

HOARDING DISORDER



WHAT IS COMPULSIVE HOARDING DISORDER?

Compulsive hoarding includes all three of the following criteria:

1. Collecting/keeping items that seem useless or of little value.
2. Cluttering living spaces, making rooms unusable.
3. Causing distress or problems in daily activities.

WHY IS GETTING RID OF CLUTTER DIFFICULT?

Individuals often struggle with organizing possessions and experience positive feelings when acquiring items and negative feelings when discarding them. They may believe items are valuable or useful, feel responsible for objects, and deny having a problem. They may have difficulty making decisions about their belongings and often fear making the wrong choice.

COMMONLY HOARDED ITEMS

People who hoard often accumulate paper items like mail and newspapers, books, excessive clothing, containers, and sometimes even garbage or rotten food. In extreme cases, they may hoard large numbers of animals or human waste, leading to severe health hazards. While some items may have value, their excessive accumulation can overwhelm living spaces and create dangerous environments.

CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

Hoarding disorder frequently co-occurs with a range of other mental health conditions, including anxiety disorders, ADHD, and depression, creating a complex and multifaceted challenge for those affected.

SIGNS OF COMPULSIVE HOARDING

Difficulty discarding items

Excessive clutter in living or work spaces

Losing important items in clutter

Feeling overwhelmed by possessions

Inability to stop taking free items

Excessive buying of items

Avoiding visitors due to embarrassment

Refusing home repairs

WHO STRUGGLES WITH HOARDING?

Hoarding can start as early as the teenage years, but the average age of those seeking treatment is around 50.

Individuals often live alone and may have family members with the same problem. Serious hoarding affects between 1 in 50 and 1 in 20 people.

FACTS ABOUT HOARDING

Hoarding may run in families, suggesting a genetic link.

Hoarding behaviors occur equally in men and women.

Individuals who hoard often live alone and may isolate themselves.

Hoarding is often a chronic condition that can persist without proper treatment.

Hoarding can cause significant emotional distress and affect relationships with others.

Severe hoarding can result in housing code violations and custody disputes.

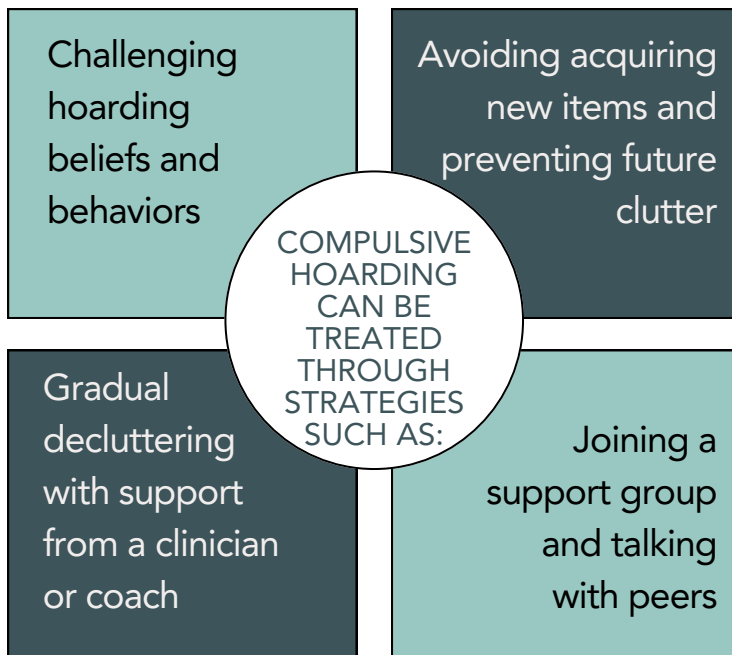
Children of hoarders may face social, emotional, and behavioral problems.

EFFECTS OF HOARDING

Severe clutter poses health and safety risks, can lead to evictions or homelessness, and causes conflicts with family and friends. Additionally, it can result in significant emotional distress and financial strain for the individual affected. Individuals with hoarding disorder often experience significant social isolation due to the shame and embarrassment associated with their living conditions, leading to a decreased quality of life.

SUPPORTING SOMEONE WITH HOARDING TENDENCIES

Family and friends should respect the individual's pace and choices, encourage them, and never discard items without permission. Building trust and understanding is crucial. Use non-stigmatizing language and avoid terms that may embarrass or shame the individual. While medications alone do not reduce hoarding behavior, they may help with associated conditions like depression and anxiety.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

International OCD Foundation: www.iocdf.org

Boston University School of Social Work: www.bu.edu/ssw/research/hoarding

Smith College Department of Psychology: www.science.smith.edu/departments/PSYCH/rfrost