

# Tracy's Story

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## Hoarding hurts more than just the Hoarder

She worked as a caring and thoughtful Registered Nurse. Everyone who met her liked her.

Tracy's mother was creative: a painter, a seamstress, a lover of poetry. Her house was peppered with framed sayings reminding her to "look on the bright side of life." But, there was a fiercely guarded secret she kept from the outside world:

### She was a Compulsive Hoarder.

Tracy's mom recently died in her hoarded home, and now Tracy is picking up the painful pieces...



Subject: [My Mother Died In Squalor](#)

My brother and I received a call on Sunday March, 26th that they found our Mother dead in her home. She has avoided letting either one of us in the house for over 8 years.

She didn't show up for work on Sunday so the nurses where she worked went to check on her and saw her car in the driveway but my Mom would not answer the door. So they called 911 and busted down the door and found her in this mess. Not only is her death devastating but the way that she lived her life was beyond comprehension. It is the worst thing my brother and I have ever had to go through. The only thing I can think of is that she must have been extremely depressed or mentally unstable. So we are trying to deal with all this.

They said that they would not let us have a viewing. I was instant messaging with my Mom on Friday night. I can only assume she died after that. She had 5 dogs running amuck in the house crapping and peeing everywhere, she even had birds that died months ago that she never took out of the cages. She had a dog that died and she just wrapped it in a towel and put it in the garage. The whole thing is just too much for my brain to think about. We found out that she didn't have a water heater and her fridge wasn't working.

I called a company that she asked to fix her water heater and fridge and they told us they couldn't do it and told my mother her house wasn't up to code and took her hot water heater and couldn't deliver a new one until she cleaned her house. EMBARRASSING!!! They even took her gas meter; I can only imagine they reported her to the city. Her toilets were overflowing with waste; I don't know where she was showering. The stench in the house was so bad I could barely breathe. Mice waste everywhere and mice running around it was HORRIFIC! To know my Mom had a heart attack and died in this mess is devastating. No one had any idea the degree of my Mom's depression. She went to work every day and was clean. I am just bewildered! We had her cremated and had a small memorial in the park where she used to go all the time.

I don't care what the cost for the rest of you whose parent is still alive and living this way WHATEVER IT TAKES, have an intervention. I don't care how mad they get; do whatever you have to, to help them. I don't want any of you to go through this kind of pain. It's like I can't even mourn her because I have this heaped on my shoulders and I feel guilty.

She would order tons of stuff from QVC & HSN and never even open it. Her finances were spinning out of control on top of it all. She must have been so stressed out that is why she had a heart attack at age 61. Her car was always a mess...there were signs...I wish had done something, it breaks my heart.



Well I drove to Clovis, NM today and tomorrow we will go back into my Mother's house. My brother went in today and said it still smells horrific in there. All the trash is out but there is mice waste everywhere. My brother said he wiped down the counters and cried a little because he is wondering how my Mom could live this way. It is inconceivable. I really miss my Mom...I wished I could have helped her. Thanks for listening



It is just so hard to wrap my brain around all this. And to think it is so common. It is just bizarre. My Mom would go to work and be all "normal". She was a very heavy woman but she had to work in a clean environment...she was a nurse. Isn't that weird? I went by the house yesterday and today...it is just beyond belief. And it just stinks so bad it makes you gag and this is after someone took out all the squalor. How did Mom justify the non use of utilities? I never had a clue. Honestly I knew my Mom was messy but I never imagined the depth of it. THE HORROR!~

I like to think of my mother like this...I believe my mother loved the Lord...and she would have prayer cards and self help books around. I would like to think of the Lord looking down on my Mom as His child and saying...MY CHILD, ENOUGH, I am going to bring you home to Me. Now my Mom doesn't have to suffer, worry about bills, the mess, the desperation, the shame...she is with her Lord...He is holding her and hugging her and giving her the love and acceptance she needed. He is a loving and forgiving father....THANK GOODNESS. I miss her though...and I look for the beautiful things about her.

This thing is like the elephant in the room no one addresses because you don't want to start a fight or hurt anyone's feelings...You know something is wrong but you don't want to fight about it.



