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It's Time for

A Fresh Start!

Our NAPO-SE-MI Organizing Newsletter

Have you been watching "Hoarders"?

Recently there has been a lot of online & off-line chatter about A&E's new television show "Hoarders." Those of us in the organizing community who know how serious and complex this mental health issue is wondered how the show would be handled. Would it truly be a reality show or just another "quick fix, clean it up in an hour and never have a problem again" organizing show? (Which is not to say the information presented on organizing shows isn't helpful, it absolutely is, but did you know those show hosts and their teams spend 80 plus hours (each) to produce a 30 or 60 minute show?)

Now that several episodes of "Hoarders" have been broadcast, we are relieved to see that this issue is being shown for what it is: a debilitating mental condition that negatively impacts every area of life, most especially family relationships. There have been a few apparent success stories but more that are not, and this is truly a more realistic picture. Does this mean there is no hope? absolutely not! There are many recovered hoarders in the world but, as the show depicts, progress can only be made where it is wanted and first there must be insight and the desire for a change.

If you've been watching the show then you've already seen visually the three criteria that define compulsive hoarding:

1. The accumulation of & great difficulty discarding objects that most people would consider useless.
2. A home so cluttered that spaces can't be used for their intended function, eg. sleeping on the sofa because the bedroom is full of clutter or the inability to shower because the tub is full of "stuff."
3. An impaired lifestyle that causes physical and emotional distress and unhappiness due to the inability to discard. For example a healthy meal can't be prepared because the stove isn't accessible; cleaning can't take place & dust causes breathing difficulties or family won't visit because of unsafe conditions in the home.

You've also seen that this is a multi-faceted condition that can involve unrealistic thinking patterns, paranoia, denial, and avoidance. Family members often ask, "Why is my loved one like this? What caused this behavior?" Unfortunately as of right now there is no cut-and-dried answer to that question. Hoarding has long been thought to be a subset of obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and does not have its own diagnostic code but this is now being debated in the psychiatric community as there are many distinct differences between the two. As organizers we expect that in the near future theory will catch up with reality and compulsive hoarding will finally be recognized as a unique and separate disorder from OCD.

Many factors seem to be at play but commonalities include some type of traumatic loss in childhood – the death of a parent or other loved one is often cited as well as exposure to this lifestyle within the family. A genetic link has long been suspected and recent studies have found genetic differences. Does this mean that if some have these genetic markers they are destined to hoard?
(continued on next page)

Do you or a family member struggle with ADD/ADHD?

10th Annual Michael Golds Memorial AD/HD Conference

Friday, October 2, 2009

Orchard Ridge Campus
Oakland Community College
27055 Orchard Lake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

Keynote Address by: Michael Ginsberg MD
Featured Speakers: SARI SOLDEN & DENSLOW BROWN

and

18 breakout sessions with international, national, & local experts on AD/HD

CO-SPONSORED BY:
OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE &
EASTERN OAKLAND COUNTY CHADD CHAPTER



Additional Information: www.oaklandcc.edu/MGMC/ You must register to attend.

Have you been watching "Hoarders"? (continued)

"Biology is not destiny," says hoarding researcher Dr. David Tolin (who was the doctor seen on the show treating a woman with food hoarding behavior.) "Just because somebody has a genetic predisposition to develop a certain behavioral condition, doesn't mean that they are doomed." In his opinion both inherited characteristics and a learned behavioral pattern are needed for the condition to develop. "People can overcome their predisposed tendency to hoard," he says.

So what works?

Practical evidence is now showing that a team approach involving a professional organizer and a therapist working together can be very effective. Other team members may include physicians, social workers, support groups, etc. but all team members should have special training in dealing with hoarding behavior, each as it applies to their own field. Many communities now have hoarding task forces.

Therapists who specialize in treating hoarding behavior using the psychological therapy method called cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) are having greater success treating hoarding behavior and OCD than those using traditional "talk therapy" and should be sought out. Likewise an organizer specializing in hoarding behavior should also be looked for. Not every organizer is comfortable enough or qualified to work with this disorder; in fact very few make this their specialty because it is such a difficult work environment. Organizers specializing in this field & additional information on this disorder can be found via the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization website (NSGCD) www.nsgcd.org.

Family members should seek help for themselves too. The distress caused by a relative who hoards can be devastating and family members are often too ashamed or embarrassed to share their distress with others. Support groups, locations and online support can be found at the [Children of Hoarders website](#) (other resources p. 4)

NAPO S.E. Michigan introduces our new Associate members.

Associate members provide services to complement your organizing needs.

Glen Miller the Home Doctor

Say goodbye to lost time and hectic searches. Glen Miller the Home Doctor installs drawer dividers, cabinet pullouts, built-to-suit shelves and storage cubbies so your belongings all have a home. For the worst of cramped or limited work/life spaces, Glen does complete remodeling to improve productivity, reduce stress, and create attractive spaces.

