possible: someone can have special interests, stims *and* OCD. This is for education, not diagnosis: a clinician who knows neurodivergence can help untangle which is which.