

"Downsizing, Moving and Clutter Challenges in Homes of Older Adults"

Presented by:

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10 Questions to Consider when thinking of Downsizing/ De-cluttering/Getting Organized:



1. Do you want to have a simplified life?
2. Are you ready to let go and de-clutter and/or downsize your current home?
3. Are you in a life transition such as, moving to a senior community, to a relative's home or to a smaller home?
4. Are your personal relationships affected because there is too much clutter in your home?
5. Are you struggling with "brain clutter"?

10 Questions Continued.....



6. Can you find your important documents easily? (banking, budget/bills, insurance, etc.)
7. Are you rebuying items (wasting money) because you can't find the items you were looking for?
8. Are you constantly looking for lost or misplaced items?
9. Do you feel depressed or anxious thinking about all the clutter and chaos around you?
10. Is it harder for you to keep your house organized and clutter free because of physical or mental limitations?

Downsizing To-Do's:



- Start early! If you are thinking of **moving**, start the process to **downsize** your possessions **12-18 months** prior to the move.
- **Talk** to your family/friends about your wishes to downsize.
- Think about **giving** items to family/friends now so YOU can enjoy them enjoying the items.
- **Moving?** Think about how much **space** you will have in your new home or newly organized spaces. Measure and map out a floor plan.
- Ask yourself, "Does this item have a **“Purpose and Place”** in my home?"
- How can I utilize all of my available and **valuable spaces** in my home? (ie. behind doors, inside cabinet doors, under beds, wall spaces, etc.)
- Don't let **guilt** dictate what items you keep.

How to Get Started with De-Cluttering:

Sorting Process:

(set up bins/boxes to sort into and label them):

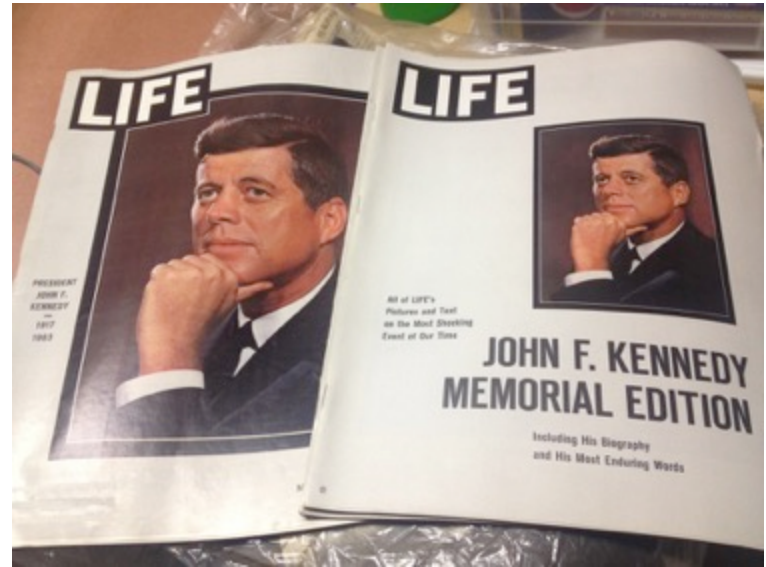
- Donate
- Give to family/friends
- Keep
- Toss/Recycle
- Relocate in the home

After Sorting Process is Completed:

- Put donate items into your vehicle to deliver to your charity of choice.
- Put items in their places that are in the “Relocate” box.
- Put items to give to friends/family by your front door or in your vehicle so you remember to distribute them. Use holidays as a time to give heirlooms/treasures to family members or friends.
- Take out the trash and recycle to the waste area right away.



Treasures or Trash?



Options to Reduce your Clutter:



1. **Garage Sales**- you get all of the profits but are a lot of labor to run for Medium to Low return
2. **Estate Sales**- good option if you have a lot of items or have items worth more than garage sale value; % paid to estate sale company; online estate sales are an option too
3. **Auction**- good option if you have large items/valuable items; % paid to auction company
4. **Donation**- good option if you want to move items out fast and use as a tax deduction (if applicable)
5. **Consignment**- good option if you have in style or high value clothing and goods; good option for furniture too; % paid to consignment shop
6. **Online**- good option to get the most money for your items, however, the process to sell can take a lot of time, there can be safety concerns, shipping cost and need to be tech savvy

Manage the Paperwork Flow:

- Set up a Paperwork Command Center with the following:
 - Master Calendar
 - To-Do lists, etc.
 - ACTION items (ie. Bills to pay, papers to fill out, etc.)
- Inbox/Outbox flow:
 - Action/To Be Filed/ Toss/Recycle/Shred
- Effective Filing System:
 - File it, Don't pile it.
 - Set up a system you will use
- Are you tech savy? Use technology to simplify how you pay bills, make lists, make appointments, etc.
- **Get off the Junk Mail Lists/Paper Recycling:**
 - www.dmachoice.org
 - www.paperkarma.com
 - www.optoutprescreen.com
 - www.papergatorrecycling.com



Moving?

- Do a temporary address change with the USPS and extend it after 6 months.
- **Do Not** do a permanent address change or you will get spammed by 500+ companies!

