

## If THINGS have taken over your life, do you ever think...

No one could ever understand how I feel.

Nobody else could have as much stuff; my house is too far gone.

I'm going to "get to it" someday and I can fix this mess myself; I don't want help.

Things are all my responsibility, and it's my job to see to it that nothing gets wasted.

I have to save things "just in case;" I worry about not having enough.

I worry that if I throw away a document or article, I won't remember the information it contained.

I can't get rid of something that may be needed by SOMEone, SOMEday; I have to find the perfect recipient for each discarded item.

Throwing away an object that someone has given me is like throwing away the person.

Throwing away an object is like throwing away a piece of myself.

If you sacrifice  
YOUR living space  
for these reasons,  
you are not alone!

## Raising awareness and creating understanding

There is hope. With awareness and understanding, this condition can be managed! Please feel free to reproduce this brochure and distribute to resources in your community.

Additional brochures are available upon request.

Please contact us at:

[info@childrenofhoarders.com](mailto:info@childrenofhoarders.com)

**Thank you for helping  
to raise awareness!**



**Children Of Hoarders**

*Opening hearts, minds, and  
homes with understanding*

[www.childrenofhoarders.com](http://www.childrenofhoarders.com)

# CAN'T LET ANYONE IN YOUR HOUSE?

**MAYBE YOU KNOW SOMEONE  
WHO WON'T LET YOU IN, AND YOU  
SUSPECT SOMETHING IS WRONG?**



A Hoarder's Dining Room. © 2006 HoardersOn

It's not that they are lazy or enjoy living in a cluttered home. They have a serious condition called:

## HOARDING

More than 1.4 million homes in the United States alone are like this.

**Freedom from things is possible.**

# OC-HOARDING IS NOT ABOUT BEING LAZY!

## What is Hoarding?

It is estimated that 1.4 million homes in the U.S. are hoard homes. Hoarding does not result from laziness or harmless “packrat” habits. It is a condition that has been addressed in research as a type of obsessive compulsive disorder (OC-Hoarding).

Hoarding is defined by specific behaviors: acquiring a large assortment of items and failing to discard what seems to be useless or of little value. Living spaces become so cluttered that they can't be used for their intended purposes.<sup>1</sup>

A few of the reasons people hoard include extreme emotional attachments to objects, intense decision-making difficulties, and a profound fear of making mistakes.

These homes fall into a serious state of disrepair because maintenance or repair people cannot enter the home. In the case of animal hoarding, animal waste may be present throughout the home.

However, hoarding has only recently become a subject of research. A great deal of work remains to be done to further describe and pinpoint the medical cause(s) of this condition.

<sup>1</sup> Frost & Hartl's (1996) definition of clinical hoarding.

*The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.*

*-William Faulkner*

## Other health issues can accompany hoarding

People who hoard can face health risks from trips and falls, mold/dust allergen exposure, and fire hazards in their dangerously cluttered homes.

People who hoard might also suffer from depression and/or perfectionism. Research shows that many hoarders suffer a combination of disorders. Hoarding may be a symptom of more than one illness.

Hoarding is more common among the elderly, but they are not the only age-group to suffer from it.

## Freedom is possible

Hoarders are often highly functional individuals outside of their homes and express the wish to make changes alone, without help. Working alone, however, usually results in frustration and “churning,” which is the relocation of items without an actual reduction in quantity.

But, freedom from **things** is possible with the right help and support from someone who understands. With cognitive behavioral therapy, hoarders have been able to stop saving memories and start making them!

Recent studies have revealed specific brain-activity patterns that are different in hoarders when compared to non-hoarders. Hopefully, these biological differences will be clues to treatment.

## If you or someone you know suffers from hoarding...

The first step is the hardest. But, help is available. Please visit the websites below as a first step in the journey to an open home:

### RESOURCES

- Obsessive Compulsive Foundation Hoarding Website  
[www.ocfoundation.org/1005/index.html](http://www.ocfoundation.org/1005/index.html)

### BOOKS

- Overcoming Compulsive Hoarding  
[www.newharbinger.com](http://www.newharbinger.com)

### ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS

- Clutterers Anonymous  
[www.clutterersanonymous.net](http://www.clutterersanonymous.net)
- Messiness & Hoarding Support Group  
<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Messiness-and-Hoarding/>
- Squalor Survivors  
[www.squalorsurvivors.com](http://www.squalorsurvivors.com)

### OCD DOCTORS

- David F. Tolin, Ph.D.  
[www.instituteofliving.org/ADC/compulsive\\_hoarding.htm](http://www.instituteofliving.org/ADC/compulsive_hoarding.htm)
- OCD Doctors and Clinics  
[www.geonius.com/ocd/doctors.html](http://www.geonius.com/ocd/doctors.html)

### HOARDING TASK FORCES

- Dane County Hoarding Task Force  
[www.co.dane.wi.us/aging](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/aging)
- Fairfax County Virginia Hoarding Task Force  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/trash/hoarding.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/trash/hoarding.htm)
- New York City Hoarding Task Force  
[www.cornellaging.com/gem/hoa\\_nyc\\_hoa\\_tas.html](http://www.cornellaging.com/gem/hoa_nyc_hoa_tas.html)
- The Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium  
[www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/taskforc.htm](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding/taskforc.htm)