

“An essential guide for loved ones of those who compulsively hoard. *Digging Out*...offers practical tools that really work to reduce harm associated with clutter and improve family relationships...”

—BELINDA LYONS, executive director of the Mental Health Association of San Francisco

Facts on Hoarding:

- About one to three million people in the United States (Samuels et al. 2008) have a hoarding problem, a typically lifelong pattern of acquiring and keeping almost everything.
- Compulsive hoarding, an anxiety disorder, is defined as the acquisition of, and inability to get rid of, worthless items even though they appear (to others) to have no value.

Why Harm Reduction?

- Harm reduction focuses on assisting family members to develop a plan to manage the problem so that hoarders can live safely and comfortably in their homes.
- Harm reduction assumes that it is not necessary to stop all compulsive acquiring, or to clear homes completely in order to stop harm.

FOR AN INTERVIEW
REQUEST OR MORE
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DIGGING OUT

Helping Your Loved One Manage Clutter, Hoarding, and Compulsive Acquiring

MICHAEL A. TOMPKINS, PH.D., AND TAMARA L. HARTL, PH.D.

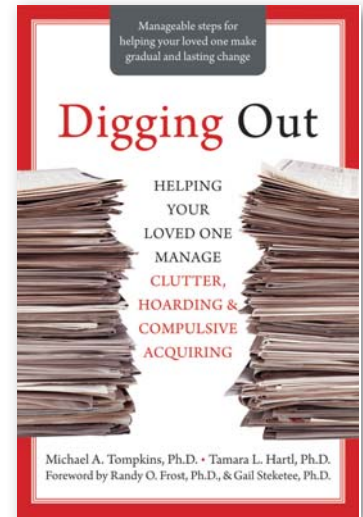
Important advice on how to keep loved ones who hoard safe and how you can preserve your relationship with them

It can be anything, really. Newspapers, used bottles, old scraps of cloth, unworn clothes. Items that normally would be thrown out or donated away but in some cases, for some people, become items of indescribable value. To the rest of the world, however, it's just clutter.

For the friend or family member of someone who obsessively acquires, watching your loved one hoard can be very painful. As their home becomes cluttered, unsanitary, and dangerous, and their life impaired by years of junk, a loved one can only look on helplessly. Although hoarding negatively affects their quality of life, social relationships, and safety, people who hoard are often unwilling to end their behavior.

Digging Out (New Harbinger, \$17.95), by psychologists Michael Tompkins and Tamara Hartl, is the first book to help friends and family members keep their loved ones safe from the dangers of compulsive acquiring. Using a technique called **harm reduction**, which aims to reduce safety risk rather than force a hoarder to discard possessions, readers will be able to set small, achievable goals for their loved ones and help them live safely and comfortably at home. “In many cases hoarding has damaged formerly loving and caring relationships,” Tompkins and Hartl explain. “Over time, families grow hopeless because they don’t see a realistic way to solve the problem, in part, because what they’ve tried hasn’t worked.”

It can be difficult to maintain a positive relationship with a hoarder when you are ashamed of their behavior or are constantly afraid that they will die in a fire or beneath an avalanche of trash. Tompkins and Hartl explain how to take the focus off of the hoarding behavior and how to concentrate instead on the loveable qualities that the person possesses. They also offer suggestions for roommates and romantic partners who live with hoarders, engaging case stories from hoarders and their loved ones, and advice on when and how to stage a clear-out intervention.



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ABOUT the AUTHORS



PRAISE

“*Digging Out* is a wonderful book for those who have family members or other loved ones with compulsive hoarding and cluttering problems. It provides a practical, realistic, in-depth, and empathic approach to helping manage this serious and often debilitating problem using harm reduction techniques...”

—CAROL A. MATHEWS, MD,
associate professor of psychiatry at the
University of California, San Francisco
School of Medicine

“If your loved one has a problem with compulsive saving, this book can help you both save what really counts—yourselves!...”

—JEFF BELL,
author of *When in Doubt, Make Belief: An OCD-Inspired Approach to Living with Uncertainty*

Michael A. Tompkins, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and a founding partner of the San Francisco Bay Area Center for Cognitive Therapy, an assistant clinical professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and a founding fellow of the Academy of Cognitive Therapy. He has authored and coauthored numerous articles and books on cognitive behavior therapy and related topics, including *My Anxious Mind* and the book and video series *Essential Components of Cognitive-Behavior Therapy for Depression*. He has presented nationally on the topic of compulsive hoarding and is a member of the San Francisco Task Force on Hoarding. He specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders in adults, adolescents, and children and is in private practice in Oakland, CA.

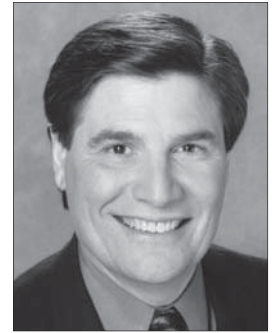


Photo by Lois Terna

Tamara L. Hartl, Ph.D., is an independent clinical practitioner in Saratoga, CA, and a psychologist at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. She has coauthored several seminal publications on hoarding behavior, including the first cognitive-behavioral model for the treatment of compulsive hoarding with Randy Frost. She specializes in the treatment of anxiety disorders and sexual dysfunction as well as compulsive hoarding.

EXCERPT

Why They Refuse Help

If your loved one suffers from compulsive hoarding, you’ve likely tried to help. You may have offered to clean her home or to hire someone to do it. You may have suggested that your loved one meet with a therapist or talk about the problem with a doctor; you may have purchased books on the topic and given them to your loved one to read, or searched for hours on the Internet for resources that could help—and, to all these efforts, your loved one has said no. Your loved one’s refusal to accept help, or even to admit that there’s a problem, is perhaps the most frustrating and demoralizing aspect of the problem for family members.

Although some with the problem do see that the clutter is excessive and that their living conditions are unsafe and uncomfortable, they may be in the minority. Far more people who hoard tend to resist or avoid treatment or help. They appear baffled by family members’ reactions to the clutter and are oblivious to the risks and discomfort that come from living with too many things. Typically, these people are older and have suffered from the problem of compulsive hoarding for years, often decades, and live in very dilapidated and unsafe conditions...Typically, when these people do accept help, it’s because others have forced it upon them. Even when refusing help may mean eviction, some people still say no.

Poor insight, disagreement about how to solve the problem, fear, hopelessness, resentment and mistrust, and personal values are some of the reasons your loved one refuses help.

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