

Are Things Piling Up On You?

Hoarding Disorder & Recovery

Does this sound like you?

Do you:

Hold onto a large number of items that most people would consider not useful or valuable?

- Junk mail and newspapers
- Clothes that MAY be worn one day
- Things that could be used for crafts
- Things that need fixing
- Other people's unwanted items
- Promotional items or freebies

Do you find yourself:

- Making excuses to avoid visitors
- Not getting home repairs done because you're embarrassed to allow trades people in
- Keeping the shades drawn so no one can see inside
- Getting into arguments with family members and neighbours about the clutter
- Facing eviction because of the clutter

Would living without these things create:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Grief and pain
- A loss of self worth
- A loss of life purpose



What is Hoarding Disorder?

If these things sound familiar you may be living with Hoarding Disorder (HD).

HD is a mental health condition that can be treated over time. Treatments can include counseling, de-cluttering assistance and helping those around you to understand your condition. Medication can also be useful in some cases.

People with HD have often experienced deep personal trauma at some stage in their life and may also have feelings of depression and anxiety.

It is important to know that you are not alone and that there is a real medical condition causing this.

What if I do nothing?

Continuing to live with HD can be harmful to your life and your relationships with those around you including family, friends and neighbours.

Hoarding can cause:

- House fires
- Pest infestations
- Hygiene issues
- Injuries from tripping on clutter
- Relationship breakdown
- Access issues for emergency services
- Eviction risks (for renters)

Where do I start?

Recovery from Hoarding IS possible.

1) Acknowledgement

The first step in recovery is recognising that the collected items at your home are causing issues for you and you don't want to live like that anymore.

Sometimes a family member or friend will help you come to this realisation but they are not doing this because they want to hurt you.

2) See your GP

Your GP will not know how you live unless you tell them. Some people take photos of their home with them to help explain things. Having a family member or trusted friend go with you can help.



Ask the GP to assess you for a Mental Health Care Plan and organise a referral to a counsellor or psychologist. Be honest with the GP if your tenancy is in jeopardy because of your hoarding.

3) Start therapy sessions

Loved ones will often want to start de-cluttering your home ASAP but this could make the problem worse for you. Recovery is often slow, methodical and improvements will come in small steps. Advise your family when you start therapy and that you will notify them when help is needed. Letting your family correspond with your therapist can be helpful if they are pressuring you.

Important Points

Recovery will be slow and gradual but it IS ACHIEVABLE.



Sustainable recovery is best achieved when professional therapy is combined with a structured and realistic plan to undertake the de-clutter process.

Just cleaning up the house alone will not be a long term solution. While it may ease the pressures temporarily, the condition is likely to reappear again and soon!

TV shows on hoarding often don't give a realistic impression of how a recovery is achieved. They focus on the before and after results of the de-clutter and often leave out the therapy and time commitment required.

You don't need to do it alone. There are services across SA that can help with the therapy and also the de-clutter aspects of your recovery.

Red Cross can help to point you in the right direction.

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