



BATTLING YOUR DEMONS: HOARDERS CLEAN HOUSE REPORT #2884

BACKGROUND: Hoarding disorder is when a person excessively saves items that others may view as worthless. This person has difficulty getting rid of possessions, leading to chaos that disrupts their ability to use their living and/or workspaces. Hoarding is different than collecting. Collectors look for specific items, such as model cars or stamps, and organizes them or displays them. In most cases, hoarders save items that they feel they may need in the future, are valuable, or have sentimental value. Some may also feel safer surrounded by the things they save. Hoarding disorder occurs in an estimated 2 to 6 percent of the population and often leads to distress and problems functioning. Research shows hoarding disorder is more common in males than females and among older adults. Three times as many adults 55 to 94 years old are affected by hoarding disorder compared to adults 34 to 44 years old.

(Source: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/hoarding-disorder/what-is-hoarding-disorder>)

CAUSES AND TREATMENT: There is no known cause of hoarding disorder, but doctors have discovered several risk factors associated with the condition. Some of these include having a relative with the disorder; a brain injury that triggers the need to save things; a traumatic life event; mental disorders such as depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder; uncontrollable buying habits; or the inability to pass up free items such as coupons and flyers. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a common treatment where people learn to understand why they hoard and how to feel less anxiety when throwing away items. Specialists will teach organization and decision-making skills that will help a person better manage their possessions. Some doctors use medications called antidepressants to treat hoarding disorder. These medicines can help to improve symptoms. Often, the combination of medications and CBT are utilized in order to reduce symptoms more effectively.

(Source: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17682-hoarding-disorder>)

NEW PSYCHOTHERAPY APPROACH: A recent study evaluated a follow-up treatment to CBT for hoarding disorder called compassion-focused therapy (CFT). The study concentrated on CFT because of its ability to help regulate a patient's emotions and improve their self-perception. The technique helps patients recognize their behavioral and thought patterns and teaches them how to self-soothe. Researchers found that using CFT as a follow-up treatment to CBT reduced patients' hoarding symptoms. More than 70 percent of people using this method lowered their symptoms under the standard level for a clinically significant hoarding disorder. A 2020 study found that hoarders display a reduced ERN, electrical signal in the brain called error-related negativity, outside of decision-making, too. Researchers found that the stunted brain signal occurs in hoarders across all emotional states, not just during times of distress. The study's findings adds to prior research that these abnormal brain signals could be related to hoarding symptoms.

(Source: <https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/a-new-psychotherapy-approach-offers-hope-for-treating-hoarding-disorder>)

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