

M A R I A   S P E T A L N I K



H O A R D I N G

F O R

L A W   E N F O R C E M E N T

A N D   O T H E R

P U B L I C   O F F I C I A L S

# SW Virginia Elder Abuse Conference

## Hoarding 1 The Basics

# Who is this crazy lady and why should we listen to her?

- 30+ years of experience working with hundreds of clients for thousands of hours working with clients with clutter and hoarding issues.
- Board Certified Professional Organizer
- Specialize in working with Elders and those that are severely cluttered
- International Instructor to the FBI, Police Departments, Social Service Departments, Therapists and Professional Organizers
- Only company in DC Metro area that KNOWINGLY takes clients with mental health diagnoses
- Thousands of CEUs in client centric topics
- NAPO member– National Association of Productivity and Organization Professionals
- ICD member – Institute for Challenging Disorganization
- ICD Specialist Certificates in Chronic Disorganization, Aging and Hoarding
- Work with Mental Health professionals, home health care professionals, Attorneys and others to assist those they serve

# What is “normal” clutter?

- EVERYONE has some clutter – even if it’s just “pockets of neatness resistance”
- Perfection is just for magazines
- Clutter – even bad cases – can be situational or chronic
- Clutter has an effect on all aspects of your life – physical, mental, emotional, social and work life. Don’t discount it.

# Types of clutter

#1?

# #1 Paperwork





# Types of Clutter

# Future Worth



# Types of Clutter

## Invisible





# What is hoarding?

Now its own diagnosis in the DSM 5 –  
Criteria for Hoarding Disorder (HD) –  
OC Spectrum Condition (APA,2013)

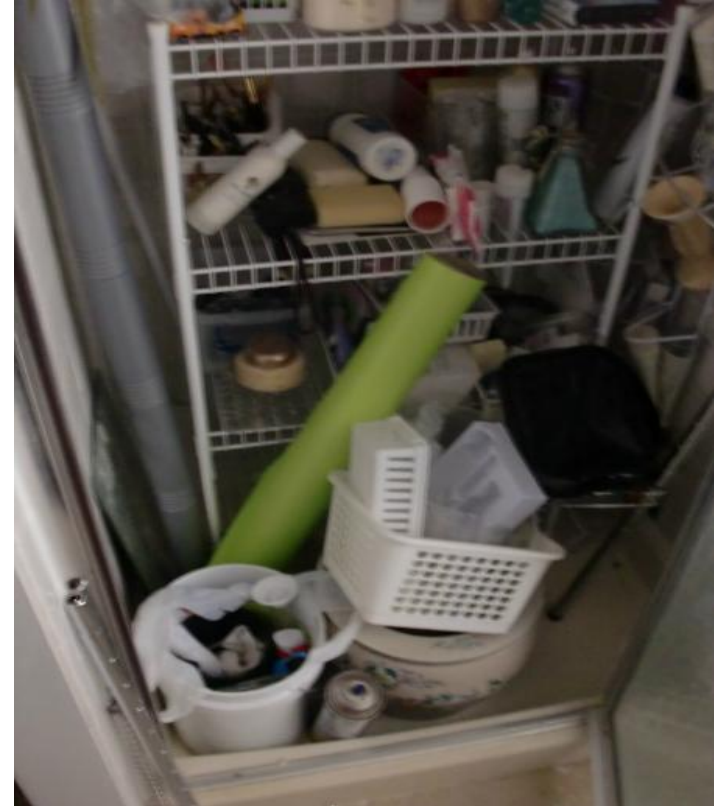
A. Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.

B. Perceived need to save items and distress associated with discarding them



# What is hoarding? - continued

C. Accumulation of possessions that clutter active living areas and substantially compromise their intended use. If living areas are uncluttered, it is only because of the interventions of third parties (family members, authorities, cleaners)



# What is hoarding? - continued

D. Causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas functioning (including maintaining a safe environment for self and others)

E. Not attributable to another medical condition (e.g., brain injury, cerebrovascular disease, etc)

F. Not better accounted for by another DSM-5 disorder (e.g., OCD, major depression, psychotic disorder, dementia, autism spectrum disorder)



# Extreme Hoarding

- The extreme collector is frequently the least likely to accept help.
- Many older parents have become estranged from their children.
- Can not reasonably care for themselves.
- Government intervention is generally the last resort when the deteriorated housing conditions are extensive.

# Someone who Hoards...

- Collects items that others consider useless such as trash, broken toys, etc.
- Will dumpster dive to find items to bring home to add to the collection of “stuff”
- Does not understand why others can't appreciate their collection
- Collects everything – often including animals

# Severe Domestic Squalor Defined

- The interior conditions of the home have become unsanitary to the point of being a threat to the health and safety of those who live or work in it.

# Squallor



# How many have HD or CD?

2-5% of the population worldwide has HD, up to 20% are severely cluttered

US population as of 2020 census was 331,449,281

HD = 6,628,986 – 16,572,464

Severely cluttered = 66,289,856

Virginia population of 8,631,393

HD = 172,628 – 431,570

Severely cluttered = 1,726,279

# Potential legal changes due to Hoarding becoming its own diagnosis

- Diagnosis as defense
- Fair Housing Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Health Insurance – standard and employer

