

If you suspect a child is living in a hoarded home, you could ask:

- **Can you get out quickly in a fire?**
- Is there a working phone you can reach quickly to dial 911 in an emergency?
- Are there working smoke alarms in your house? In your bedroom?
- Are there exposed electric wires in your house?
- Do you have a quiet place to do your homework?
- Do you think it's *your* fault that the house is a mess? Do you get punished for trying to clean up?
- Are you envious of how your friends live and/or ashamed of your own home?
- Can you use your sinks? (i.e.-to brush teeth)
- Are you allowed to have friends inside your home?
- Is your messy house a family secret that is hidden from others?
- Do you have a large number of animals sharing your home/living spaces?
- Do you feel like your family saves things that should be thrown away?
- Do you feel you are blamed unfairly when things are lost?
- Are there whole rooms in your home you have not been able to get into or use for a month or longer?
- Do you have to walk in paths through the house? Are there holes in the walls, floors or roof?
- Can you sleep in your bed? Are there sheets on your bed? Do you have bedbugs?
- Do you have heating in winter and cooling in summer? Do necessary home safety repairs get put off?

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- Do you feel like you need to compete with animals or objects for your parent's attention?
- Do you, your house, your clothing, smell bad? Are you able to wash clothes?
- Is there animal waste on the floors or rugs?
- Do you have spoiled food in your house? Are there bugs in boxes of food or in your bed?
- Do you worry someone will enter/see your house? (Do you hide when there's a knock at the door?)
- Do you have an unusually high amount of roaches, mice, fleas, or rats in your house?
- Do you have trouble breathing at home (asthma)? Does the air burn your eyes or throat? Give you headaches?"
- Is there visible mold anywhere at home?
- Can you open your blinds or drapes during the day?
- Can you flush your toilet and/or bathe with running water?
- Are you afraid of one or both parents?
- Does a family member hurt pets?
- Do you avoid going home?

Raise Awareness-Get Yours!

<http://bit.ly/COH-Bumper-Sticker>

HOARDING HURTS



www.ChildrenOfHoarders.com

Created by adult children of hoarders

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To make a donation: <http://bit.ly/COHDonations>

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My Mother's Dining Room

Some Children Live Like This

It's the Family Secret

Recognizing the Signs



A Guide for Adults
www.childrenofhoarders.com

What is Hoarding?

"Approximately, 3%–5% of the U.S. population suffers from compulsive hoarding but others suffer as well, in particular, the family members who care about them."

-Michael A. Tompkins
Journal of Clinical Psychology
Working with families of people who hoard

Compulsive hoarding has been defined as the acquisition of and **failure to discard** items that appear to be useless or of little value. It is manifested in excessive possessions in the home interfering with the normal use of living space and furniture, and is accompanied by significant interference or distress.¹

Hoarding symptoms are part of a discrete clinical syndrome that also includes; Indecisiveness, perfection, difficulty in organizing tasks, avoidance.²

¹Frost & Hartl, 1996 ²Steketee & Frost, 2003

How Children Are Affected

To all its occupants, a dangerously cluttered or hoarded home presents various health risks, some of which include: trips and falls on stairways, mold/dust allergen exposure, and fire hazards. Disease can be spread through animal waste, especially in the cases of animal hoarding or rodent infestations.

Research studies show that Hoarding may be a symptom of more than one mental illness. Mental health disorders are very difficult for a child to understand. Suffering children often feel responsible for the well-being of their hoarding parent.

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A Safe Place for Children?

These children need support

COH need a safe place to talk about their feelings, some of which could include: the fear they may be removed from the home and separated from their parent if the secret is discovered; shame, and unhealthy guilt it's **their** fault; or believing that objects or animals are more important than they are.

Children of hoarders could benefit greatly from support groups among peers living in the same situations. Teachers, counselors, mental health professionals...you can help by starting some in your community!

Raising Awareness & Understanding

There is hope. With increased awareness, understanding, and support, families can manage hoarding.

You can help. Please feel free to reproduce this brochure and distribute it to local groups for children such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts, mental health professionals and advocacy groups for the welfare of children.

Children of hoarders often guess at what "normal" is and may feel like the condition of the home is somehow their fault.

Many adult COH identify with numerous traits of Adult Children of Alcoholics.

***"It's finally time
for US to matter
more than the stuff."***

-Adult Child of a Hoarder

For More Information

Learn about Hoarding Syndrome

- International OCD F Hoarding Website
<http://bit.ly/IOCDF-Hoarding>

Effects on Family

- Research: Family burden of compulsive hoarding (Frost/Steketee/Tolin, 2007):
<http://bit.ly/FB-Hoarding>
- Video:ABC 20/20 Special: Children of Hoarders
<http://bit.ly/COH-20-20>
- New York Times Article--Children of Hoarders; Leaving the Cluttered Nest
<http://nyti.ms/COH-NYT>

Books About COH

- Dirty Little Secrets (Y.A.) By C. J. Omololu
<http://bit.ly/DLS-Book>
- Dirty Secret, by Jessie Sholl
<http://bit.ly/COH-DS>

Support for Minor COH

- None known at this time

Support for Adult COH

- Adult COH online support group:
<http://bit.ly/COH-YG>

Research on Adult Children of Hoarders

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