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Beyond The Clutter

Understanding and Supporting Individuals with Hoarding

By Annie O'Neil, NYCPS-P, WIP-C

Agenda

Welcome & Introductions

- Presenter overview
- Western New York Independent Living Inc.
- Training objectives

Training Presentation

- What is a hoarding disorder
- Examples of Hoarding Behaviors
- Key Characteristics
- Common Signs In the Field
- Risk Factors and Causes
- Impact on Health and Safety
- How to Approach Individuals
- What Not to Do
- Why
- Trauma Informed Approach
- Harm Reduction Model

Questions & Discussion

- Collaboration with other Agencies
- Hoarding 2 Healing Support Group
- Recommended Books
- Important takeaways
- Open Q&A
- Closing remarks

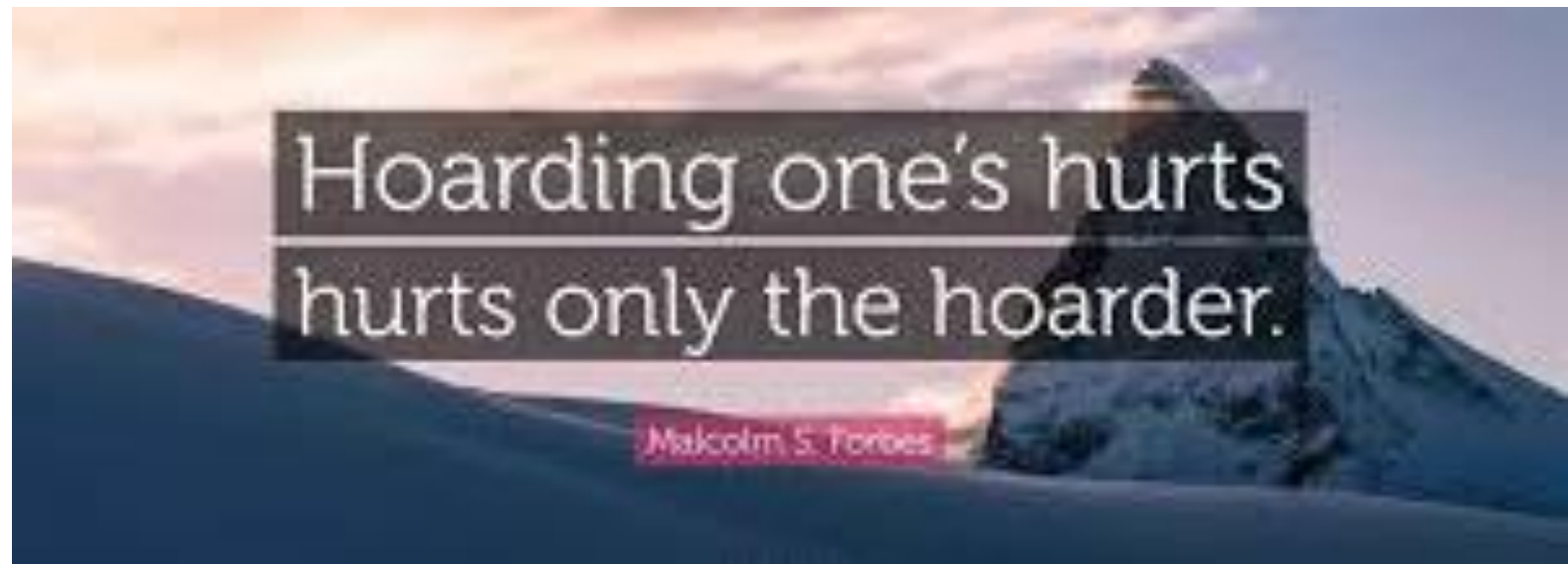


Training Objectives

Is it hoarding
or organized
mess?

By the end of this training, participants will:

- Recognize signs of hoarding disorder
- Understand underlying causes
- Learn safe and respectful engagement strategies
- Identify what NOT to do
- Connect individuals to local resources in Buffalo / Erie County
- Learn about ongoing support options





Presenter: Annie O'Neil



Annie L. O'Neil, NYSCP-P, Notary Public, CPMC, WIP-C

Pronouns (She, Her, Hers)

Mental Health Peer Connection

CORE Peer Support Specialist/Benefits Advisor

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What is Hoarding Disorder?