# The History of Hoarding



# Homer and Langly Collyer

March 21, 1947

2078 Fifth Street Avenue



# Neat/Organized Hoard Dry Hoard



# Messy Hoard Wet Hoard



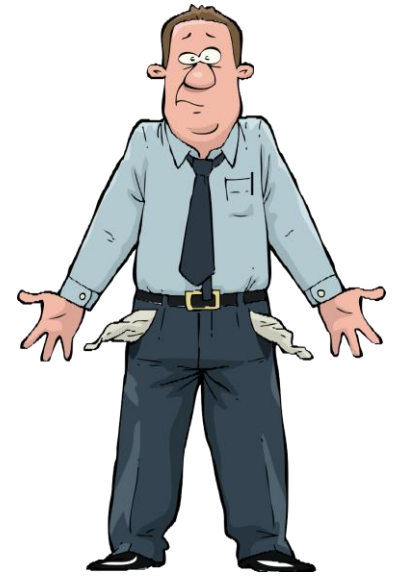
# Animal Hoarding

- While less prevalent, animal hoarding poses a serious health threat to the resident, the community and the animals being kept.
- Animal overpopulation in a home leads to unhealthy waste accumulation, starvation, disease and animal death. Decomposing remains also adds to the unhealthy environment.
- Typically, someone who hoards animals is unaware of the filth and odor actually present in and around the home, and insists the animals are being cared for appropriately.



# Who Hoards





# How serious can this get?

10/3/2012 – Greenwich, CT – Dean Verboven (42) set fire to his house to prevent state social workers from cleaning it out. He died, his 69 year old mother Barbara was severely burned.

**In the last 12 months** – Conquer the Clutter – 42 hoarded clients in Northern Virginia, none of whom made the news



# Hoarding is not a lifestyle choice



# Impact of Clutter

- 98% have at least moderate difficulty moving around the house
- 70% unable to use furniture
- 50% unable to use stove tops or ovens
- 45% unable to use refrigerator or freezer
- 42% unable to use tubs or kitchen sinks
- 10% unable to use toilets
- NAPSA 2020 – Ethics and the hoarding dilemma

# How hoarding feels

- Hoarding is like Cancer
  - Malevolent
  - Dark
  - Grows when you are not looking at it
  - Needs immediate attention
  - Need monitoring
  - Like wearing cataract simulation glasses 24/7

# Time frame

Hoarding is not a short term problem, expect a behavior change to take months or years. It takes time to retrain a person's habits.

Recidivism rates are high – almost 100% without therapy and 70-90% with it. If in therapy interventions tend to happen sooner with slower rates of re-hoarding.



# Alteration in causality beliefs

Prior to 2005 or so

Environment was considered to be the primary cause of hoarding behaviors

Now....

Genetic/Injury/Disease

Executive order decision making

Psychiatric diagnoses

# Possible Triggers

Grief and loss

Loss of a person (death, divorce, breakup)

Possessions (Fire, Flood, divorce)

Possibilities (Dream job, girl have crush on)

Societal losses (shootings, vicarious traumatization)

Raised in environment so its familiar

Self Soothing behavior  
“Retail Therapy”



# Family drama

## Fights

- Lost payments – foreclosures – loss of utilities
- Compensating by purchasing leads to inability to pay bills
- Increased embarrassment so friends not invited over leading to social isolation
- Increased strain in familial relationships



# Children living in a Hoarded Home

- May have no space of their own due to family members' HD
- More than 80% likely to hoard when they grow up in a hoarded home
- Health and safety issues school achievement problems due to lack of ability to complete homework
- Learned coping behaviors
- Abuse due to heightened stress in the family



# Elders with HD

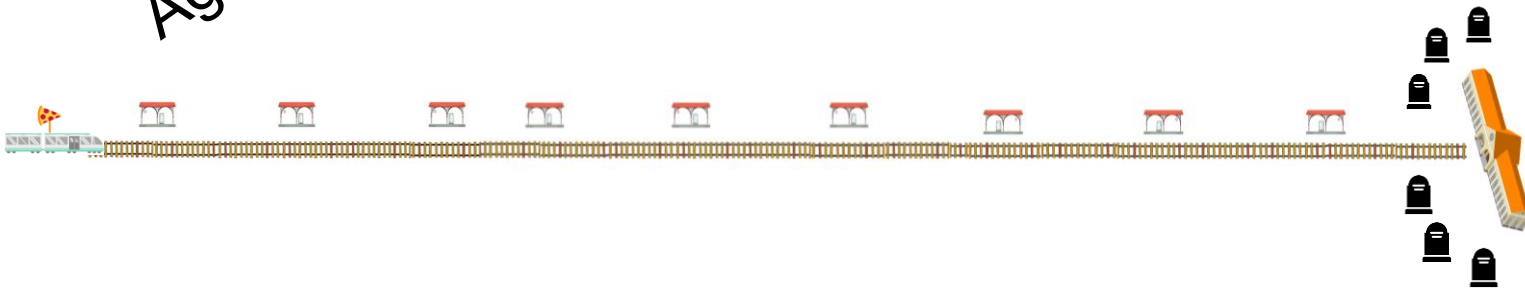
- 10-25% of nursing home and public housing residents
- Premature relocation to senior housing and greatly increased risk of homelessness
- One study showed up to 40% of homeless hoard
- Chronic and age-related medical illnesses at higher rate than average
- Significant impairment of ADL's
- Social isolation