Organized rooms increase your efficiency no matter what you're doing and Glen remembers to check every detail. Can you reach the shelves? Do you have enough lighting? Is your sink close enough to the refrigerator? Glen Miller the Home Doctor has the fix for your organizing ailments.

- Boost your productivity or find calm at the end of the day with a new paint color.
- Remove that divider wall and improve the foot traffic flow in your home or office.
- Sealcoat your driveway and repair the deck for increased safety and enjoyment.
- Create new basement living and storage space.
- Organize your clothes and accessories with new closet shelves and storage capacity.
- Repair or remodel within your budget.

Glen specializes in kitchen and bath remodeling to enhance work and life activities but remember your garage, office, pool house, and basement. Glen creates organized storage areas and improves work flow in all of these spaces through installing custom-made storage units or off-the-shelf products. No job is too small – he even changes light bulbs and sets up holiday decorations.

At home or work, Glen Miller the Home Doctor is the preferred professional. See kitchen and bath remodels at www.glenmillerthehomedoctor.com . Call 734-255-9793 or 248-568-0499 and get your organizing prescription straight from the Home Doctor. Email glenmillerthehomedoctor@gmail.com .

Jo's Shelving

Jo at Jo's Shelving is your shelving needs expert.

Jo's background is in cleaning homes and offices in Southeastern Michigan. "From being in so many homes I saw firsthand the frustration my clients were having with their shelving storage," says Jo.

Older homes were made for our parents who just plain didn't have all the "stuff" that most households have today. Mom had a few dresses and not that many pairs of shoes. But many brand-new houses also have inadequate shelving. Most builders put their money towards what people see first: granite tops, stainless appliances, hardwood floors, and such. Homeowners move in, then notice, "Hey there's only one shelf at eye level to hang all my clothes."

Today with our society we need different wardrobes for each activity. Business, business casual, regular casual, golf, tennis, workout, yoga, well you get the idea. Put on top of that all the activities our children are involved in and the equipment that goes along with it. All of it needs to be stored somewhere plus be easily accessible. Here's where Jo's Shelving can help. Jo will come by and measure and give you some great ideas to maximize the space you have. She can increase your space by at least 40%.

The idea is to "bring some new space into that old space." She can do that with affordable Schulte Freedom Rail shelving. Freedom Rail comes in wood and wire shelving, with chrome rods and drawers either in wood or wire. All shelving is adjustable and can be changed and is also easily removable and can be taken with you if you were to move. Jo's Shelving offers a full installation service for all products. Visit her website at <http://www.josshelving.com> and give them a call at 586-977-3565.

The following contributions were made by a recovering person who hoards. The entire submission can be found on the [Children of Hoarders website](#) and are used with permission.

"How Not to Raise a Hoarder"

DON'T

- Stand over your kids when they are trying to do their homework, correcting spelling and other mistakes as they go.
- Pick all their clothes for them and be overly involved in their daily clothing decisions...as long as they are neat and clean and reasonably well put together.
- Talk frequently about how most people are not to be trusted and have ulterior motives, complain and comment about the neighbors and others.
- Make your child a confidante for problems that you should be discussing with another adult. Just because you don't have any friends doesn't mean that you should unload on the child!
- Emphasize the importance of things over people and their feeling...is it really "too good to use"?
- Over dramatize everyday events. It isn't "criminal" or "terrible" that people choose to throw things away. Don't hand-wring and create anxiety where there shouldn't be any.

DO:

- Have friends and invite them in; entertain a little bit at least.
- Promote decision-making skills in kids by allowing them to choose their daily outfit, complete their own homework, choose their own cereal for breakfast, and how they will spend some of their time.
- Push your kids past some of their fears, swimming for example, so that they know these skills.
- Try to put things into perspective. One of the things about hoarders is that their fears are totally disproportionate to reality. These fears are sometimes rooted in childhood with their own parents who were/are extremely conscientious – almost to the point of neurosis.
- Have your kids do a purge of their toy collection every fall. They should learn that it's smart to clean out the ones they've outgrown or broken, to make space for the new toys they'll get for the holidays. One thing in = one thing out...a concept I still find magical and amazing!

Seeking Self - Help for Hoarding Disorder?

Read:

"Buried in Treasures – Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding"
David Tolin, Randy Frost, and Gail Steketee Oxford University Press 2007
ISBN: 0195300580

(Help for family members is also a feature of this self-help book.)

"Overcoming Compulsive Hoarding: Why You Save & How You Can Stop"
Fugen Neziroglu, Jerome, Bubrick, Jose A. Yaryura-Tobias
ISBN13: 9781572243491