To give a better understanding it is:

- Persistent difficulty discarding possessions
- Strong urge to save items regardless of value
- Living spaces become unusable or unsafe



"You're not technically hoarding if you take everything out of your house and put it in a storage unit where nobody can see it."

Examples of Hoarding Behaviors

Mail Hoarding

A lot of people hoard mail not just hoarders



Compulsive Shopping Clutter

For every item brought in the home take something out



Collection Hoarding

Is your collection taking over your living space?



Storage Hoarding

Storages, attics and garages are often hoarded to capacity



Key Characteristics and Signs



Key Characteristics

What to look for:

- Excessive accumulation
- Clutter that impacts daily living
- Emotional distress when discarding
- Often co-occurs with anxiety, depression, or trauma





Common Signs in the Field



- Blocked exits / fire hazards
- Stacks of papers, food containers, or items
- Strong odors or unsanitary conditions
- Limited movement inside the home
- Social isolation



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Risk Factors & Causes

- Trauma or loss
- Chronic stress
- Executive functioning challenges
- Attachment to objects
- Family history



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Impact on Health & Safety

- Fall risks
- Fire hazards
- Infestation or mold
- Medical neglect
- Eviction or code violations

How to Approach Individuals

Speak politely, clear in a calm inviting voice.

Helpful language:

“How can I support you?”

“What feels most important to you right now?”



✓ Use empathy and respect



✓ Build trust over time



✓ Ask permission before discussing belongings



✓ Focus on safety first

What NOT to Do

✗ Do NOT force clean-outs

Many people get angry and things can get out of hand



✗ Do NOT shame or judge

We don't know what they are going through

when we judge,
we miss the
opportunity to
support.



✗ Do NOT throw items away without consent

The person may withdraw and no longer want to communicate



✗ Do NOT overwhelm with too many demands

One thing at a time is a better approach. Show them authentic support



WHY?

These actions increase trauma, resistance, and relapse risk



Trauma-Informed Approach

Progress over Perfection

Remember to:

