



# *QVCC Human Services Topical Webinar*

## Too Much Stuff?

## Understanding Excessive Clutter

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Shelley Buchbinder PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor, Quinebaug Valley Community College

# Housekeeping



Audio & video are muted

Call-in if audio issues  
Subtitling is available



Participate

Chat  
Polls



Recording

This webinar is being recorded



Follow-up email

Recording  
Presentation



No CEs available

Email with questions

# Too Much Stuff? Pandemic Stockpiling



Why did people stockpile?

# Types of Too Much Stuff

Stockpile

Collect

Clutter

Excessive Clutter

What's your relationship to excessive clutter?



# Fascination with Excessive Clutter

Collyer Brothers (1947)



Tom Watson, New York Daily News

Hoarders (2009 – 2013, present)



***Consumption*** without ***rapid disposal***

# Classification as a Mental Health Condition

Evolution from an OCD feature to Hoarding Disorder (DSM 5)

Difficulty discarding  
possessions

Saving items to avoid distress

Cluttered spaces that hinder  
use as designed

Distress and impairment

About [Hoarding Disorder](#) | [DSM 5 Hoarding Disorder Criteria](#)

(Frost et al., 2012; SAMHSA, 2016)

# Assessing if Clutter is a Problem

## Clutter Image Rating Scale: Living Room

Please select the photo below that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter in your room



1



2



3



4



5



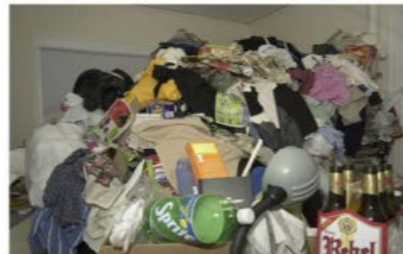
6



7



8



9

## Clutter Image Rating Scale

- Select the photo that most accurately reflects the amount of clutter
- 4+ is concern for Hoarding Disorder

See [Hoarding Disorder Clinical Assessments](#)