Chronic Disorganization: What is it?

Chronic Disorganization is found at the extreme end of the continuum, differing from severely disorganized. Chronic disorganization is marked by its longevity, interference with quality of life and resistance to self-help efforts. " Reference: ICD Fact Sheet-001

Chronic Disorganization challenges can stem from conditions such as, anxiety, depression, hoarding, chronic illness, traumatic brain injury, ADD, PTSD and more.

Situational Disorganization: What is it?

Disorganization that is caused by circumstances in a person's life that is not an ongoing situation.

Examples:

- Medical condition (acute)
- Change in family situation (ie. Birth, death, job loss, divorce, etc.)
- Moving
- Lack of time (ie. Work, Family obligations, etc.)
- Spaces are inadequate (ie. Small home, lack of storage, etc.)

Why is Excessive Clutter a Problem?

- **1. Safety Hazard-**

- Fall risk with pathways/mazes/piles.
- Risk of items falling on homeowner.
- Risk of fire (i.e. Items too close to fire hazards and/or daisy chaining of cords.)
- Dangerous to first responders (i.e. EMS, Fire, Police, etc.)

- **2. Public Health Hazard-**

- Infestations that spread (i.e. Fleas, cockroaches, bedbugs, etc.)
- Unsanitary- human or animal waste; lack of working toilets/ water/sewage system
- Yard/Home Disrepair/Standing water= mosquitos (Lyme disease),ticks; trash attracts vermin

- **3. Health Hazard-**

- Respiratory issues/infection risk- black mold, animal urine/feces, bug bites, food poisoning, etc.

Collecting vs. Hoarding

Collecting behaviors :

- Usually involves display of items for show
- Sense of pride for the items collected
- Specific locations in home to house collection
- Budgets and saves money to acquire new items in collection and feels a sense of satisfaction when adding them to the collection
- Items are usually organized and well maintained

Hoarding behaviors:

- Feel embarrassment by their possessions or "mess" (won't let others in their home)
- Lack of functional organization of possessions
- Loss of functional living space due to clutter
- Often have debt, sometimes extreme due to continual purchasing of items
- Sees potential or use in items no matter if the item is of little value, broken, etc.
- Strained relationships over the amount of clutter

What is Hoarding Behavior?

DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) states that Hoarding Disorder is present when the following criteria are met:

- Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.
- This difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and distress associated with discarding them.
- The symptoms result in the accumulation of possessions that congest and clutter active living areas and substantially compromise their intended use.
- The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupations, or other important areas of functioning.
- The hoarding symptoms are not due to a general medical condition.
- The hoarding symptoms are not restricted to the symptoms of another mental disorder. (E.g. hoarding due to obsessions in Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, lack of motivation in Major Depressive Disorder, delusions in Schizophrenia or another Psychotic Disorder, cognitive deficits in Dementia, restricted interests in Autistic Disorder, food storing in Prader-Willi Syndrome)

The DSM also lists two "specifiers" (features that may or may not be present):

- Excessive acquiring
- Poor insight

Why do People Hoard?

- Traumatic life experience (i.e. Abuse, death, divorce, eviction, loss of possessions, etc.)
- Sentimental value.
- Recessive trait (traumatic life experience would bring it to the forefront).
- Holding onto items make them feel safer and happier.
- Feelings of responsibility for items.
- Fear of losing things. Memory issues.
- Indecisiveness.
- Perfectionism. Fear of "doing it wrong" or making mistakes.
- Sees usefulness and potential in every item.
- Growing up in an environment of hoarding.
- Can progressively get worse with age.
- Stronger attachment to things than to people around them.
- Organizational problems- (i.e. ADD) executive functioning deficits.

Tools for Assessment:

- Clutter-Hoarding Scale- 5 levels
(Institute for Challenging Disorganization)
www.challengingdisorganization.org
- Clutter Image Rating Scale- 9 levels
(www.oxfordclinicalpsych.com) App available
- Clutter Self-Assessment - 16 questions

Assessments aim to identify: health & safety issues/hazardous items, severity of hoard, household functioning, infestations, accessibility of the home, personal protective equipment requirement, client's insight and desire for change

Who sees Hoarding behavior?

- Property Management company workers, landlords, etc.
- Neighbors
- Home Health or Home Care Agencies (PT, OT , RN, Meals on Wheels, Aides, etc.)
- Adult Protective Services workers, Social Workers,
- First Responders (i.e. Fire and Police, EMS, etc.)
- Repairmen (ie. Appliances, cable/internet/phone, etc.)
- Gas or electric company
- Delivery people
- Others?

The person hoarding usually is resistant to intervention and isn't the one calling for help. It is usually the family/friends or someone else.

What does Hoarding look like?



How to Help with Hoarding?