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graph TD; A[Remember to:] --- B[Recognize hoarding as coping]; A --- C[Prioritize autonomy]; A --- D[Move at the person's pace]; A --- E[Collaborate-not control];
```

Recognize
hoarding as
coping

Prioritize
autonomy

Move at the
person's pace

Collaborate-
not control

Harm Reduction Model

Think of the person your supporting

Focus on safety, not perfection



Small, achievable goals



Clear pathways (exits, kitchen access,
bathroom use)



- Erie County Department of Mental Health
- Crisis Services of Erie County
- Belmont Housing Resources for WNY
- Adult Protective Services Erie County

Collaboration with Agencies

- It takes a village to provide support !
- Case managers
- Code enforcement
- Fire departments
- Mental health providers

Hoarding 2 Healing Support Group



Western New York
Independent Living, Inc.
Family of Agencies
improving the lives of individuals with disabilities in Western NY
through the Independent Living philosophy of consumer choice

HOARDING 2 HEALING

Every Monday starting April 15, 2024
3 PM - 4:30 PM
3108 Main Street
Buffalo, NY
(Behind Jim's Steakout)
***This is a scent free environment**



Where hoarding is transformed to healing through
organizing lives one area at a time!



- Learning to organize/upkeep skills
- Developing cleaning schedules
- What it means to declutter
- Open discussion with peers
- Create your own plan
- Judgement free

RSVP WITH ANNIE



716-836-0822 Ext. 144

MHPC Monthly Support Group Calendar				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Recovery Support Group (3:30-4:30 PM) • Hoarding to Healing (3:00-4:30 PM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming Life's Challenges (9:00 AM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own Your Space – Healthy Boundaries (2:00-3:30 PM) • SMART Family Recovery (WNYIL) (1:00-2:00 PM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-Regulated (3:30pm - 5:00pm) • SMART Recovery (3:30-4:30 PM) • Virtual Open Mic – Freedom of Expression (3:30-4:30 PM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking Barriers Employment (3:30-PM) • Housing Barriers Support Group (3:00-4:00 PM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Recovery Support Group (3:30-4:30 PM) • Breaking the Ice (2:00-3:00 PM) • Hoarding to Healing (3:00-4:30 PM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Through the Arts (12:30 - 1:30pm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Family Recovery (Library) (1:00-2:00 PM) • Elevate! Peer Support Group (2:00-3:00 PM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART Recovery (3:30-4:30 PM) • LGBT Mental Health Support Group (1:00-2:00 PM) 	
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BREAKING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT
Support for overcoming employment obstacles.
RSVP: Zanus Cook – 716-836-0822 ext. 173/533

SMART RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP
Evidence-based recovery skills for SUD.
RSVP: Tim Van Valkenburg – 716-836-0822 ext. 135

OWN YOUR SPACE – HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
Build healthy boundaries and self-advocacy skills.
RSVP: Tegwanda Alford – 716-836-0822 ext. 169

VIRTUAL OPEN MIC – FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
Creative sharing space for expression and connection.
RSVP: Lisa Maria Cruz – 716-836-0822 ext. 509

WELLNESS THROUGH THE ARTS
Relaxation through art-based wellness activities.
RSVP: Lancia Woods – 716-836-0822 ext. 193

OVERCOMING LIFE'S CHALLENGES
Shift perspective using gratitude and positive thinking.
RSVP: Jahneen Jamison – 716-836-0822 ext. 171

LGBT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT GROUP
Peer support around LGBTQ+ mental wellness.
RSVP: Jack Green – 716-836-0822 ext. 167

SMART FAMILY RECOVERY (LIBRARY)
Support for loved ones affected by addiction.
RSVP: Carla Kenney – 716-836-0822 ext. 164



RE-REGULATED
Support for those living with childhood trauma
RSVP: Ryan Lockwood – 716-836-0822 ext. 106

SMART FAMILY RECOVERY (WNYIL)
Tools for communication, boundaries & stress.
RSVP: Carla Kenney – 716-836-0822 ext. 164

ELEVATE! PEER SUPPORT GROUP
Peer-led coping and support for daily life challenges.
RSVP: Brooks – 716-836-0822 ext. 183

HOUSING BARRIERS SUPPORT GROUP
Help navigating challenges in finding/keeping housing.
RSVP: Ashanti – 716-836-0822 ext. 160

BREAKING THE ICE
Improve comfort and confidence in social interactions.
RSVP: Amanda Hergert – 716-836-0822 ext. 526

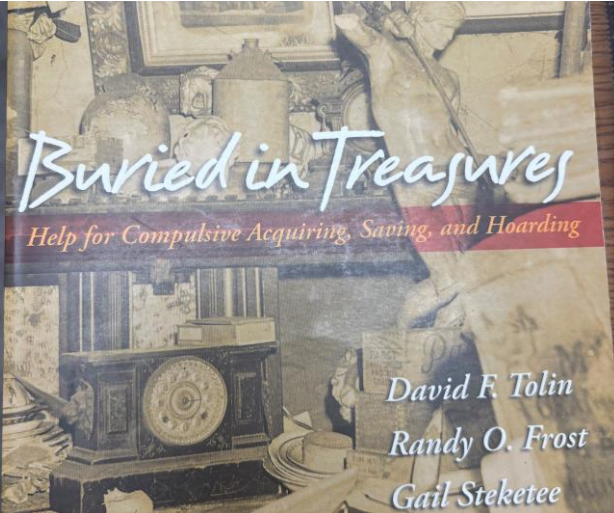
HOARDING TO HEALING
Support for decluttering and building organizing skills.
RSVP: Annie O'Neil – 716-836-0822 ext. 144



Recommended Books

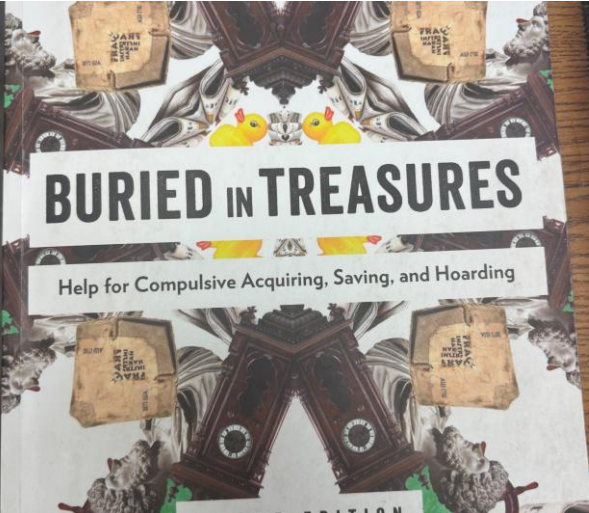
Buried In Treasures 1st Edition

David F. Tolin
Randy Frost
Gail steketee



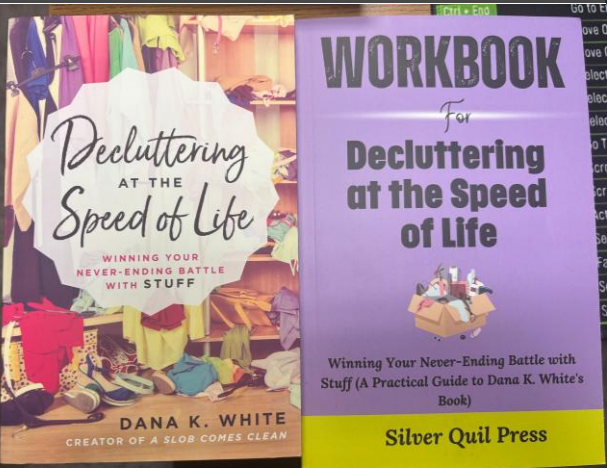
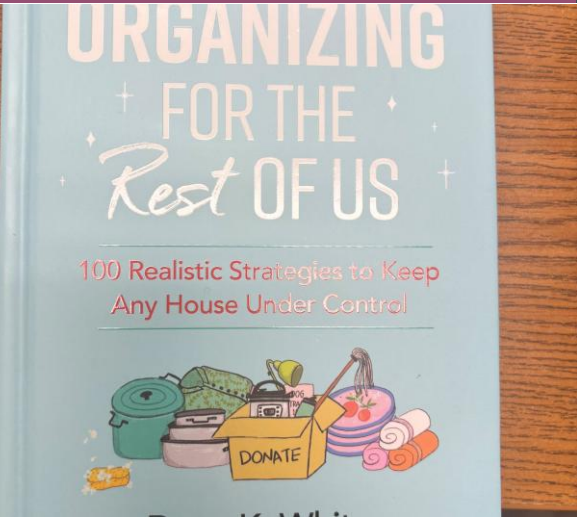
Buried In Treasures 2nd Edition

David F. Tolin
Randy Frost
Gail steketee



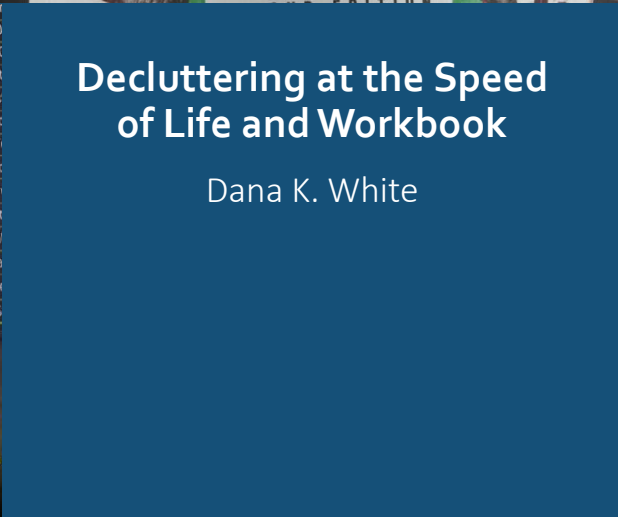
Organizing for the Rest of Us

Dana K. White



Decluttering at the Speed of Life and Workbook

Dana K. White



Important Takeaways To Remember

Progress over Perfection

Key Takeaways

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graph TD; A[Key Takeaways] --- B[Hoarding is a mental health condition—not laziness]; A --- C[Trust is essential]; A --- D[Safety over perfection]; A --- E[Collaboration leads to better outcomes];
```

Hoarding is a mental health condition—not laziness

Trust is essential

Safety over perfection

Collaboration leads to better outcomes



Q & A Time!!!!

Open floor for:

- Questions
- Experiences
- Challenges