# Causes & Consequences

## Core vulnerabilities

- Environment (e.g., experiences of violence)
- Genetic factors

## Information processing deficits

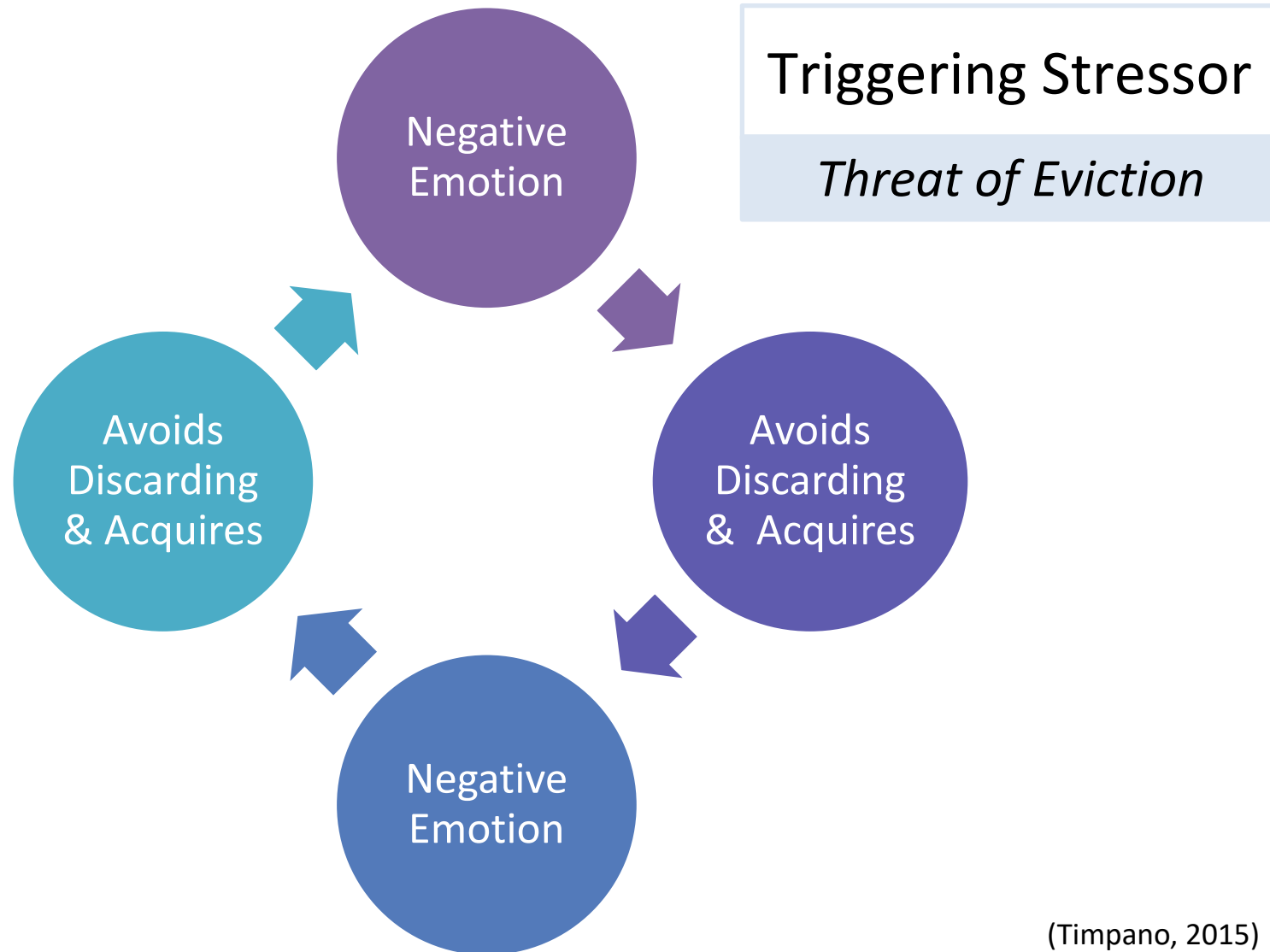
- Memory
- Attention
- Decision-making

## Emotional responses & processes

- Positive reinforcement to save or acquire items
- Negative reinforcement & avoidance to discard or not acquire items



# Reinforcement Loop

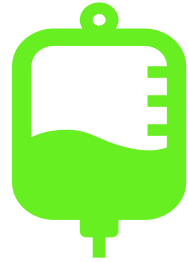


(Timpano, 2015)

# Related Harms



Housing



Health &  
safety



Financial



Social

Witnessed or experienced any of these harms?

(Bratiotis et al., 2011; Frost et al., 2000)

# Rental Responsibilities & Risks

## CT General Statutes

### Tenant Responsibilities

Clean and safe condition

Disposal of garbage, rubbish in a clean and safe manor

No nuisance to neighbors

Do not destroy or impair use of apartment or appliances



# Public Involvement

Adult or Child Protective Services

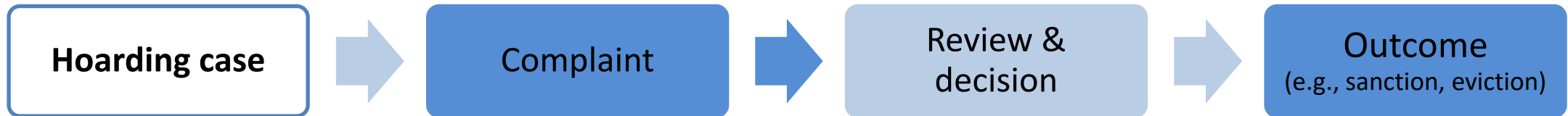
Animal Control

First Responders

Public Health Departments

Code Enforcement

Progression of hoarding cases through the public sector



Seen public involvement with people with excessive clutter?

(Bratiotis et al., 2011; Chaplin et al., 2010)

# Challenging to Address



Providers & families report strained relations

Irritated by behavior  
Higher burnout  
Avoid



Providers report a lack of

Resources & training  
Trained professionals  
Lack of a response system

Experienced or witnessed strained alliances?



# Addressing Excessive Clutter

## Treatment

**Reduce and eliminate symptoms** by changing thoughts, beliefs and behavioral patterns

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Hoarding Disorder

## Harm Reduction

**Reduce negative outcomes** (e.g., eviction) without altering factors that impact behaviors (e.g., acquiring)

Do no harm (e.g., no cleanouts)

Follow interests (e.g., cooking)

# Resources for Harm Reduction

Inspection Support

Risk Assessment

Self-help









# Housing Inspection Tools

Experience with housing inspections?

