

College basketball star Julian Swartz talks to *Current Science* about the emotional problem that sidelined him for a year.

Time Out!

By Darren Sechrist

Hours after his teammates had left for home, 18-year-old Julian Swartz would stand alone in his high school gym, draining three-pointer after three-pointer. He would make seven in a row, miss one, make another eight, miss one. Not until sinking ten treys in a row would he finally go home.

That kind of persistence made Swartz the star of his high school basketball team in Waukesha, Wis. From there, it

led him to the University of Wisconsin basketball team, which reached the final four of the NCAA tournament in 2000. It also led him to write these words in his journal:

"I cannot, nor anyone, take away the sadness, pain, and indescribable feelings I battle every second of every minute of every hour of every day."

Strange Thoughts

Swartz suffers from a condition called *obsessive-compulsive disorder* (OCD). People who have OCD are plagued by repeated disturbing thoughts. Such nagging, unwanted thoughts are called *obsessions*. In an effort to deal with those thoughts, many people with OCD perform certain tasks again and again. Such behaviors are called *compulsions*.

Swartz, now 21, experienced his first symptoms of OCD in the first grade. He would have repeated thoughts that something awful was going to happen to him or someone close to him. By eighth grade, Swartz's obsessions had led to compulsions. "As I grew up, I guess so did the OCD," Swartz told *Current Science*. Obsessed with germs, Swartz washed his hands until they were raw. Obsessed that he had left the stove on, Swartz got up many times each night to check it.

