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Digging Out: Helping Your Loved One Manage Clutter, Hoarding, And Compulsive Acquiring



Synopsis

Many people who hoard understand the extent of their problem and are open to help. This book is not for them. Digging Out is for the concerned and frustrated friends and family members of people who do not fully accept the magnitude of their hoarding problem and refuse help from others. If you have a friend or loved one with a hoarding problem and are seeking a way to guide him or her to a healthier, safer way of life, this book is for you. In Digging Out, you will find a complete guide to helping your loved one with a hoarding problem live safely and comfortably in his or her home or apartment. Included are realistic harm reduction strategies that you can use to help your loved one manage health and safety hazards, avoid eviction, and motivate him or her to make long-term lifestyle changes. You'll learn how to handle a roommate or spouse with a hoarding problem, identify and work through special considerations that may arise when the person who hoards is frail and elderly, and receive guidance for healing strained relationships between people who hoard and their friends and family. Take heart. With this book as a guide, you can help your loved one live more comfortably and safely, salvage your damaged relationship, and restore your peace of mind.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: New Harbinger Publications; 1 edition (November 1, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1572245948

ISBN-13: 978-1572245945

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.5 x 8.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (30 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #331,541 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in Â Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Invertebrates #310 in Â Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Mental Health > Compulsive Behavior #980 in Â Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Clinical Psychology

Customer Reviews

This book fills a gap in published information about hoarding. Other excellent books exist for hoarders themselves or for professionals who treat hoarders, but there has not been a book directed at the people whose loved ones hoard. The authors deal with the frustration family members or friends feel regarding an uncooperative person with excessive clutter. In addition to

addressing the emotional toll on those around the hoarder, the book educates readers about hoarding, including setting realistic expectations for changing the situation. Particularly useful is the application of harm reduction theory to hoarding. This examines how friends and family can help the hoarder to minimize health and safety hazards. Digging Out presents a comprehensive, easy to read guide for those who are at their wit's end. No doubt it will be a seminal book for working with hoarders.

This book does a very good job clarifying priorities when it comes to clearing the mess of a hoarder (i.e. instead of approaching the situation with a "TOSS EVERYTHING!" attitude, it advocates a "harm reduction" stance, which focuses on maximizing your loved one's safety & comfort over discarding his or her things). It tries to get the reader accustomed to the idea that the hoarder will probably never be as horrified about their living conditions as those around them. Fortunately or unfortunately, the majority of the book seems to focus on elderly hoarders (that does put a particular slant on the text), which may be positive or negative, depending on the reader. It goes into great lengths discussing the challenges of dealing with a hoarder in the grips of Alzheimer's or dementia or those who have difficulties getting around without the use of walkers or finding their medications in the clutter. Unfortunately, for people dealing with younger/youngish hoarders, the condescending psycho-babble in the hypothetical discussions is completely off-putting (eye-rolling at times) & would lose any credibility I personally have with my particular hoarder. Additionally, once a "harm reduction team" is gathered (good luck with that), trying to get the hoarder to sign a contract about how to keep one's OWN property is also condescending, intentionally so or not. This book is really a bit better suited for older hoarders (rather than middle-aged or younger ones). However, these techniques may work for some. Plus, the more flexible "harm reduction" approach over the more staunch "STUFF reduction" method could potentially open more hoarders to purging.

The book "Digging Out" takes a new, pragmatic tack toward the problem of moderate to severe hoarding behavior. It is written for those who are living with, are related to, or are friends of hoarders and as such is the first book to address their concerns directly. It also takes a health and safety approach that reduces unrealistic expectations while offering a toolbox full of useful techniques. I have used some of the communicative strategies in the book with success and the stress and conflict in my situation has been reduced. Other reviewers criticize the book for its emphasis on the elderly and/or dementia sufferers. I did not find this emphasis distracting, though I must admit I see my situation inevitably heading in that direction. A more distracting technique was the repeated use

of the phrase "loved one" to refer to the hoarder. Writing well is not a matter of search and replace. Nevertheless, I was motivated to finish reading the book despite its occasional formulaic quality. The book is quite forward looking in its recognition that hoarding behavior might not be confined to OCD syndromes but also include ADHD profiles, which puts it near the leading edge of contemporary research. I wish there had been more in the book that directly addressed the relationship between OCD and ADHD behavior in hoarders. The biggest shortcoming of the book is that conceptually, and in the form of many sample dialogs, the authors assume at least some level of cooperation on the part of the hoarder. Total denial is so common yet so insurmountable that the examples seemed (to this reader) almost cartoonlike. Still, this book has schooled me in a more humane and caring approach toward my own "loved one."

My family are a bunch of creatives and as such they tend to hoard anything that looks remotely like it might come in useful sometime in the rest of their lives. It even got to the stage that when our son was born they passed on hand-me-down junk to us that filled our carport. I heard about this book from a friend and bought a copy. It really helped out. First off I read it and learned exactly what hoarding is from a therapist's point of view and how to begin working on the problem without upsetting anyone. The main lessons were aimed at minimising harm and they simple language the two authors use got the message over really quickly and didn't leave me guessing about any big medical terminology. They even have a section on planning out your decluttering process. We worked through the book and have made progress. It's an on-going thing and slowly we're learning to change the way we view our home and are really beginning to enjoy it now it's not a dumping ground for junk. Top marks.

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