

## TIPS FOR SUPPORTING A LOVED ONE

- **Meet as a Team:** Coordinate and discuss together.
- **Avoid Arguments:** Focus on productive discussions instead of debating what to remove.
- **Offer Emotional Support:** Be there for each other emotionally throughout the process.
- **Respect Personal Boundaries:** Do not handle or relocate items without permission.
- **Encourage Positivity:** Be a source of encouragement and motivation.
- **Know Your Limits:** Avoid overworking yourself; prioritize self-care.
- **Join on Non-Acquiring Outings:** Support during trips where the focus is not acquiring new items.
- **Assist with Transportation:** Help with moving and transporting items.
- **Recommend Workshops:** Suggest attending a BIT or CBT workshop for additional support (check with your local health department for available courses).

## REACH OUT TO YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR SUPPORT

- Acton - (978) 264-9634
- Bedford - (781) 275-6507
- Billerica - (978) 671-0931
- Chelmsford - (978) 250-5241
- Dracut - (978) 453-8162
- Methuen - (978) 983-8655
- Tewksbury - (978) 851-7261
- Tyngsborough - (978) 649-2300x118
- Westford - (978) 692-5509

SCAN FOR  
HOARDING: BEST  
PRACTICES GUIDE



## RESOURCES

- **International OCD Foundation on Hoarding Disorder:**  
[hoarding.iocdf.org](http://hoarding.iocdf.org)
- **Center for Hoarding and Clutter:**  
[centerforhoardingandclutter.com](http://centerforhoardingandclutter.com)
- **Children of Hoarders:**  
[childrenofhoarders.com](http://childrenofhoarders.com)
- **AgeSpan (>60yrs):**  
(800)-892-0890
- **MassHousing:** (617)-854-1000  
[masshousing.com/hoarding](http://masshousing.com/hoarding)

## TALKING ABOUT HOARDING DISORDER BREAKING THE STIGMA



GLHA  
GREATER LOWELL HEALTH ALLIANCE

## WHAT IS HOARDING DISORDER(HD)?

Hoarding disorder is a mental health condition where individuals excessively collect items and find it difficult to discard them, leading to clutter that disrupts their living space and daily life.

### TREATMENT

The primary treatment approach is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is a type of talking therapy that aims to help manage problems by changing how the person thinks(cognitive) and acts (behavior).

The objective is to enhance the individual's decision-making and organizational abilities, support them in overcoming the urge to save items, and ultimately guide them in systematically decluttering room by room.

### WHAT DISTINGUISHES HOARDING FROM COLLECTING?

While many individuals enjoy collecting items like books or stamps without issue, the key difference lies in organization. A collection is typically well-organized with items easily accessible. In contrast, a hoard tends to be disorganized, occupying significant space, and its items are often difficult to access.

## COMMONLY ACQUIRED ITEMS



NEWSPAPERS, BOOKS, RECEIPTS, LEAFLETS



CLOTHES, CONTAINERS, CARDBOARD BOXES, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

### HEAVY CLEANOUTS: UNSUSTAINABLE AND HARMFUL

Efforts to clear HD homes without addressing the root issue often end in failure. Families and agencies invest significant time and money in cleaning, only to see the problem return quickly. People with HD typically feel distress and may strengthen their attachment to possessions if their homes are cleared without their agreement, leading them to reject future assistance.

## START THE CONVERSATION

**Instead of telling, ask to understand** the person's perspective:

"I noticed you have some newspaper stacks next to the couch. What prompted you to put them here?"

This approach opens up the opportunity to reflect on what the person shares and helps to build a stronger working relationship.

**Using "I" statements** helps to convey your concern without directly telling the person what to do, which can be more respectful and open to discussion.

"I'm concerned that if this area isn't cleared, it might affect our ability to pass the next inspection."

**Match the person's language.** For example, use their terms like collections, belongings, or treasures.

**Use respectful language and avoid judgmental expressions**, whether verbal (e.g., 'discarded items') or non-verbal (e.g., facial expressions).

**Use supportive language:** acknowledge strengths or progress in the home and build upon them.