Here is another weird thing about my Mother...sometime when Steve and I were in college, my Mom's Mom threatened to come to visit my Mom. She had already started to avoid letting me and my brother in the house...my grandmother told her she already booked a ticket....my mom was in a complete panic phase now and broke down to my brother about her "messy" problem. My brother took 2 weeks off of school to clean her house. He said it was horrible, and at that time he had to wear a mask.

### Hoarding Interrupts Others Lives

My grandmother never did come down but here is what happened next...My mom had an electrical short in the kitchen and it started a house fire. If my brother hadn't cleaned up that house the insurance would have never paid to have the whole house gutted and re-done. After the fire, my Mom's house was so beautiful...she got all

new furniture and carpet and counters...everything was replaced except for her bathroom which was a reminder of how bad her mess used to be. For a while my Mom was really keeping up with the house and if anything was out of place she would flip out.

The hazards are very real

As we all know, she went back into the same old habits except 100 times worse and now with the hoarding. HSN & QVC, eBay and book clubs and fabric all over the place....some boxes weren't even opened. A week after my Mom's death we were still getting stuff she ordered from EBay. It's like they are filling some void...no matter how much they buy it is never enough to fill the void.

I don't know how it could have gone to total s\*\*t that fast. I hope this is not the case for those of you that are helping your parents now. But I definitely think just cleaning it up is not going to matter without some sort of mental help. Even spiritual help. It's like feeding your body to survive, you have to feed the rest of you, emotionally, spiritually, physically you can't starve one and expect to be ok. That's how I feel.



I am still in mourning over my mother so I am on this site a lot. A few months before she died, I sent my Mom that squalor survivor site and wrote her a long letter about how I want her to want better for herself...I only saw her car mess and freaked out about it...had no idea the extreme mess of the house...I knew it was messy but HAD NO IDEA HOW MESSY!

I told her how stressful it is for my brother and me that she hasn't let us in our own childhood home in years. That she can't go and do things because she walks a few feet and is out of breath. How worried we are about her...how she seemed to be in complete turmoil...there were times she would get really pissed off...then she wouldn't talk to me for days...Just to have you all here, feeling the same things and actually understanding what I am saying has been a great deal of comfort for me.



...my mother died in her filth. But you know what? She would not take help or even discuss this problem she had. I know it is hard to comprehend. Beyond human comprehension except for someone that is living this way. I just can't believe it is so common. I asked my brother to take pictures. But something that is close is on the Squalor Survivors website. Under KIMMY'S pictures. I even sent my Mom the link to that website, and wrote my Mom a big email about it. On that website they tell you the 4 degree's of squalor...and My Mom was the worst one. It is hard to say that out loud because if you read about it, it is disgusting.

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They Won't LET you help them



4-19-2006

You know what just sucks about this whole damn thing? Is you are going to be the one to deal with it....because if they die in this mess like my Mom did, who else are they gonna call but the kids? OH I hate it! It somewhat makes me resent my Mom. I actually told my Mom that once...Mom, if and when you die, because you don't take care of yourself or your stuff, me and Steve won't even be able to mourn you because WE WILL BE CLEANING UP ALL YOUR \*@\*@!!!! And that is exactly what is going on now. She never responded. I know she read it though because she didn't talk to me for days. Had I known how bad it REALLY was I would have forced her to get help. I keep going back and forth emotionally about it because I really loved my Mom. I talked to her every day. But she would really stress me out. She was a loner.

I just don't want any of you to have to go through this. Before long something goes wrong in the house and the next thing you know my Mom doesn't have a hot water heater or even a gas meter. It is like a domino effect. I really am sorry that we are all dealing with this, but I am glad we have each other.



4-25-2006

I haven't written in a while but want you all to know I am doing well since going to grief counseling. I am also making a slide show about my Mom's life. (Minus the squalor hoarding thing of course)

My Mom was a neat lady besides the glaring problem. She was a great nurse, she could paint, sew and was a wonderful cook....she was very creative. Now that she is gone...I want to remember her like that. So I am making a slide show about her life. It is helping me a lot. I know I will have my moments. But for now I am Ok.