# Train of Thought

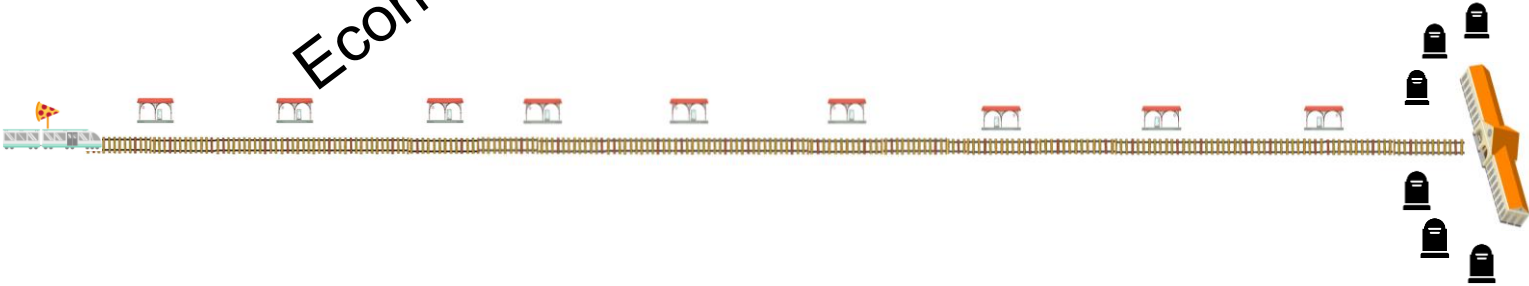


Age 68

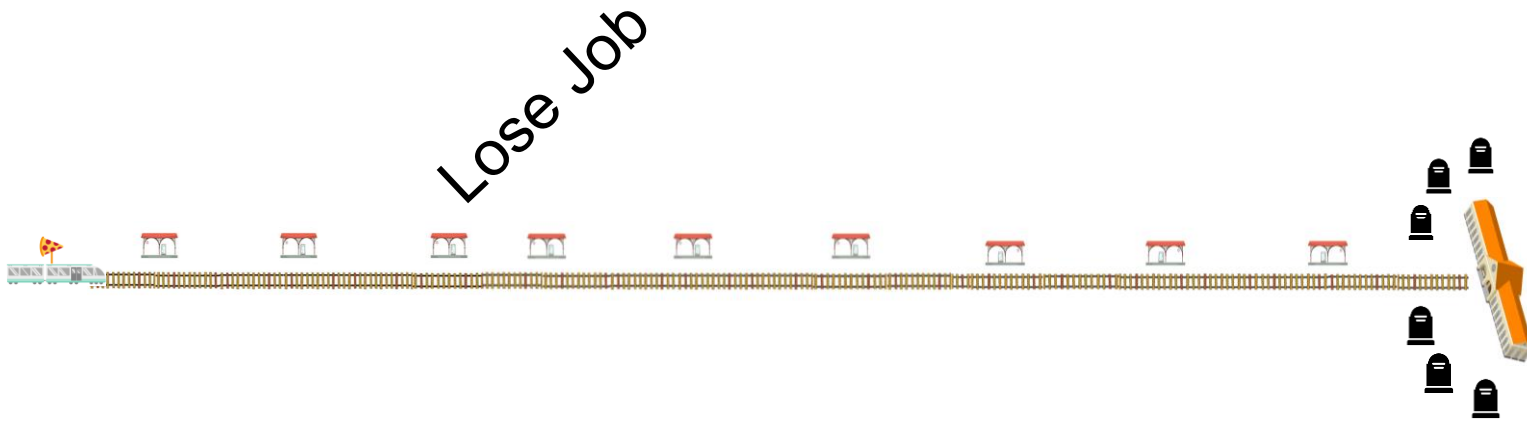


Age 68

Economy Bad

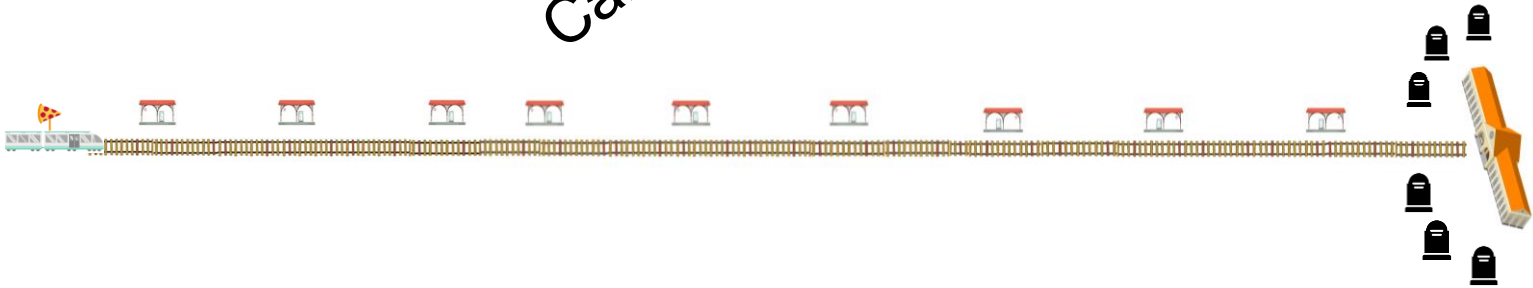


Age 68  
Economy Bad



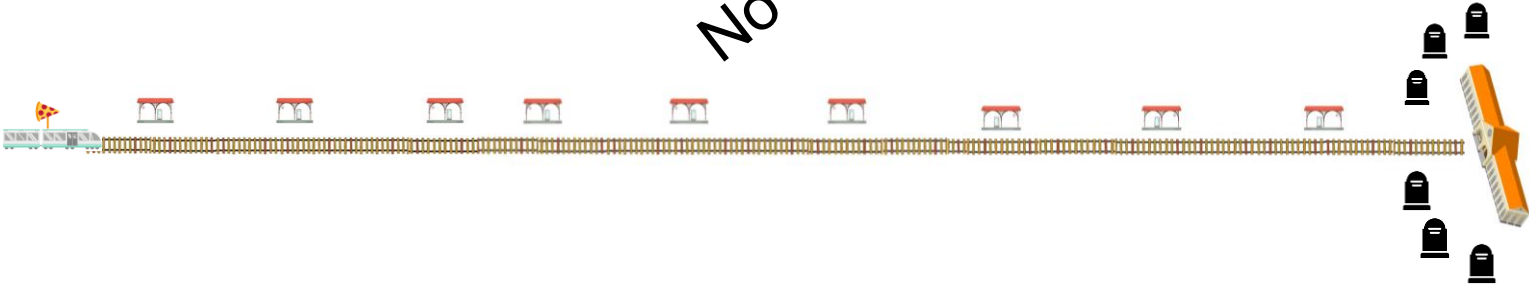
Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job

