

Hoarding: The Case for a Complex Phenomenon

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By any name. . .

- Scavenger
- Clutterer
- Junkaholic
- Pack Rat
- Collector
- Living in squalor
- Diogenes Syndrome
- Behavior learned from the Great Depression
- Eccentricity
- Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder
- Compulsive Hoarding

Activities Associated with Hoarding

- Compulsive spending
- Collecting

Collectibles

Magazines

Used containers

Notes

Food

Old receipts

Trash

Clothes

Newspapers

Animals

Human waste

Multiple items of the same type

- Cluttering
- Inability or unwillingness to discard items

Stated Reasons for Hoarding

- Afraid of discarding something that will be needed in the future
- Fears of discarding something that is useful

Winsberg, Cassic, & Koran, 1999, *J of Clinical Psychiatry*

- Emotional Significance
- Intrinsic Beauty

Steketee & Frost (2007) *Compulsive Hoarding & Acquiring*

What makes hoarding a form of self-neglect?

- Functional impairment
 - Lack of organization
 - Unable to walk through the house without danger of falls
 - Fire Hazard
 - Unable to make meals in kitchen
 - Unable to sit on furniture
 - Unable to sleep in own bed
 - Isolation due to not allowing people into home

Characteristics of the Disorder

- Information processing difficulties
- Maladaptive beliefs about possessions
- Strong emotional attachment to possessions
- Emotional distress (guilt, anxiety, grief) leading to avoidance of discarding the objects

Steketee & Frost, 2002, *Clinical Psychology Review*

Genetic Evidence for Hoarding Behavior

- Found significant likelihood of genetic connection with Chromosome 14 with OCD and 2 or more hoarding individuals in family

Samuels, et al. 2007, *American J of Psychiatry*

Correlates of Hoarding

- Family history of hoarding 84%
- Grew up in a household with hoarding 80%

Samuels, et al. 2007 *American J of Psychiatry*

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| ● Perfectionism | Indecisiveness |
| ● Precipitants of stress or loss | Dependency |
| ● Avoidance | |

Hoarding and Co-Morbidity

- Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder & OCD (18-33%)
- Eating disorders
- Trauma
- Depression
- Social Phobia
- ADHD
- Serious Marital Problems
- Schizophrenia
- Organic mental disorders
- Brain injury
- Different forms of dementia

Hoarding in Older Adults

- Has traditionally been studied in the context of Diogenes Syndrome where older adults are found to be living in squalor in the midst of trash and to exhibit severe self-neglect (Hwang, et Al., 1998).
- Hoarding is common in dementia patients (Drummund, Turner, & Reid 1997) found that 23% of older adults on a geropsych unit had hoarding behaviors
- Steketee et al. 2001, 44% of older adults had a documented mental health issue and 33% were suspected of having a mental illness. Most common- depression. anxiety, personality, paranoia. Less common were agoraphobia, bipolar disorder, psychosis, & OCD

Steketee, Frost & Kim, 2001

36 case managers, social worker working with older adults were recruited from the Boston area. They reported on 62 clients who were hoarders

- Most were white women who lived alone and had never been married (Aged 65-92)
- Nearly 2/3 showed impairment in self-care
- 17% were filthy
- 80% were inhibited in their movement by the clutter
- 70% could not use furniture to sit on
- 81% experienced substantial threats to their health
- > 75% had no problems with cognitive functioning (orientation to place and time)
- > 65% exhibited few if any memory impairments
- Only 15% acknowledged that their hoarding was irrational

Effects on Family and Relationships

- Loss of functional living space leads to tension
- Children may be isolated due to being too embarrassed to have friends over
- Shame: “Oh you can just drop me off at the end of the street, I feel like walking.”
- Costs of food, storage lockers can add to financial strain
- Health problems such as headaches, respiratory problems, allergies due to clutter
- Dust and mold and mildew due to spilled drinks, etc. that are hard if not impossible to clean
- Hoarding may lead to divorce and cutoffs in relationships
- A sense of hopelessness and helplessness “She won’t let me fix it.”
- Being blamed when something was lost or missing
- Having a big mess to clean up after your loved one has died
- Family members who hoard may not support changes in hoarding behavior

Challenges for Interventions with Hoarding

- Lack of insight into the problem/not viewed as a problem
- Little internal motivation to change
- Lack of adherence during intervention and high attrition
- Co-Morbidities may exacerbate hoarding behavior
- Information processing difficulties
- Faulty beliefs
- Avoidance
- Little confidence in memory
- Compulsive spending

What does Not Work

- Medication
 - Saxena & Colleagues (2002), SSRI's were helpful to 32 patients who had OCD and were hoarding
- Involuntary cleaning of the home
- Traditional cognitive behavioral therapy

What Works?

- Longer term (7-12 month) intervention—26 sessions
- Modified CBT

Home Visits (1.5-2.0 hours)

Adherence to homework assignments

Addressing motivational issues

Assistance organizing clutter

Assistance removing clutter

Addressing acquiring issues

Therapist-Client collaboration

Tolin, Frost, & Steketee, 2007, *Behaviour Research & Therapy*

Resources on Hoarding

- *Digging Out: Helping your loved one to manage clutter, Hoarding, and Compulsive Acquiring* November 2009 by Hartl by New Harbinger Publications
- *Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring*, 2007, by Steketee and Frost
- Messies Anonymous
- Clutterers Anonymous
- Children of Hoarders (COH)
- A & E series on Hoarding
- OC Foundation—Compulsive Hoarding website
- Hoarding of Animals Research Consortium

www.tufts.edu/vet/cfa/hoarding

Questions

- When should other co-morbidities be addressed in tandem in order for the treatment to be successful?
- How do the ways clients are referred affect the outcomes?
- How much do other family members contribute to the hoarding problem and how might they be better utilized as a source of support?
- What is the long term outcome of those who have treatment for hoarding?
- How do we define success?
- What kinds of boosters are need to maintain gains?

How to Reach Me

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