5-1-2006

When my niece Taler was younger (She was about 7 years old, she is 11 now) she asked my Mom "Grandma, how come you don't clean your house?" But these kids loved my Mom and still wanted to go see her. A month before my Mom died, Taler stayed the weekend with me and she said "how come Grandma won't let us come over anymore" I told my Mom what she said and my Mom said "I know, I will plan to have them over soon." I can't imagine the guilt my Mom must have felt.



5-2-2006

Are there any success stories of people who stopped living this way and are now normal after getting help? I just don't think it's about getting it cleaned up...because I am convinced if they don't get help mentally or spiritually it is just never going to end. But I will not give up fighting for my Mom and other people like her.



I remember one New Year's weekend my boyfriend and I spent the holiday near where my mom lived. I drove through my Mom's home town. Mom asked me to stop by the hospital where she worked and visit her. She showed me off to everyone and I felt like she was so proud of me.

I only saw her one time after that before she died. But I reflect back on that moment a lot. It blessed my heart...that is my Mom...and I loved her so much. When Mom came over for the Super bowl I told her that I thought she looked like she was in turmoil... I know my Mom knew that if Steve and I had known she didn't have a hot water heater because of the conditions of her house...there is no way we would have let that happen. Mom was too ashamed to tell us how bad it had gotten. I can't imagine that she wouldn't have wanted us to be proud of her...she probably was so sad about the way things had gotten.

My Mom wasn't a bad person, she just needed help. I wish I would have helped. I may have said this before but I remember her telling me about waiting for her hot water heater all day, she even took off work to have them deliver it. But she never told anyone that they wouldn't deliver it because the house was so bad. Then she died.

I found that she had been written up at work for being sick so much and late all the time. I don't know how she couldn't be sick all the time I could hardly breathe in her house the smell was so bad. I even called her out on it a few times. I would always ask her if she was keeping up with the house. She would say..."Yeah, I am not doing too badly." It is just sad, sad, SAD.

KEEP TRYING FOR YOUR PARENTS....don't give up but also don't let it consume your whole life. You have to live too.



Mother's Day....It sucks for me. I get sad. But my boyfriend is coming to town to spend the weekend with me... I will be calling a probate lawyer tomorrow to get my Mom's things in order. We have to go through probate before we can touch the house and she never designated a beneficiary for her pension plan either. This could go on for months. So keep praying for me and Steve.



Went to the grief counselor yesterday. Didn't think I would cry at the therapist but ended up bawling my head off. I guess Mother's day stuff is really getting to me this week, more than I thought. The other day one of my brother's friends drove past my Mom's house and said the door was wide open. I COULD DIE!! So we called my Mom's neighbor to make sure no one had been in there. I talked to the neighbor and she told me she went into the house (the squalor is gone but the house is a mess and stinks really bad) she said she had to run out and puke

and go back in to make sure everything was ok. EMBARRASSING!!! Poor lady, she is really nice for making sure the house got locked back up. I called the probate lawyer but we keep playing phone tag.

I am really thinking about going to that company that took my Mom's water heater and asking them face to face if they felt any moral obligation to report my Mom to social services? Or if they thought it was ok to let her go all winter without hot water and heat? I am so depressed about mother's day I could hardly look at cards to buy my Step Mom and Grandma. I just want this whole thing to be over.

The chaos is left behind for others



My Mom did have great qualities. But she let herself go. I don't want to lose myself like that EVER...I want to belly laugh, I want to love, I want to be around people and I want to be proud of my life and my house.

One of the last times I saw my Mom....she hugged me for a long time and she told me that she loved me. There were years she didn't say those words or hug me like that. It is weird because I am so opposite...I hug people all the time. And I smile a lot, people say. Just do not lose yourself in this parent trap. Don't let this steal YOUR Joy! And just keep trying if you can.

Avoidance IS the compulsion with Hoarding  
Bills go unpaid...medicine goes untaken...



Date: Mon May 15, 2006

GUESS WHAT!! SHE didn't \*\*@\* pay the income taxes either!! Did she take care of ANYTHING!! It just pisses me off! So she owes property taxes for 2004 & 2005 almost \$800, it's not that much money but it just makes me angry she didn't have her shit together It is just embarrassing that Mom didn't take care of ANYTHING. Who knows what else I will find out about...I don't think it can be any worse than the state of her house. The toilets are still full and I can't touch anything until this goes through probate.



