

# HOARDING DISORDER



**HOW TO HELP SOMEONE  
NOT GET EVICTED**

## HOARDING DISORDER 101

**Nothing** about hoarding disorder is intuitive.

Hoarding is a manifestation of something else... typically trauma.

**There is a strong correlation between hoarding and:**

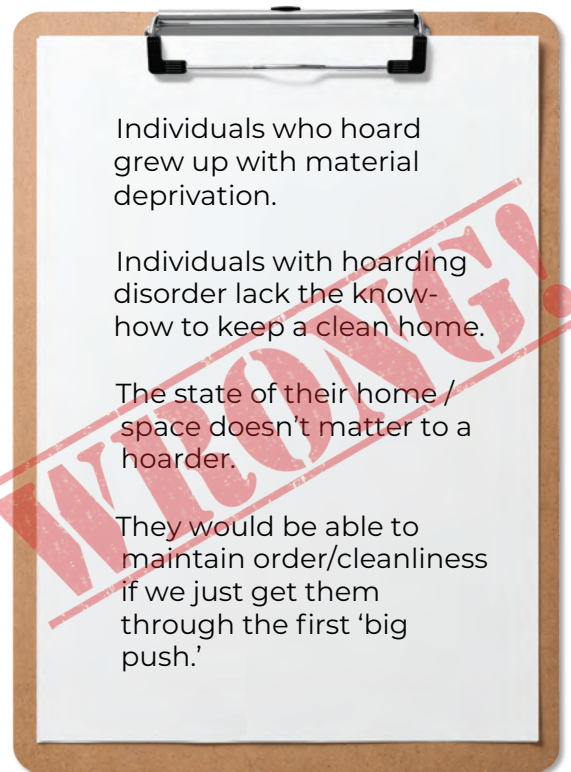
- Trauma (especially childhood).
- Brain lesions from Traumatic Brain Injury
- Other diagnosis.

### Particularly:

- Physical violence
- Sexual assault
- Robbery/burglary
- Excessive physical discipline

### Particularly:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Personality disorders
- Dementia

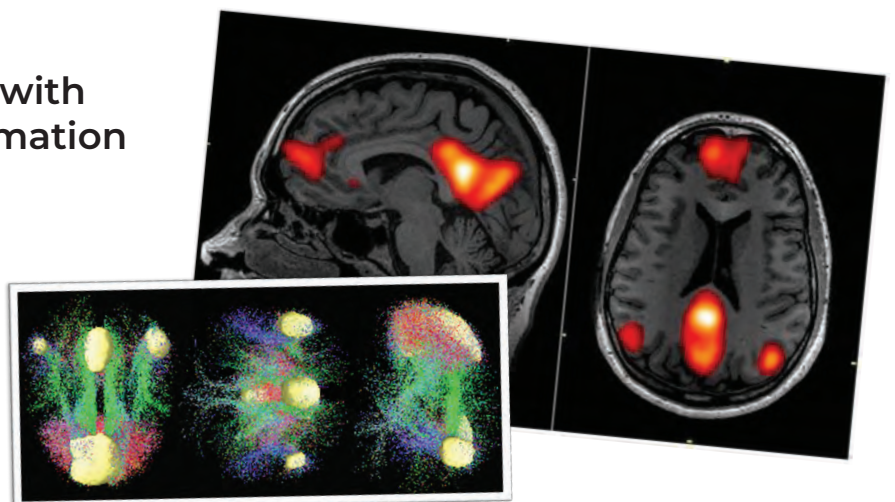


**Digging deeper, the brains of individuals with Hoarding Disorder are different:**

- Lower connectivity in brain regions associated with cognitive control.
- Greater connectivity in the "default mode network" (The default mode network is the part of the brain that focuses inward--introspection--vs. outside world).

**Digging even deeper, people with Hoarding Disorder have information processing deficits:**

- Information processing
- Sustained attention
- Working memory
- Organization
- Problem solving
- Visuospatial ability



# Hoarding Disorder is NOT about the stuff.

It IS a coping mechanism for trauma, loss of control, insecurity, anxiety, etc.

Yes, hoarding can cause more of that in the long-term. In the short-term, though...

We all hang onto possessions for three reasons:

Utility , Memory , Identity

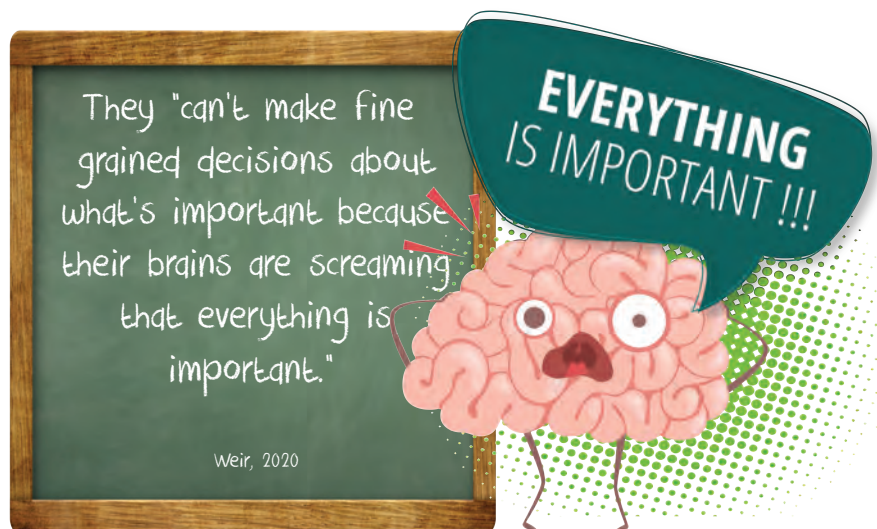


## For Individuals with Hoarding Disorder:

- Utility gets amplified
- Memories get amplified
- Identity gets amplified

## Other stuff you should know about hoarding:

- They need professional counseling (which is beyond the scope of this training).
- “Hoarding Disorder” is its own diagnosis in DSM-5.
- Do not accommodate someone who hoards (like getting them a storage unit). It will only get worse.
- Under disability law, you can request more time to clean because of diagnosed hoarding disorder, unless there are life-threatening issues.



