



BELL CENTER FOR ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

What Is Hoarding? A Fact Sheet

Prevalence

- 2-3% of the general population (~154,000 in Maryland)
- 85% of people who hoard report hoarding in their families (12% of first degree relatives)

Behavioral Syndrome

- Obsessional fear (losing something important)
- Urges to save
- Excessive acquisition
- Clutter
- Churning
- Indecisiveness
- Avoidance and procrastination
- Perfectionism
- Difficulty organizing tasks
- Slowness and lateness
- Circumstantial, over-inclusive language
- Poor attention
- Impulsivity
- Less confident in memory skills
- Inefficiency

Profile of a Person Who Hoards

- More likely to live alone
- Less likely to be married (divorced or never married)
- Impaired work or inability to work (disability)
- Impaired social and leisure activities
- Impaired family/friend relationships
- Average age for beginning to collect ~13
- Average age for seeking treatment = 50
- "S-I-C-K" (Sensitive, Intelligent, Creative, Kind)

Common Co-Morbid Diagnoses

- 92% of those diagnosed with Hoarding Disorder will have at least one additional psychiatric diagnosis during their lifetime
- Anxiety Disorders
 - o Generalized Anxiety Disorder (28%)
 - o Social Anxiety (29%)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (17%)
 - o Need to check before letting go
 - o Contamination fears
 - o Response to loss or trauma
- Depression (57%)
 - o Only significant co-morbid diagnosis
- Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (Inattention) (16%)
 - o Will lose items if I don't keep them out

Myths About Hoarding

- Hoarding is just another label for messiness
- People who hoard are just disorganized
- People who hoard can't be treated and don't want to be helped
- People who hoard value their items more than they value their family/job/friends/etc.
- People who hoard are lazy, careless, incompetent, ill-prepared
- Helping the individual discard clutter will solve his/her problems
- Cleaning the person's home will mean that the person who hoards will be able to keep it that way
- Organizing the person's home/belongings will mean that the person who hoards will become organized.
 - o House will be cleaned as a consequence of changing thoughts and behaviors

Treatment Options

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Professional Organizer
- Psychopharmacology
- Collaborative Interventions (Therapist and Organizer)

When working with a person who hoards, remember to be:

- Calm
- Thoughtful
- Empathetic
- Patient

Guidelines for working with a person who hoards

- Meet regularly as a team
- Help maintain focus
- Provide emotional support
- Help individual make decisions (*DO NOT* make decisions for them)
- Be a cheerleader
 - o Recognize the progress that has been made – don't minimize or belittle
- Accompany on non-acquisition trips
- Help with removal of items

Common pitfalls when working with a person who hoards

- Arguing
- Touching or moving objects without permission
- Making decisions for the person
- Telling the person how to feel

Skills to Build

- Procedural understanding
- Flexibility
- Efficiency
- Hypothesis generation
- Organization
- Problem-solving
- Decision-making
- Categorization
- Planning

Problems with Interventions

- Treatment refusal
- Treatment dropout
- Lack of cooperation in treatment
- Absence of resistance to hoarding behaviors
- Poor insight