



Introduction to Hoarding

**Behind Closed Doors:
Getting a Handle on
Hoarding**

Hoarding

This five-part course describes the fascinating world of hoarding.

This **Introduction to Hoarding** module is designed to acquaint you with hoarding through the stories of Clark, married to a hoarder for fifty years, and Sam, an 85 year old hoarder whose nephew “cleaned out” his apartment.

Hoarding 101 describes what causes hoarding and how prevalent it is, along with a profile of hoarders and typical items they collect.



Hoarding

Hoarding From the Inside Out describes the thought processes that drive hoarders to collect and see value in common objects and helps you experience hoarding through the eyes of a hoarder.

This fourth module, **When and How to Intervene**, describes an intervention protocol and presents important guidelines to use when working with hoarders.



Packrat

The last module consists of the award-winning Terra Nova film, **Packrat**. **Packrat** explores the issues of hoarding through two families whose lives have been shaped by parents who were “packrats” and reinforces information presented in the course. The film also presents an interview with Dr. Randy Frost, a leading clinician and researcher in the field of hoarding.

At right is the father of **Packrat** cinematographer/co-producer Jessica Jennings, in his enormous barn filled to the ceiling with items “that could be useful someday.”



Meet Clark

I buried my wife yesterday. She was a hoarder. I loved her and I took care of her, especially the past few years when she was bedridden. After fifty years of marriage, her dying words to me were not "I love you." They were "Don't touch my stuff."

I was surrounded by her stuff for years. I want to get rid of it and reclaim my life.



Clark's bedroom

This is Clark's bedroom; it is neat and orderly.



How Clark lived

This is the living room and dining room in the home Clark shared with his wife.



How Clark lived

This is the bedroom of Clark's wife.



Clark remembers

It wasn't always this bad. It grew gradually, and kept on growing, like an addiction. When did it start? When we were younger, we had company, we did things... then her stuff took over our lives. How did I let this happen? What could I have done that might have made things different?

Clark cleared out much of his wife's clutter from his home. Three years later, like a number of elderly, lonely widowers, Clark took his own life.



Meet Sam

Since I was 15, I saved all kinds of stuff --- candles, small bottles, marbles, mirrors, nuts, screws, wire, cord, bath tub stoppers, mothballs, empty cigarette packs, frying pans, paper that said different things on them, parking tickets.



Sam's "hobby"

In 1997, my brother Harry, with whom I lived, slipped on some of my papers and was brought to a nursing home. The social worker wouldn't let him come back unless I got rid of some of my collections. So I got a bus pass and visited him once a week. He died last year at the age of 85. If he'd had a hobby like me, he might have lived longer.

		95
2	PERSONS	\$1.03
3		\$2.06
4		\$3.09
5		\$4.12
5		<u>57</u>
10	05659	<u>62</u>
16	PLEASE PAY CASHIER	<u>67</u>
21	Thank You—Call Again	<u>72</u>
26		<u>77</u>
31		<u>82</u>
36		<u>88</u>
41		<u>93</u>
46		<u>98</u>
51		<u>1.03</u>

“It made me feel important”

I liked living with my collections and I always knew where everything was. In the living room the junk came up to about my chest. In the bedroom, it wasn't too bad. It just came up to about my knees. I made paths to get around. It made me feel important.

But I guess I overdid it. The landlord wanted me to get rid of my junk. A third of my neighbors wouldn't talk to me. I suspected I might get evicted. So this summer, I had to let it all go.



The clean-out

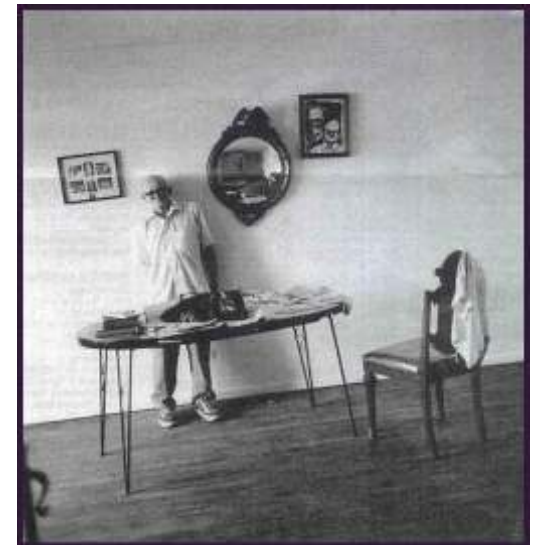
My nephew cleaned out my apartment with some of friends of his. It took ten days. I wasn't there. When I came back, I was disappointed. I thought more of my stuff would be saved. I felt so empty, like I had been robbed. I lost memories of my four brothers and my mother. But things happen. What can you do? I am too old to worry any more. All that is left is my necktie collection and my cat, Waggin.



Sam's new world

*The emptiness is a little hard to get used to.
For one thing, the traffic noise is very loud now.*

*I feel hollow. My collections were a sort of freedom.
I put so much work into saving, years and
years, and it's suddenly gone. It's like
somebody had died, a fire, or an earthquake.
It's like the change from hot to cold water.
I may start saving certain things, like books,
but I don't go out now as much as I used to,
so I can't collect as much. From now on,
I'll have fewer hobbies.*



The ethics of working with hoarders

Clark and Harry's stories illustrate some of the complex ethical issues involved in working with elderly hoarders and their families.

- Do mentally competent seniors have the right to neglect themselves and their surroundings to the extent that they endanger themselves and/or offend the community?
- Do government agencies have a right or obligation to intervene?
- What should be done when reclusive or eccentric seniors refuse help?

Welcome to the world of hoarding.





Congratulations!
You have completed the **Introduction to Hoarding** module.

Now proceed to a short quiz.