Hoarding is a serious issue that often requires professional intervention. Here are some guidelines to follow if you are working with someone who hoards:

Do:

- Be Patient and Understanding.
- Know your own limitations.
- Ask open ended questions to find out more/
Hear their story.
- Treat the person with dignity and respect/
build trust.
- Evaluate for health safety. Focus on harm reduction.
- Refer for medical and/or mental health services .
- Recognize it is a behavior that will be difficult to change as it has brought him/her comfort in the past.
- Be a cheerleader!!!
- Set up for success. Work in one area at a time/set small targeted goals for inspection. Main living area first.
- Slow steady progress in the goal.
- Advocate for more funding to help pay for resources.
- Be specific about expectations for each area that needs intervention. (Written goals, Vision boards, color coded reminders)
- Help maintain focus on the tasks at hand. (i.e. Use of timers, time management schedules, etc.).
- Get permission to speak to family/friends involved.
- Involve the person in seeking solutions.
- Provide resources for ongoing hands on assistance. (ie. professional organizer, volunteers, etc.)
- Stop new items from being brought into the home. (i.e. contract of compliance, etc.)
- Be prepared for relapse. Changing habits/behaviors takes time and motivation.
- Reduce incoming paper: www.dmachoice.org / www.paperkarma.com; www.optoutprescreen.com/
www.papergatorrecycling.com (local recycling at churches/schools/nonprofits)

How to Help with Hoarding ? (Cont.)

What NOT to do:

- Pass judgment/Be critical.
- Talk about the person as if he/she is not present.
- Argue with the person.
- Make decisions for the person/disregard the person's input.
- Lie to the person.
- Remove any item without permission.
- Tell the person how they should feel.
- Expect that a rapid clean out will solve the problem.
- Go into the situation unprepared for safety and/or health hazards.



Hoarding Task Forces:

Grand Rapids Area Hoarding Task Force:

- Headed up by City of GR Code Compliance supervisor and GRPD Community Liaison officer. Multiple agency involvement for assistance and education to the community.
- <http://grcity.us/community-development/Code-Compliance-Division/Pages/GRAHT.aspx>
 - Contact: hoarding@grcity.us

Kalamazoo Hoarding Task Force:

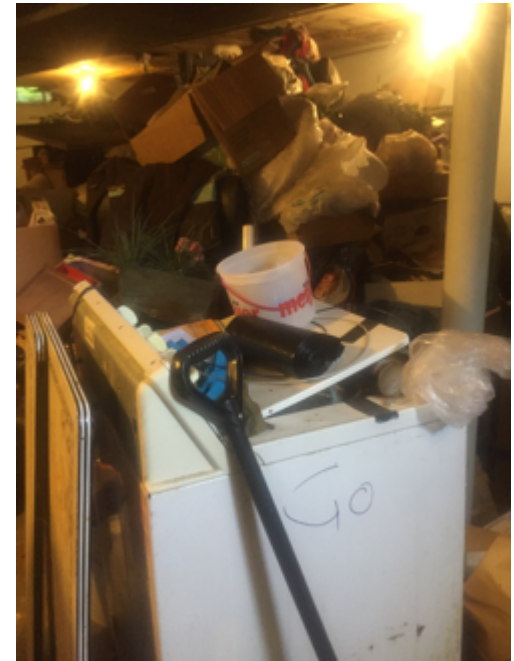
- www.kalamazoohoarding.org

Washtenaw Hoarding Task Force:

- Hoarding@htfwashtenaw.org

Traverse Bay Area Hoarding Task Force:

- Traversebayhoarding@gmail.com



Mental Health Resources:

- www.ocfoundation.org
(International OCD Foundation)
- www.network180.org
(Community Mental Health in Kent County)
- www.childrenofhoarders.com
(Information for families of person with hoarding issues)

Assisting Older Adults:

- www.nasmm.org
(Moving-Senior move managers)
- www.caregiverresource.net
(Resource info. for caregivers of older adults)
- www.AAAM.org
(Area Agency on Aging West MI)

Clean Up Help:

- www.wmichhoarding.com
(BioOne of W.Michigan)
- www.servicemaster.com
(Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids)
- www.hoardingpros.com
(serving throughout Michigan)

Organization Help:

- www.napo.net
(Nat.'l Assoc. of Professional Organizers)
(Check for speciality/training in chronic disorganization)
- www.napomichigan.com
(NAPO Michigan Chapter)
(Check for speciality/training in chronic disorganization)
- www.challengingdisorganization.org
(Institute for Challenging Disorganization)
 - Clutter-Hoarding Scale

Hoarding Disorder Resources:



- Tolin, D. Frost, R. & Steketee, G., (2014), *Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving and Hoarding*, New York, The Oxford University Press.
- Steketee, G. & Frost, R. (2014), *Treatment for Hoarding Disorder, 2nd edition, Workbook*, New York, The Oxford University Press.
- The Institute for Challenging Disorganization, Varness, Kate, ed. ; (2012) *The ICD Challenging Disorganization: For Professional Organizers*, St. Louis, MO, Institute for Challenging Disorganization.
- Bratnotis, C., Schmalisch, C. & Steketee, G., (2011), *The Hoarding Handbook: A Guide for Human Service Professionals*, New York, The Oxford University Press.

Contact Information:



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 - NAPO (Nat.'l Assoc. of Professional Organizers)
 - NAPO Michigan Chapter Vice President
 - Institute for Challenging Disorganization- Level 1 Certificate of Study in Hoarding
 - The Caregiver Resource Network
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Questions?