Can't get a new Job



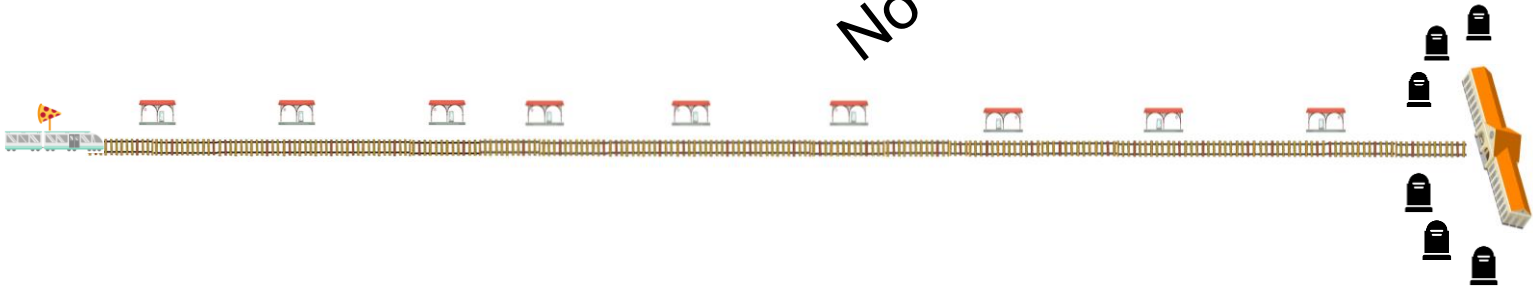
Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job  
Can't get a new job

No Income



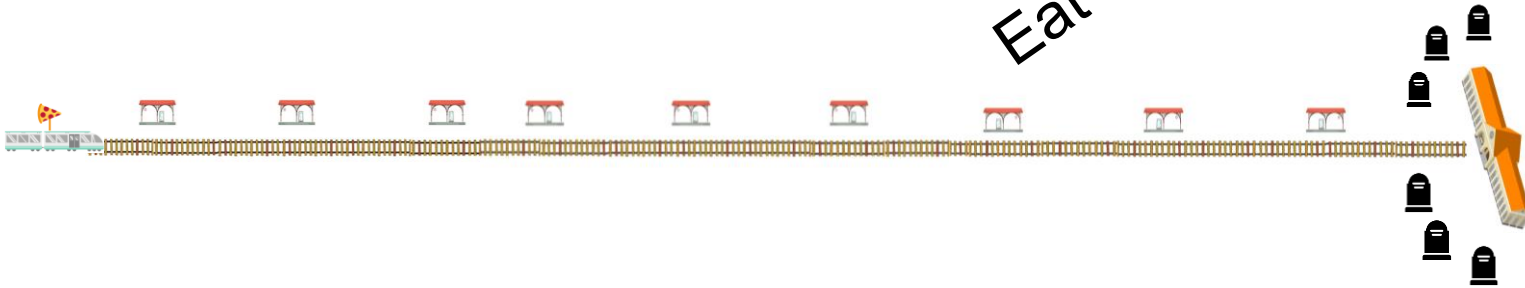
Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job  
Can't get a new job  
No Income

No \$\$\$ to buy food

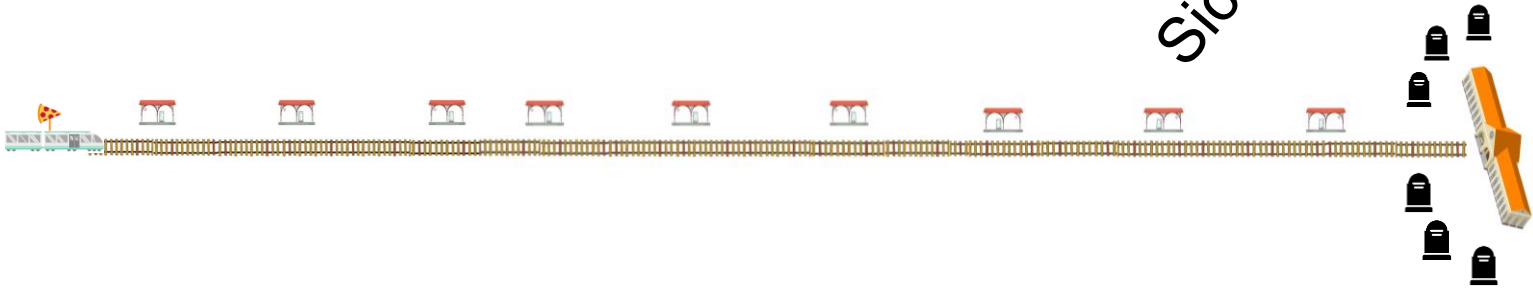



Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job  
Can't get a new job  
No Income  
No \$\$ to buy food

