

More information is available through our website:  
**[www. quakeragingresources.org](http://www.quakeragingresources.org)**

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

**Suggested Reading:**

David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, Gail Steketee, Buried in Treasures, 2007, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.

**Links:**

Moving and Organization:

National Association of Senior Move Managers -

<http://www.nasmm.org/>

<http://www.spaceinventors.com/>

Find Help with Hoarding: <http://www.ocfoundation.org/hoarding/>

Information about Hoarding-

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/hoarding/DS00966>

## *Hoarding*



*“...I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not so costly; so that a way of life free from much entanglements appeared best for me, though the income was small...There was a care on my mind so to pass my time as to things outward that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.”*

John Woolman, 1743, PYM Faith and Practice, 2002



Aging Resources Consultation Help

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**Hoarding** is a phenomenon that leads to social isolation, depression, anxiety, and reluctance to move in retirement. This reluctance often brings hoarding to the awareness of family and Meeting. By hoarding I do not mean simple clutter; a cluttered home may have piles of stuff here and there that are worked at and diminished from time to time.

Hoarding is a psychological issue that results in stuff everywhere, a home that can't be walked through, a bathtub full of clothes, all correspondence for the past 20 years in boxes, a dining room table piled so high that no one has ever eaten there, appliances that don't work and can't be gotten rid of, half the bed covered with junk mail.

A way to distinguish between clutter and hoarding is the emotional distress or barriers thrown up at the thought of getting rid of anything. For hoarders their stuff is an extension, definition, or protection, of self and cannot be eliminated. There are YouTube sites with videos of the homes of hoarders, and of the negative results of making a surprise intervention and cleaning the place while Mom is not home.

While hoarding may be treated successfully as an addiction, it is an anxiety based disorder and sometimes requires professional help. There is a network of social workers who specialize in this phenomenon. Workbooks can walk the hoarder through making changes in small steps, a process best done with on-site assistance of someone with great patience, which usually means not a family member. (See Additional Resources)

Due to the emotional need for their stuff, hoarders can be extremely reluctant to move. For example, Trudy had severe arthritis but lived in a house with five levels; she needed to be some place that was all on one floor, or with elevators. Her children had shown her attractive places to move to, but she continued to refuse in spite of her constant pain.

### **How can I help?**

**Professional Consultation** -an Aging Services Specialist worked with Trudy weekly for 6 months, gaining her trust, helping her to decide what she truly wanted to save and what could be gotten rid of, and they worked together on one small area at a time.

**Patience**-moving first and then getting rid of stuff is more effective and easier on the hoarder than thinking that everything extraneous must go before a move can be contemplated. Once the most important things were boxed, Trudy agreed to move and leave behind the bulk of stuff to be cleaned out after moving.

**Listening and Validation**- families or Meetings of someone reluctant to move should take the time to listen to the reasons, and then take those reasons seriously. For Will it was that the house held all his memories of his wife who had died many years before. Offering Will a large box in which he could put the things most central to his memories would allow him a sense of control and respect.

**Find Meaning**- Marta's need was to know that everything she was leaving behind would go to a home somewhere. First Marta invited family and friends to take what they wanted, and then Marta identified the charity that would receive the proceeds of the estate sale held after the move. Marta's needs were met and she could move.

**Not everyone who saves is a hoarder**- Will nor Marta was a hoarder; both were merely savers. Hoarders need time and expertise to make moving thinkable.