## Uniform Inspection Checklist

Uniform Inspection Checklist -Quick Reference			
Date Completed:		Person Completing This Form:	
Address:		Town:	
RESIDENT	The purpose of inspection is to ensure housing is decent, safe, sanitary, & in good repair. Inspector must be able to view, reach, and test all items on inspection checklist.		
INSTRUCTIONS	Use P to indicate Pass if item MEETS STANDARD of target or F to indicate Fail if the item DOES NOT MEET STANDARD of target. Write any specific information in space to right of target.		
<b>STEP 1</b>	P=Pass F=Fail	<b>The following items must be UNOBSTRUCTED ~ completely clear of any items ~</b>	<b>SPECIFIC AREA NEEDING TO BE ADDRESSED (EX: BACK DOOR, BEDROOM WINDOW, PATH FROM BEDROOM TO KITCHEN, ETC.)</b>
<b>HARM REDUCTION TARGETS</b>		Egresses - <i>means of exit</i> - must be unobstructed	
		Minimum of 36" wide unobstructed and continuous pathways throughout residence	
		Smoke detectors, CO detectors, & sprinkler heads ( <i>all that apply</i> )- must be unobstructed	
		All doors must be unobstructed: including entry & exit, closet, cabinet, pantry, etc. (Inspector must be able to open & close doors fully & freely, & be able to latch if applicable)	
		Minimum of 1 unobstructed window in living room, each bedroom, and any other room in home with windows for emergency exit	
		Toilets, stoves, ovens, refrigerator, washing machine/dryer, open flame heat sources, fireplaces, water unit, a/c, heat thermostats, trash containers must be unobstructed	
		Emergency pull cords - ( <i>if applicable</i> ) end of cord must be no more than 18" from the floor must be unobstructed	
<b>STEP 2</b>	P=Pass F=Fail	<b>The following items must be ACCESSIBLE ~ easily able to be reached by inspector ~</b>	
<b>PRIMARY INSPECTION TARGETS</b>		Windows must be accessible ( <i>any not included on unobstructed list</i> )	
		Electrical panel(s) & electrical outlets must be accessible	
		All heat sources must be accessible	
		All plumbing fixtures & pipes, including plumbing under all sinks must be accessible	
		Sinks, bathtubs, & showers must be accessible	

## Healthy and Safe Home Initial Benchmarks

- ☐  Clear 3 feet wide pathways throughout the home including hallways and stairs.
- ☐  Reduce all piles to no more than 4 feet above the floor.
- ☐  Reduce all piles near windows to below window sill height and keep windows accessible so they can be opened.
- ☐  Keep all doors clear of belongings, so that they can be opened freely.
- ☐  Keep the stove and oven clear of all clutter, so that the oven door can open completely. Keep paper and other flammable materials at least 1 foot away from the stovetop.
- ☐  Keep belongings at least 1 foot away from heaters, heating equipment, hot water heaters and electrical panels.
- ☐  Regularly remove rotting food, food containers and garbage from the home.
- ☐  Keep outlets, surge protectors and extension cords clear of clutter. Do not run extension cords across piles or pathways.

# Tips When Entering a Home

Can be challenging entering someone's home with excessive clutter

Use respectful verbal and nonverbal language

Match the person's language

Avoid touching objects in the home

Avoid making suggestions about the person's belongings

Avoid focusing on removal

# HOMES Hoarding Risk Assessment

@ Bratiotis 2009

Focus on reducing risk over stopping behaviors

## ☐ Health

- ☐ Cannot use bathtub/shower
- ☐ Cannot access toilet
- ☐ Garbage/Trash Overflow

- ☐ Cannot prepare food
- ☐ Cannot sleep in bed
- ☐ Cannot use stove/fridge/sink

- ☐ Presence of spoiled food
- ☐ Presence of feces/Urine (human or animal)
- ☐ Cannot locate medications or equipment

- ☐ Presence of insects/rodents
- ☐ Presence of mold or chronic dampness

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## ☐ Obstacles

- ☐ Cannot move freely/safely in home
- ☐ Inability for EMT to enter/gain access

- ☐ Unstable piles/avalanche risk
- ☐ Egresses, exits or vents blocked or unusable

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## ☐ Mental health (Note that this is not a clinical diagnosis; use only to identify risk factors)

- ☐ Does not seem to understand seriousness of problem
- ☐ Defensive or angry
- ☐ Unaware, not alert, or confused
- ☐ Does not seem to accept likely consequence of problem
- ☐ Anxious or apprehensive

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## ☐ Endangerment (evaluate threat based on other sections with attention to specific populations listed below)

- ☐ Threat to health or safety of child/minor
- ☐ Threat to health or safety of person with disability
- ☐ Threat to health or safety of older adult
- ☐ Threat to health or safety of animal

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## ☐ Structure & Safety

- ☐ Unstable floorboards/stairs/porch
- ☐ Leaking roof
- ☐ Electrical wires/cords exposed
- ☐ No running water/plumbing problems
- ☐ Flammable items beside heat source
- ☐ Caving walls
- ☐ No heat/electricity
- ☐ Blocked/unsafe electric heater or vents
- ☐ Storage of hazardous materials/weapons

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



# Resources



## Self Help

- [Buried in Treasures](#)
- [Buried in Treasures Facilitators Manual](#)
- [Clutters Anonymous](#)



## Provider Resources

- [The Hoarding Handbook](#)
  - For human services & community providers
- [Best Practice Hoarding Guide](#) (MA)



## Information

- [Hoarding Disorder Center](#) from International OCD Foundation
  - Taskforces [About 75 in the US](#)

# Coming Up



## Next Webinar

- 10/14 on *Gender, Orientation and Affirming Environments*



## Take Evaluation

- When you exit Webex



## Follow Up Email



## Questions

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