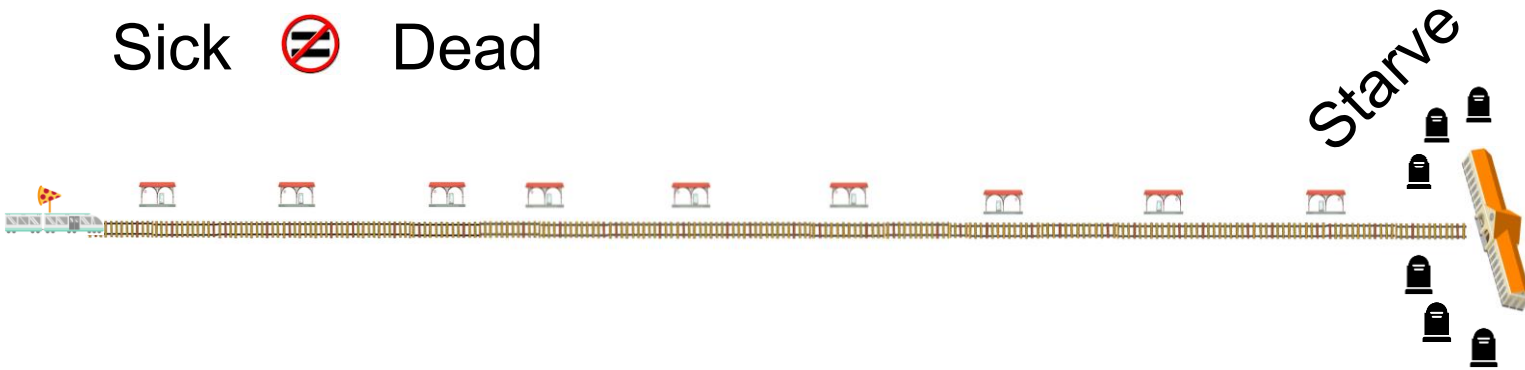
*Eat what I have*

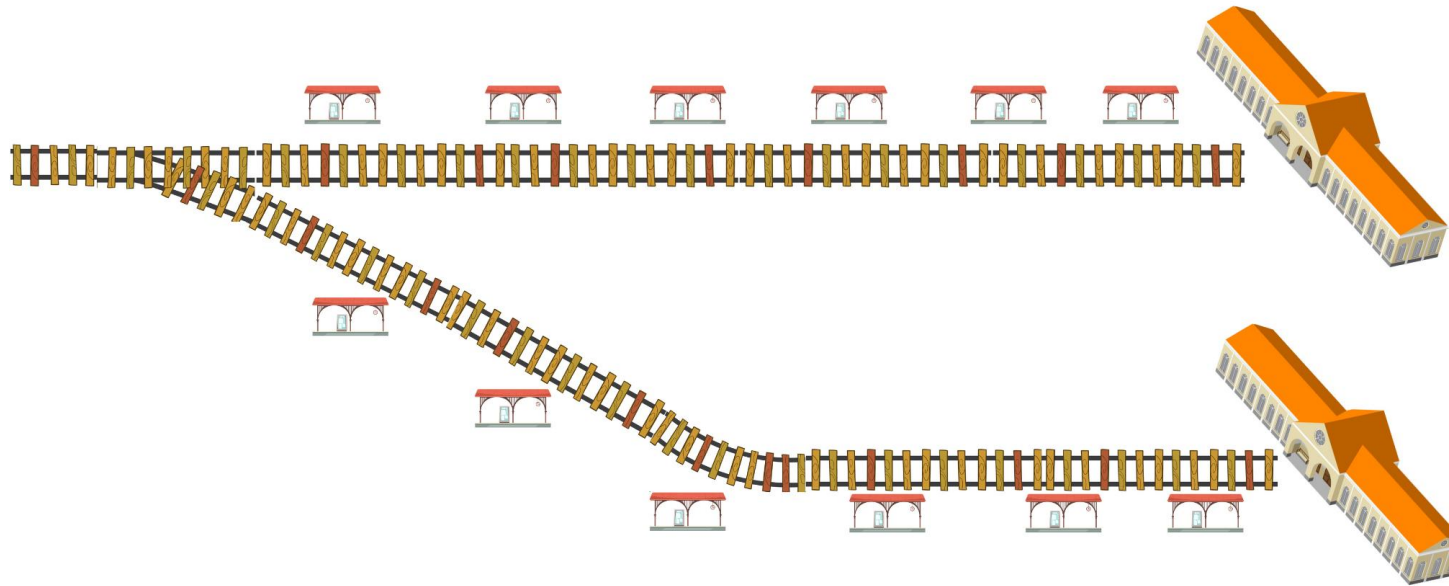


Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job  
Can't get a new job  
No Income  
No \$\$ to buy food  
Eat what I have



Age 68  
Economy Bad  
Lose Job  
Can't get a new job  
No Income  
No \$\$ to buy food  
Eat what I have  
Sick  Dead





# Signs there may be hoarding

# USE PROHIBITED – EVACUATION NOTICE

## THIS STRUCTURE IS UNSAFE/UNFIT FOR HABITATION

ITS USE OR OCCUPANCY HAS BEEN PROHIBITED BY THE  Fire Marshal  Building Official  Maintenance Code Official  
PER THE  Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code  Virginia Construction Code  
 Virginia Existing Building Code  Virginia Maintenance Code

*No person shall enter, occupy or use this structure, except as authorized by the code official, or designee, to make inspections, to perform required repairs or to demolish the building. Any person who enters this structure in violation of this notice may be prosecuted for violation of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§§ 110.5, 110.6) and/or for trespassing.*

THIS PLACARD SHALL NOT BE ALTERED, REMOVED OR DEFACTED UNDER PENALTY OF LAW WITHOUT APPROPRIATE AUTHORIZATION.

Street address (building or specific portion thereof): \_\_\_\_\_

Description and scope of conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Posting Agency	Address	Telephone
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire and Rescue Department Fire Marshal or designee	12099 Government Center Pkwy, Suite 3100 Fairfax, VA 22035	703-324-4800, TTY 711
<input type="checkbox"/> Land Development Services Building Official or designee	12055 Government Center Pkwy, Suite 659 Fairfax, VA 22035	703-631-5101, TTY 711
<input type="checkbox"/> Department of Code Compliance Maintenance Official or designee	12055 Government Center Pkwy, Suite 1016 Fairfax, VA 22035	703-324-1300, TTY 711



Posted by (first and last name): \_\_\_\_\_ Date posted: \_\_\_\_\_ Time posted: \_\_\_\_\_

# NOTICE

Pursuant to Chapter 66.0413(1)(b), Wis. Stats. & Section 7.22 of the Housing-Property Maintenance Code of the City of Beloit, this structure has been declared unfit for human habitation.

**“This Building cannot be used for human habitation, occupancy or use.”**

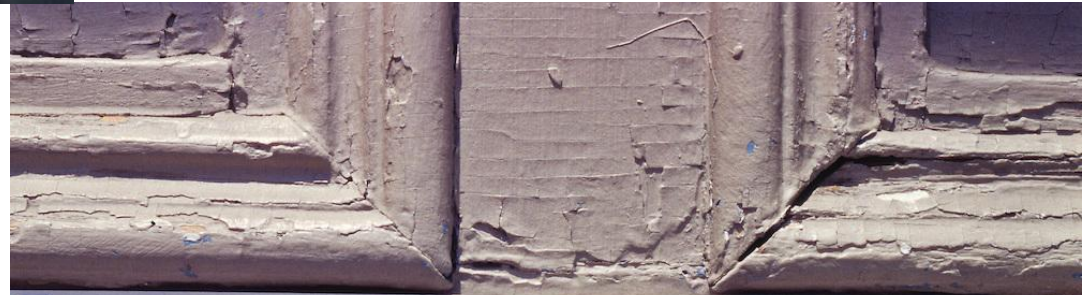
The Building must be vacated and shall remain vacant until orders have been complied with and the order to vacate is withdrawn.

Removing or defacing this placard will result in citations. Citations carry monetary penalties, plus costs and assessments, for each violation.



**CITY OF БЕЛОIT**  
Division of Housing Services and Code Enforcement  
364-6650

Date: 1/21/24



# NOTICE!

THIS PROPERTY HAS BEEN

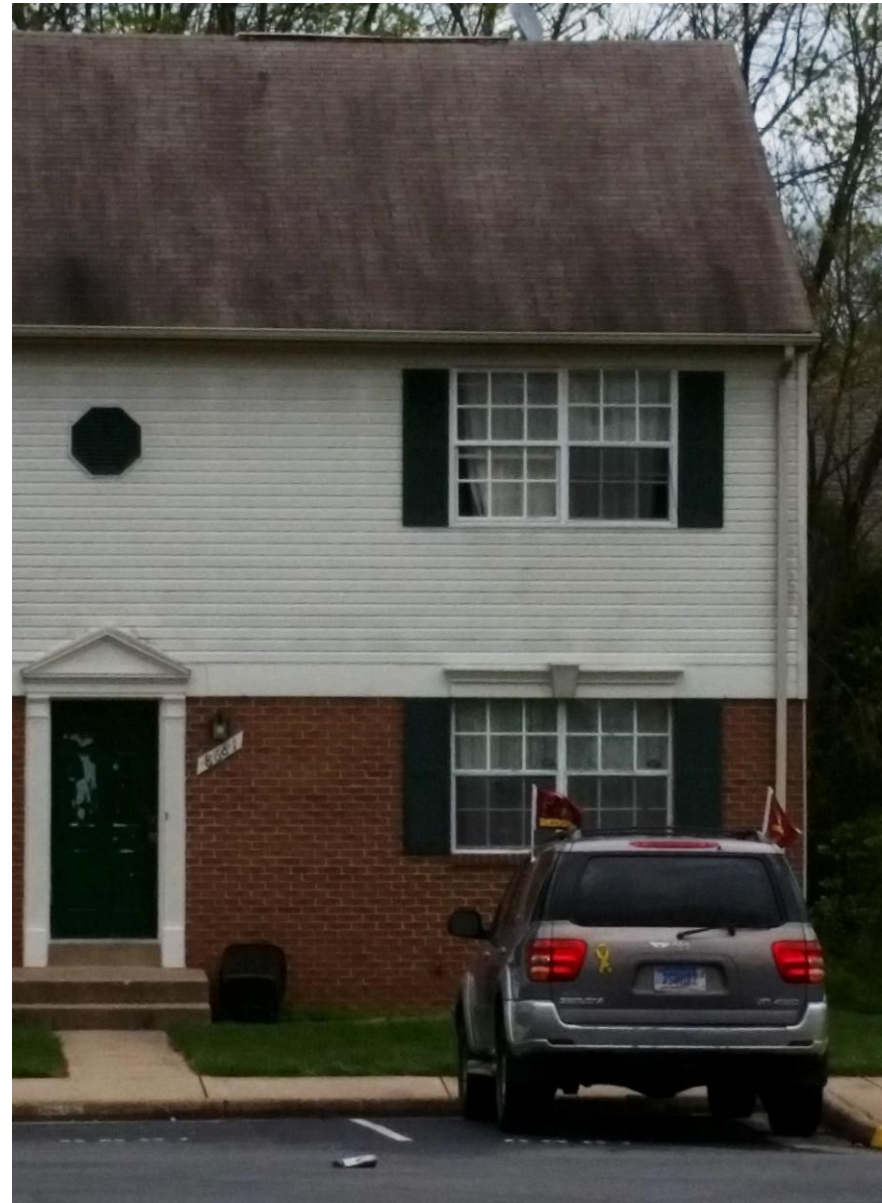
# CONDEMNED

**As Being Unfit For Human Habitation and  
May Not Be Occupied Until Repaired.**

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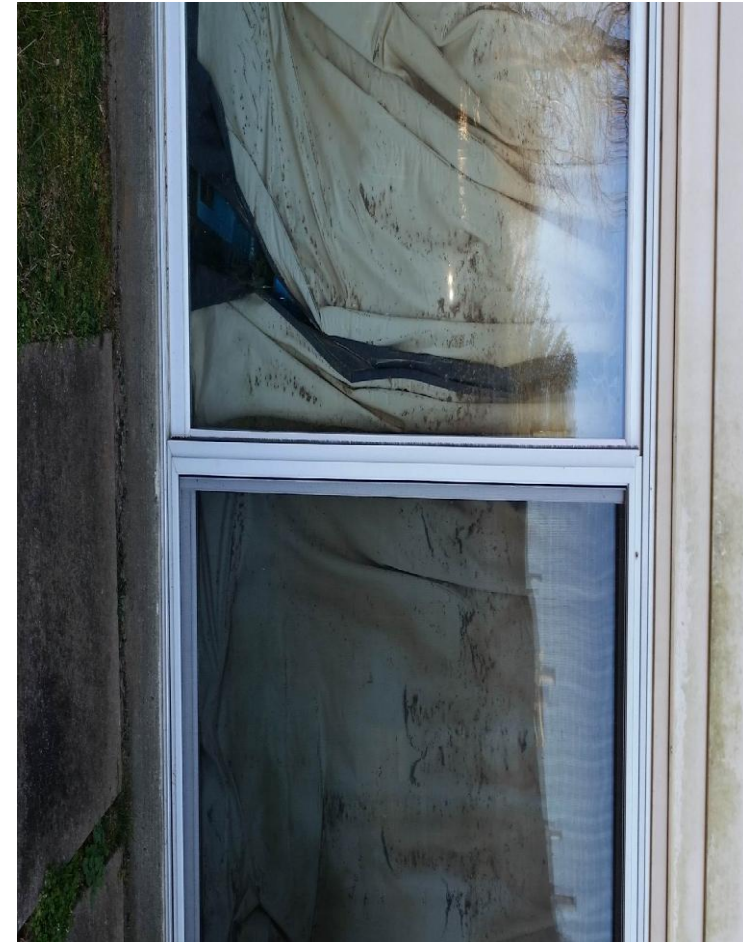
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# Windows

- Miniblinds or curtains pressed against the glass
- Cardboard or other items covering the glass





# The reasons for Hoarding

# Lack of insight

- Everyone lives like this, I'm just being picked on
- I don't need to worry about the fire codes, I'm not going to have a fire
- My house is too small, if I get a bigger one everything will have a place



# Proxy by Item/Emotion Transference



# Safety



# Basic Health and Safety

# Egress





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# Structural Damage





# Combustibles



↑ Before

← After









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# Sanitation



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# Kitchens





# Spark danger







# Officer Safety



# Goat Trail



# Hiding Places









# Needles and drugs





# Meet Fluffy



# Pests



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# Mold and dust



# Dark/blocked windows





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# Working with someone who hoards

# The person who hoards

## Embarrassment can lead to anger

- Striking out
- Tears
- Hopeless – why bother
- May not answer questions

# The person who hoards

- Will appear to listen but then ignore instructions – will not stay where told to in order to protect items
- Does not understand why they are being picked on. Everything is fine so just leave them alone

# Resistance to Intervention

- They do not want to change.
- They are not motivated to change.
- Are “Blind” to certain aspects of their Life.
- Deny the problem.
- Deny the degree of seriousness.
- Insist on self-determination.

