

WORKING THROUGH THE CLUTTER: A HANDS-ON HOARDING WORKSHOP

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Objectives

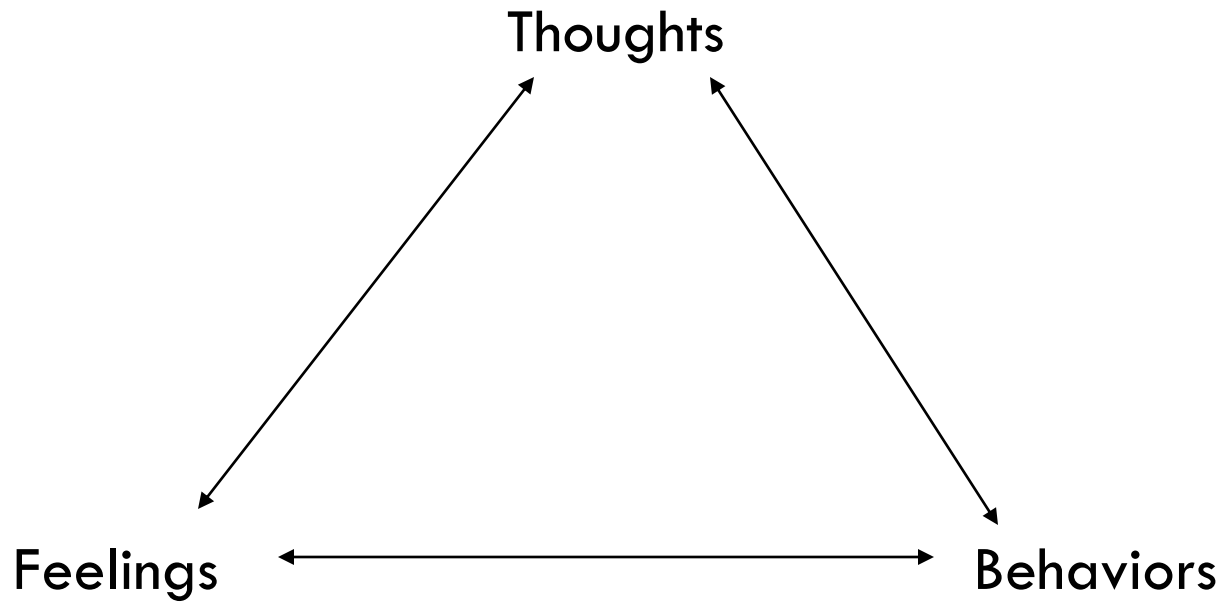
- Describe cognitive-behavioral treatment strategies specific to in vivo interventions for hoarding behaviors
- Apply the understanding of underlying issues to the conceptualization of hoarding from a cognitive-behavioral perspective
- Implement treatment interventions that utilize cognitive-behavioral principles when working with hoardings in their homes

What is Hoarding?

- Acquisition
- Failure to discard
- Clutter makes living spaces unusable
- Distress or impairment resulting from behavior

(Frost & Hartl, 1996)

The Cognitive-Behavioral Model



Hoarding and Thoughts

□ Thought Processes

- Perfectionism
- All-or-Nothing
- Fear of making mistakes
- Missed opportunities
- Distorted perception of others' spaces

□ Information Processing

- Categorizing
- Determining importance
- Assumptions about items

Hoarding and Feelings

- Emotional Attachment
 - ▣ Possessions as extension of self
 - ▣ Attaching greater sentiment to items
 - ▣ Comforted by possessions
 - ▣ Exaggerated loss
- Reactions toward others in relation to clutter
- In context of co-morbid anxiety and depression

Hoarding and Behaviors

- Churning
- Distracting self from decluttering
- Avoiding decisions and discarding
- Needing to remember/record
- Keeping items in-sight
- Creating visual cues
- Avoiding emotional discomfort



Therapeutic Exercises

The Application of CBT Principles

Monitoring Emotional States

- Subjective Units of Distress Scale (SUDS)
- Monitor the anxiety associated with a given task
 - Anticipation
 - In the moment
 - Reflecting back
- Identify the appropriateness of a given task
- Track progress during the course of treatment

Valuing and Questioning

- If you were to write a handbook for living your life, what would be the predominant messages that reflect your values?
- Once you've identified these priorities, what questions can you ask yourself that encourage choices that support these themes?

