What Is Hoarding Disorder?

Jennifer Sampson, Ph.D., LMFT
The Hoarding Project
Co-occuring Disorders and Treatment Conference – 10.8.14

FAQ: What is hoarding disorder?

Quick answer: With the DSM5 hoarding disorder is a diagnosis, the common definition has 4 parts:

1. Excessive acquisition of stuff*
2. Difficulty discarding possessions
3. Living spaces that can't be used for their intended purposes because of clutter
4. Causing significant distress or impairment (Frost & Hartl, 1996)

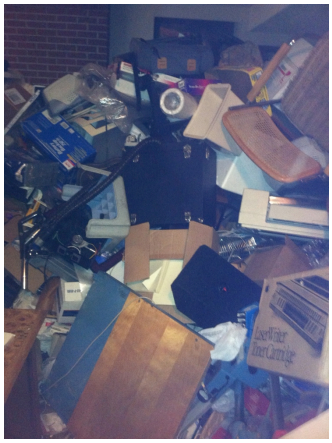
*Not universal in all people who hoard

Copyright 2014. The Hoarding Project. All rights reserved. Do not copy or reproduce without written consent from THP.

How many people hoard and are some people more likely to hoard than others?

Research projects that

- About 2-5% of the population hoard, which is about 15 million people in the U.S., on the high end (Iervolino et al., 2009; Samuels et al., 2008)
- Older people hoard more than younger people (Samuels, et al. 2008)
- People with lower income hoard more than people with higher income (Samuels, et al. 2008)
- Gender differences?

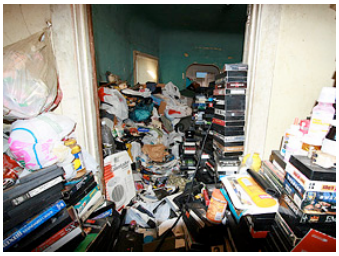


Co-occurring Psychiatric Disorders

- **Comorbidity occurs in up to 92% of individuals meeting diagnostic criteria for hoarding disorder**

(Frost et al., 2011:

- 53.5% Any anxiety disorder, not OCD
- 50.7% major depressive disorder
- 24.4% General Anxiety Disorder
- 23.5% Social Phobia
- 18% OCD
- 14.3% Specific Phobia
- 6.9% PTSD
- 4.6% Dysthymia
- 1.8% Substance Abuse
- 1.4% Bipolar Disorder
- 1.4% Eating Disorder



- Some gender differences exist re: types of co-morbidity (Wheaton et al., 2010)

Copyright 2014. The Hoarding Project. All rights reserved. Do not copy or reproduce without written consent from THP.

+ FAQ: What's the difference between clutter, collecting, and hoarding?

Clutter: possessions are disorganized and may be accumulated around living areas

- No major difficulty with excessive acquisition AND no major difficulty discarding items
- Can carry on normal activities in home

Collecting: new possessions = part of larger set of items

- Display does not impede active living areas in home

Hoarding: possessions become unorganized piles of clutter

- Prevent rooms from being used for normal activities
- Motivation to display items: lost

+ FAQ: What causes hoarding?

The BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL Model of Hoarding Disorder states that:

Hoarding behavior arises from a variety of external and internal variables that are biological, psychological, and social in nature.

We can't talk about one of these pieces without talking about the others!

Copyright 2014. The Hoarding Project. All rights reserved. Do not copy or reproduce without written consent from THP.

FAQ's: Is there a family link to hoarding, and when does is start?

- Family history (Pertusa, et al., 2008; Samuels, et al., 2007)
  - More likely to have 1st degree relatives with hoarding (12%) or with hoarding symptoms (49%) (Winsberg, Cassic, & Koran, 1999)
  - Social learning (Tolin, 2011)
- Genetic link (Iervolino et al., 2009; Lochner et al., 2005; Samuels, Shugert et al., 2007)
- Course and progression: behaviors begin during childhood or adolescence (Frost & Gross, 1993; Grisham et al., 2006; Pinto, Eisen, Mancebo, et al., 2007; Samuels et al., 2002; Winsberg et al., 1999)

FAQ's: What is the link between Hoarding and the Brain?

- Brain functioning differences
  - Abnormalities in areas associated with: executive functioning, impulse control, and processing of reward value
- Maladaptive Cognitive Processes (Grisham, Brown, Savage, Steketee, & Barlow, 2007; Grisham, Norberg, Williams, Certoma, & Kadib, 2010; Hartl, Duffany, Allen, Steketee, & Frost, 2005; Hartl et al., 2004; Lawrence et al., 2006)
  - Attention (Grisham et al., 2007; Tolin, Villvicencio et al., 2010)
  - Memory (Hartl et al., 2004; Tolin 2009)
  - Executive Function
  - Categorization
  - Complex thinking
  - Decision-making

Copyright 2014. The Hoarding Project. All rights reserved. Do not copy or reproduce without written consent from THP.