When my Mom died a couple months ago...we found 3 computers still in boxes (chewed by mice) 6 sets of dishes, she hadn't cooked in years. She must have kept ordering the same things over and over and forgetting she had them. WEIRD.



So now I own my Mom's house (not that that is anything great it is disgusting) so now I have to figure out what to do with it. I have to get someone to get those full toilets out. I sat on my Mom's porch crying, disgusted that she lived this way. This nosy neighbor comes over and proceeds to tell me...I can't believe your Mom was a nurse and living like that. What are you going to do with her car and her house? Someone took something out of her backyard that I wanted...and blah blah blah. I felt like saying DO YOU MIND JACK HOLE!! I am trying to brace myself to go inside BY MYSELF! And you are not allowed to say things about my mother! I am, but you are not. Then he tells me my Mom's door was open for a week. I am like then why didn't you shut it JACK WEED? I just want to be done with this.

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So I called the company that dealt with my Mom's hot water heater and GET THIS!! She told them that it was her sister's house and that she was going to get her some help. She even sat in her car crying telling them that she couldn't believe her sister lived like this. They said that they were doing the work and found a huge nest of mice and they started running everywhere and that was when they said NO MORE...we can't work like this. Then they called a supervisor because they felt like it was an unsafe environment and he called them off the job. I DON'T EVEN KNOW MY MOM!! I have to call the IRS to see if she even paid her income taxes. MY GUESS IS NO!

They do anything to guard the secret

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...I just want to know WHY? WHY did you continue to use the toilet...why didn't you pay your property taxes? Why did you let the dogs crap and piss all over the house and never pick it up? Where were you showering? Why was it acceptable to live with mice running amuck chewing up everything in site? Why did you not take the birds that died out of their cages? Why did you have rotten food in the fridge and why did you not fix the fridge when it was broken? Why were there maggots in your car? What did you eat, where did you sleep? Why didn't you ask me for HELP!!



I talked to the hot water heater people again. They said this first started in March 2005. It went on for a year. The people said that she had HSN boxes and QVC everywhere when they went in a year ago. They told me had they not been told by my mother that this was her sister's doing...they would have reported her and have reported people before. So my mother didn't have hot water or heat since March 2005, she died March 2006. They also said they told her they would finish the work if she got the mess cleaned up. She said she would hire someone to clean it and would call them back. They said they didn't hear from her for 2 weeks and drove by her house. And the door was locked and she didn't answer. I think it just got so out of hand that she couldn't do it. So she just gave

up. It still makes me wonder where was she showering and stuff? People at work told me that she never looked or smelled dirty; she went out of her way to hide it.

Why doesn't anyone else step in to help?



My mother was divorced from my Dad when I was 6 years old. My Dad told me that he couldn't put up with my Mom's mess. He said back then she was really messy and didn't take care of herself. He said when I was little they would come pick me up and my Dad would get all stressed out because the house was a disgusting mess, and he didn't want us kids living like that. He told me he struggled with trying to get custody of us because of the house, but he felt like that would have sent my mom over the edge...that she probably would have ended up dying. Mom always blamed the mess on us, but Steve and I would always stick up for our mom when Dad would get upset about the messy house we were living in. After we went to college, it got worse.

This is when squalor happened. Sometimes empty nest brings upon extreme hoarding and squalor. I still can't believe the way she lived. Can't get over the toilet thing...and the animals dying in house and she didn't take them out of their cages. ?????????? (They were birds) The dogs were all fat and happy. But it is just weird. I still think about it...have been avoiding the "house" still haven't decided what to do about it. I know I have to remove the toilets. Asked for some quotes online and no one wrote me back. I know I don't want to deal with it.

I just want to sell the house as is...they can bulldoze it for all I care...I never want to see it again unless it is fixed. It causes me a great deal of pain. Last time I went in there I kept picturing my Mom dying in the huge mess and the dogs scratching at her...how could she breathe in there? I could barely breathe....it burned to breathe...sometimes when I talk about it out loud...I start gagging and I have to stop thinking about it.