Challenging Automatic Thoughts

- Downward Arrow
 - What thoughts occur when faced with getting rid of a particular item?
 - What would happen without this item?
 - What would it mean to you? Why would this be upsetting or distressing
 - If these thoughts are true, what's so bad about them?
 - What's the worst part about these thoughts?
 - What does it mean to you?

(Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring Workbook, 2007)

Challenging and Encouraging Insight

- How many do you already have? Is that enough?
- Do you have enough time to use, review, or read it?
- Have you used this during the past year?
- Do you have a specific plan for this item? By when?
- Does this fit with your values and needs?
- Is it important because you're looking at it now?
- Is it current, of good quality, accurate, reliable?
- Would you buy it again if you didn't already own it?
- Do you really need it?
- Could you get it again if you really needed it?
- Do you have enough space for this?

Decluttering Role-Play

- Trading places
 - ▣ Client practices coaching techniques in helping someone else (clinician) sort through clutter
 - ▣ Clinician demonstrates empathy and understanding of client's circumstances
 - ▣ Client feels empowered to challenge and question self
- Using generic clutter
 - ▣ Have a box on-hand in office
- Using client's possessions

In-Session Decluttering

- Working through acquired items
 - ▣ Practicing skills addressed during session
- Address thoughts and feelings as they arise
- Coaching through process
- Helps initiate homework process
 - ▣ Setting the stage for success
- Client controls which items are addressed
- Less threatening than allowing clinician into home

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Application with Clients in the Home

Before Entering the Home

- Discussion of what to expect
- Identification of any “off-limits” spaces or items
- Plan what to do with items that are being let go of
 - ▣ Donation sites
 - ▣ How to deliver items to these destinations
- Definition of decluttering team
 - ▣ Family members or friends who may assist
 - ▣ Involvement of professional organizers, etc.

Rules of Engagement

- Therapist will not touch possessions without **EXPLICIT** permission
- Decisions are made by owner of the items
 - ▣ Can be *guided* by therapist, not *decided* by therapist
- Establish categories in advance
- Proceed systematically
 - ▣ Agree on a “Plan of Attack”
 - ▣ OHIO rule (**O**nly **H**andle **I**t **O**nce)
- Be flexible and creative
- **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE**
 - ▣ Sorting, Decluttering, Non-Acquisition

Guidelines Around Engaging Clutter

DO:

- Imagine yourself in the client's position
- Model positive, adaptive behaviors
- Provide encouragement and emotional support
- Share your opinions *when asked*
- Believe in the client's ability
- Highlight strengths
- Stay calm
- Take care of yourself

DON'T:

- Use judgmental language
- Touch belongings without explicit permission
- Declutter behind the client's back
- Minimize the challenges faced
- Make decisions
- Equate the clutter with the person
- Argue or try to persuade

Therapy Bag & Temporary Discarding

- Items set aside during self-directed decluttering between sessions
- Out-of-sight, out-of-mind
- Reviewing challenges faced while working independently
- Questioning how experience is different when in company of coach or clinician
- When considering letting go of an item but struggling with finality of commitment
- Allowing clinician to hold onto item
- Evaluate SUDS
 - ▣ Anticipated vs. actual
- Question experience of temporary separation

Role-Playing Exercise

- 1 Clinician – Empathetic, Supportive, Challenging
- 1 Client – Attached, Struggling, Overwhelmed
- 1 Bag of Clutter – Emotions, Memories, Uses

Trade roles half-way through

Questions and Discussion

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References and Resources

- Compulsive Hoarding and Acquiring: Therapist's Guide and Workbook
 - ▣ Gail Steketee and Randy O. Frost
- Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things
 - ▣ Gail Steketee and Randy O. Frost
- Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding
 - ▣ David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee