

HOARDING and MENTAL HEALTH

Maintaining that hoarding is a mental health issue is incorrect: sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't.

Hoarding is a legal, public health and safety issue sometimes with mental health components. These Mental Health components may not be intrinsic to the reasons the Hoarding behaviour occurs; in some cases anxiety, for example, is primarily caused by the living conditions and secondary losses. i.e. social isolation / loneliness / embarrassment at the inability to offer & accept social invitations.

Research demonstrates that hoarding is NOT simply caused by an obsessive-compulsive disorder neither is it easily placed in mental diagnostic categories (per DSM categories). Most clinicians do not know how to treat these clients. Ongoing therapy using accepted therapeutic models has been largely unsuccessful. Long-term, successful interventions are not achieved by counseling alone. The cleaning and sorting process requires specific skills and strategies, which are not part of the conventional counseling process.

Research also demonstrates that Hoarding behaviour is very complex. There are people who hoard who want help but do not have the means to get the help they need. There are others who due to physical or mental limitations cannot accomplish the organizing, sorting and clean-ups. There are those who hoard, who acknowledge the state of their environment but adamantly refuse any services. They live in and create unsafe conditions for themselves and the community.

In these situations the law or courts must act. Others who hoard have no insight and deny there is a problem, refuse services and will not allow anyone to step in. These situations result in perpetually, marginally unsafe conditions for both the individual and those living in close proximity. They insist on their right to live the way they choose and require constant monitoring