Did I tell you guys I found a little framed picture in my Mom's house that said "I am the God of second chances" hanging on the wall. HOW IRONIC. Meanwhile there are cobwebs and dead flies everywhere and the stench of shit and piss ...it makes me sad and it makes me sick. I say MY MOM WAS TOO GOOD TO GIVE UP ON...TOO GOOD FOR HER TO GIVE UP ON HERSELF. So my friends PRESS ON.....TRY TO HELP THEM SO YOU HAVE NO REGRETS WHEN THEY PASS ON.

Still missing my Mother...don't want to remember her this way. But it is difficult.



I think my Mom did everything for everyone else...there was a big void in her life and she bought things to fill it thinking it would eventually fill up. The void was never filled then she became overwhelmed and just gave up on everything. She was obese, lived in squalor and hoarded stuff to fill the void...all waiting for that "SOME DAY":

She would always say things like **SOMEDAY** I will win the lottery and buy a new house

*Someday I will lose weight*

*Someday I will re-do my kitchen in an apple theme*

*Someday never came for my Mom...she died March 26th*

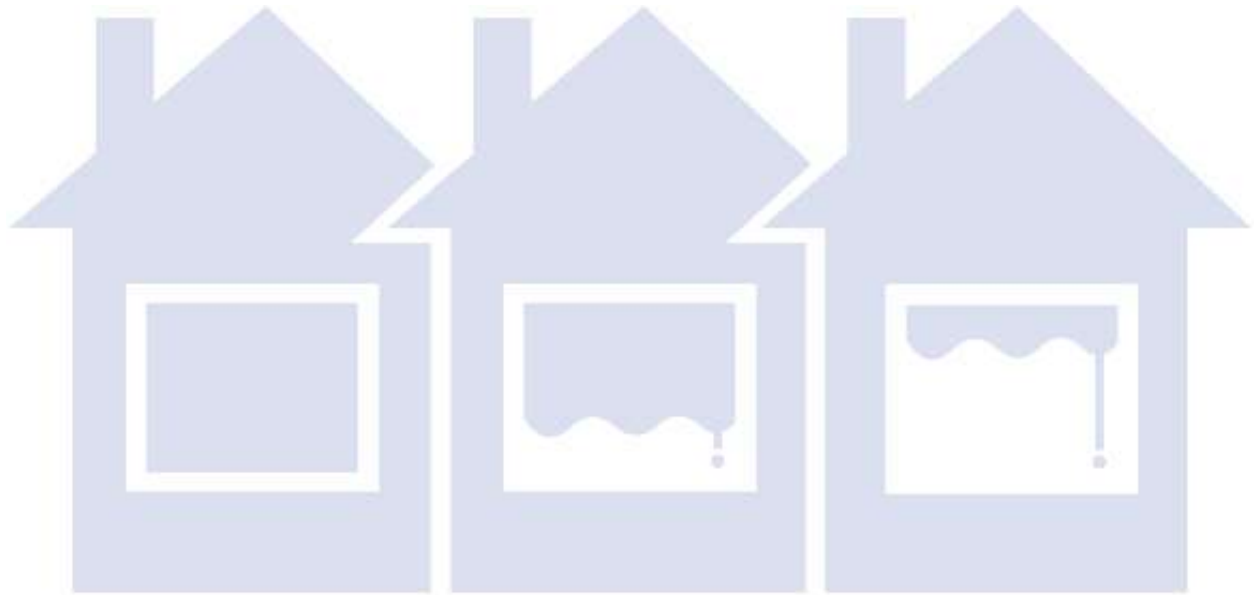
You are lucky...PRESS ON!! Just keep pressing on for your parents who are battling this illness.



We dedicate the Children of Hoarders website to Tracy (& her brother), her mother, and all those people who hoarded and weren't able to get the help they needed to overcome this disorder in their lifetime.

**You can watch Tracy tell some of her story on her [local news channel](#) here.**

[Contact Tracy](#)



## Children Of Hoarders

Opening hearts, minds, and  
homes with understanding