**BOTTOM LINE: HOARDING IS NOT ABOUT THE STUFF. IT IS A COPING MECHANISM (OFTEN FOR TRAUMA)**








\*\*Good resource: [www.Philadelphiahoarding.org](http://www.Philadelphiahoarding.org)

# STAGE 1 : PREPARATION

## HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH THE RESIDENT

Discuss the problem in an open, accepting way. Focus on harm reduction (e.g. preventing eviction). Keep it simple and break it down into steps, both in writing and verbal (because of disorganized thinking).

### TOPICS:

-  What is the goal?
-  What is the plan for where stuff will go? (discard, donate, recycle, etc.)
-  Who decides where things go?
-  Strategies for deciding (e.g. 10 seconds to decide, only touch items once)
-  Who is coming to help?
-  What is the schedule of the day?
-  How will we handle stress?



## GATHER SUPPLIES MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR:





- Dumpster
- Vehicle (e.g. Uhaul)
- Bags / Boxes
- Gloves
- Sharpies
- Tape
- Post-it Notes or Stickers
- Flashlight



## CHOOSE THE TEAM

Choose people who are supportive, even-tempered and can follow instructions.

### ROLES:






-  Team Lead
-  Haulers
-  Stress Management
-  Mental Health Professional (If Possible)



## PLAN FOR CRISIS

Cleaning day will be stressful, for both the resident and helpers. Challenges will arise. Agreeing on (and writing down!) plans for how you'll handle them can help.

### WHAT WILL YOU DO IF:

-  The resident gets overwhelmed?
-  The resident gets angry?
-  The resident pulls stuff out of the dumpster/truck?
-  A team member makes the situation worse?
-  You run out of time?



# STAGE 2 : CLEANING DAY



**HOARDING IS A COPING STRATEGY FOR UNDERLYING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES (OFTEN TRAUMA). TODAY WILL BE VERY TRAUMATIZING FOR THE RESIDENT. LET'S DO OUR BEST TO MINIMIZE THEIR ANXIETY.**

## OUR GOALS TODAY (Circle those that apply, ignore the rest!)

### TIER 1:

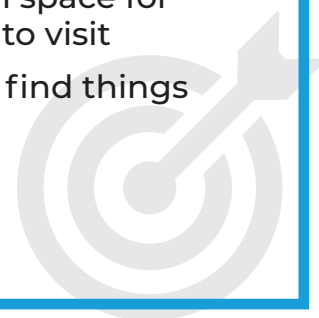
- Minimum to meet code or landlord's requirements
- Fire hazards (e.g. items on stove, pathways/doors not blocked)
- Health issues (animal feces, bugs, etc.)

### TIER 2:

- Able to use heating/cooling effectively
- Tripping hazards
- Access to bathroom
- Able to sleep in bed
- Expired food

### TIER 3:

- Able to cook in kitchen
- Enough space for people to visit
- Able to find things



## TODAY I WON'T

- Blame, shame or show disgust (words, body language, tone of voice)
- Devalue their possessions (e.g. "this is trash")
- Go beyond the goals circled above
- Try to fix the hoarding disorder

## TODAY I WILL

- Mirror the resident's language (e.g. "your collections")
- Speak positively about the home where I can (e.g. "That's a nice painting.")

### MY ROLE TODAY IS:

\_\_\_\_\_

## CRISIS PLAN

- If the resident gets overwhelmed \_\_\_\_\_
- If the resident gets angry \_\_\_\_\_
- If the resident pulls stuff out of the dumpster \_\_\_\_\_
- If someone upsets the resident \_\_\_\_\_
- If we run out of time \_\_\_\_\_



# STAGE 3 : FOLLOW-UP

## POST-CLEANING PROCESSING

- 🤝 Help the resident process the additional trauma of cleaning day.
- 🤝 Have patience with their processing.
- 🤝 Do not try to rationalize strong feelings away.

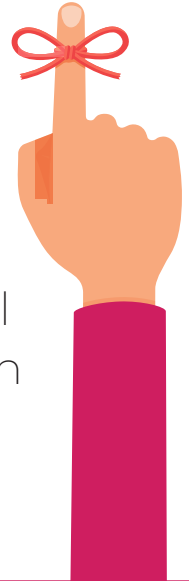


## INTENSIVE THERAPY

The resident needs professional help to work on the underlying issues.

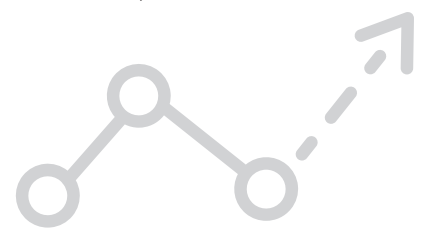
**Cleaning their home did not solve the problem.**

Without intensive therapy, the stuff will return (often worse than before!).



## MAINTENANCE AND PROGRESS

- ☑️ Negotiate small steps.
  - Keep one area clear of clutter.
  - Throw out one item per day.
  - Set a timer and try to clean out one area.
  - Make a list of types of items and plans for discarding.
- ☑️ Discuss alternatives to throwing stuff away to minimize stress (sell, give away, donate, recycle).
- ☑️ Celebrate small steps (track progress or take before/after pictures).



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