# Remember!

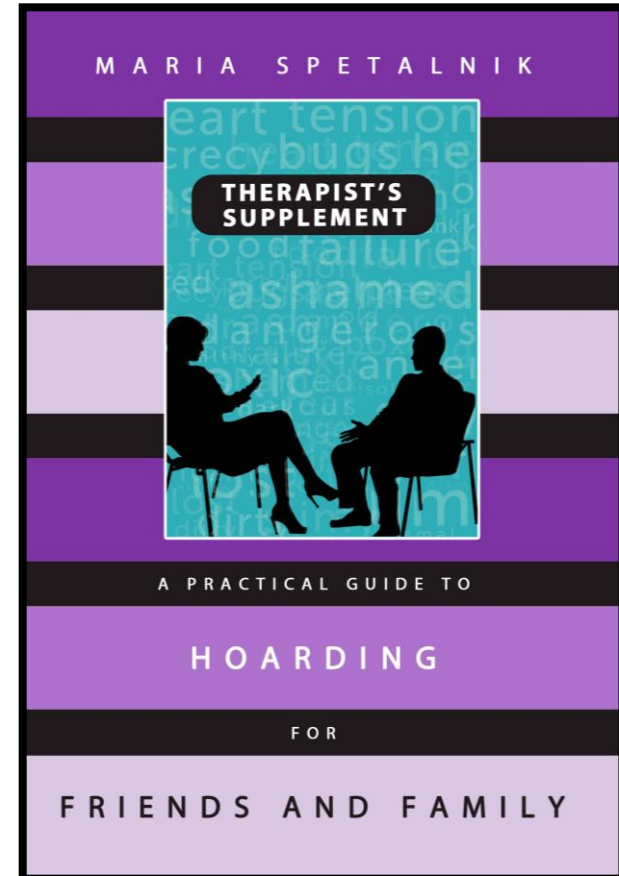
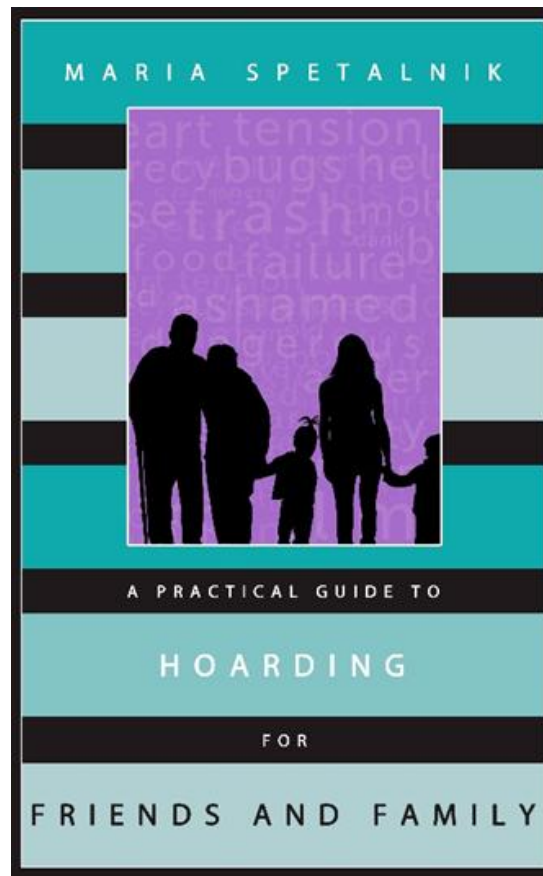
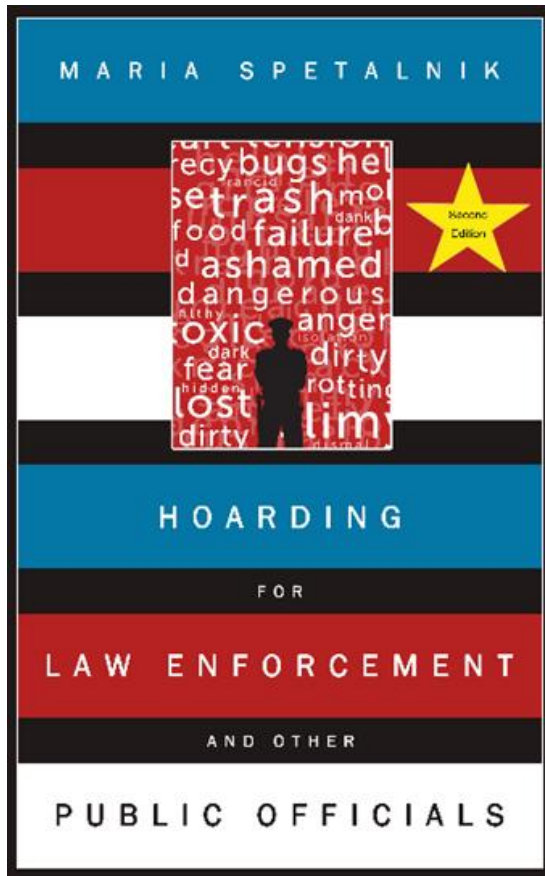
Just because a person hoards they are not necessarily a bad parent, spouse or child.

Removing the loved one from the person can make the situation worse. Everyone needs to be removed for safety but as long as the new location is not hoarded keeping a good family together is usually best.



# Contact Me

[Mail@MariaSpetalnik.com](mailto:Mail@MariaSpetalnik.com)



*Thank you*



# Tips and Techniques



# WHY?

This question will set you back faster than any other.

1. Takes the other person out of the present and into the past
2. Forces justification
3. Once justified, much harder to get out of their entrenched position



# Particularly for Law Enforcement

- Why it happened is not as important as That it happened
- Why is motive/motivation
- Why is looking for confession

In no contest in life does the advantage accrue to the unprepared.

Have a plan of how to ask non-why questions.

# A Few Options to Why

- What does keeping that \_\_\_\_\_ do for you?
- Does keeping it help you move forward toward your goal of \_\_\_\_\_?
- What benefit is there to keeping this?
- Can we set some rules for what to keep and what to let go?
- How many is a reasonable number of \_\_\_\_'s to keep?
- What purpose does this serve for you?

# Behavior Modification

It's easier to avoid temptation than constantly trying to fight it.

- Avoid trigger locations and activities
- Get help for activities that lead to hoarding
  - grocery shopping
  - gift buying
- Put reminders in place to help you avoid hoarding activities
  - Wallet reminders

# Donations

Lead the way with  
**VALUES**

# Reasonable Number

Start with extreme number

Suggest the ridiculously small

Explain now have range

Narrow the range

Understand their final range will be based on  
how many they have – they will be surprised  
how many more than that you will find



# The Best Friends Game

(Who gets to make the move)













# Wallet Reminders

“Do not buy” contract

“Does this fit the contract rules?”

“Would Maria agree with this purchase?”

“Where is this going to live?”

One in – One (or two or three) out