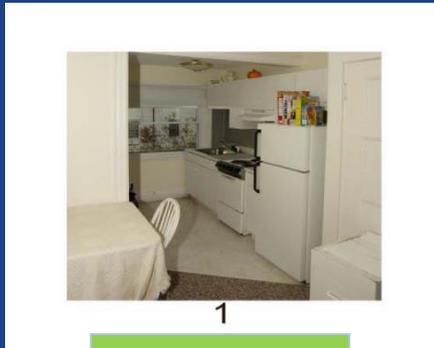


Understanding Hoarding

Dr. David Orr

Self-Neglect and Hoarding Conference

Ipswich, 6th November 2018



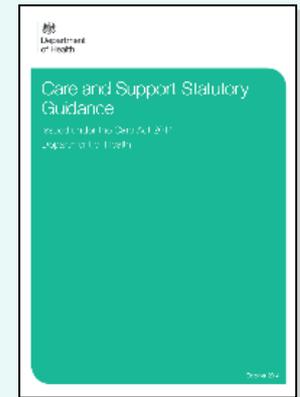
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Hoarding: Why Now?

1. Policy Developments

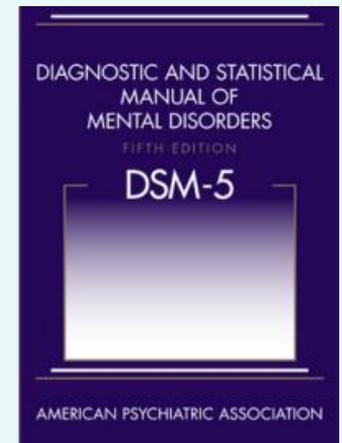
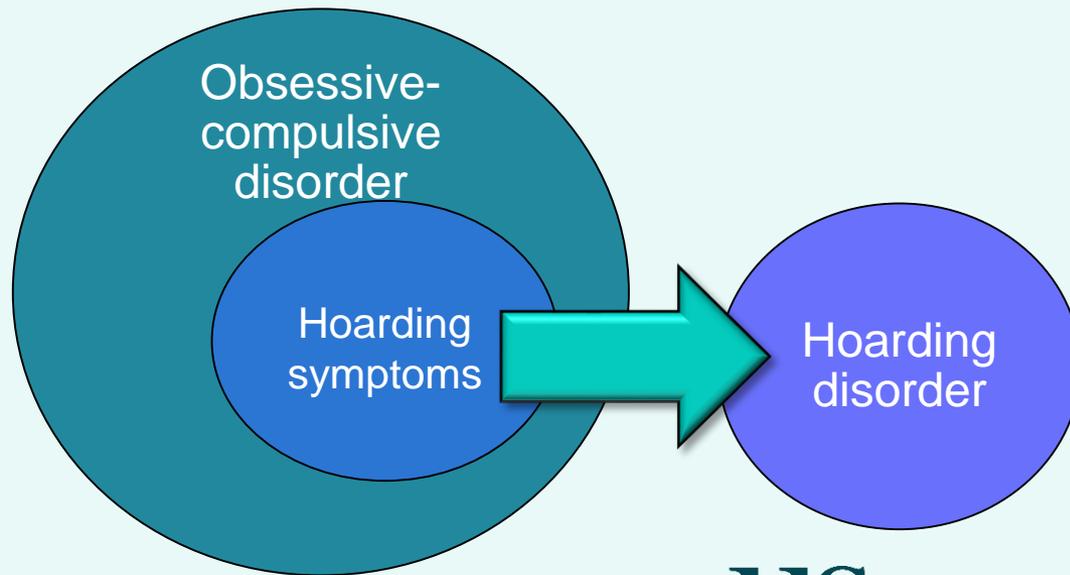
- Included in recognised forms of abuse and neglect: “Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings, **and includes behaviour such as hoarding**” (DH 2016)



Hoarding: Why Now?

2. Clinical Developments

- Hoarding included within 5th Edition of DSM:

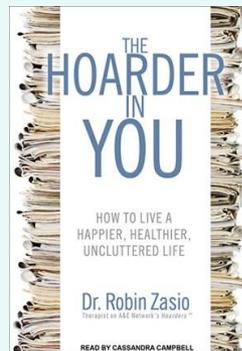
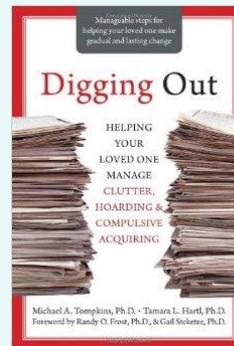


Hoarding: Why Now?

3. Social and Cultural Developments



- A Life of Grime
- Britain's Biggest Hoarders
- Hoarding SOS



- The Hoarder Next Door
- Extreme Clutter
- Hoarding: Buried Alive

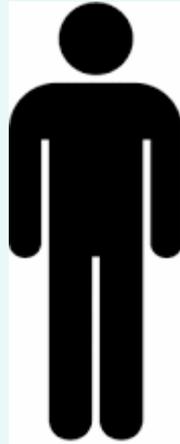
"I'd seen on the television about the hoarders, you know. I said to the lady who was coming at the time, [...] 'I've heard it's a mental health issue,' and she said, 'Well, it is, yes.'"

Hoarding as a social issue

- In Melbourne study, fewer than 0.025% of house fires involved hoarding – but hoarding-related fires accounted for 24% of fire-related deaths
- San Francisco Taskforce on Compulsive Hoarding (2009) estimated hoarding cost city landlords and social services more than \$6 million per annum
- Significant overlap with squalor and related health risks
- Clinically significant hoarding detectable in 2.3 – 6% of general population



Why do people hoard?



MEDICAL MODEL

- genetics
- related conditions

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL MODEL

- information
- beliefs
- emotions

PSYCHODYNAMIC MODEL

- hoard as 'cocoon'
- identified with self
- compensates for loss

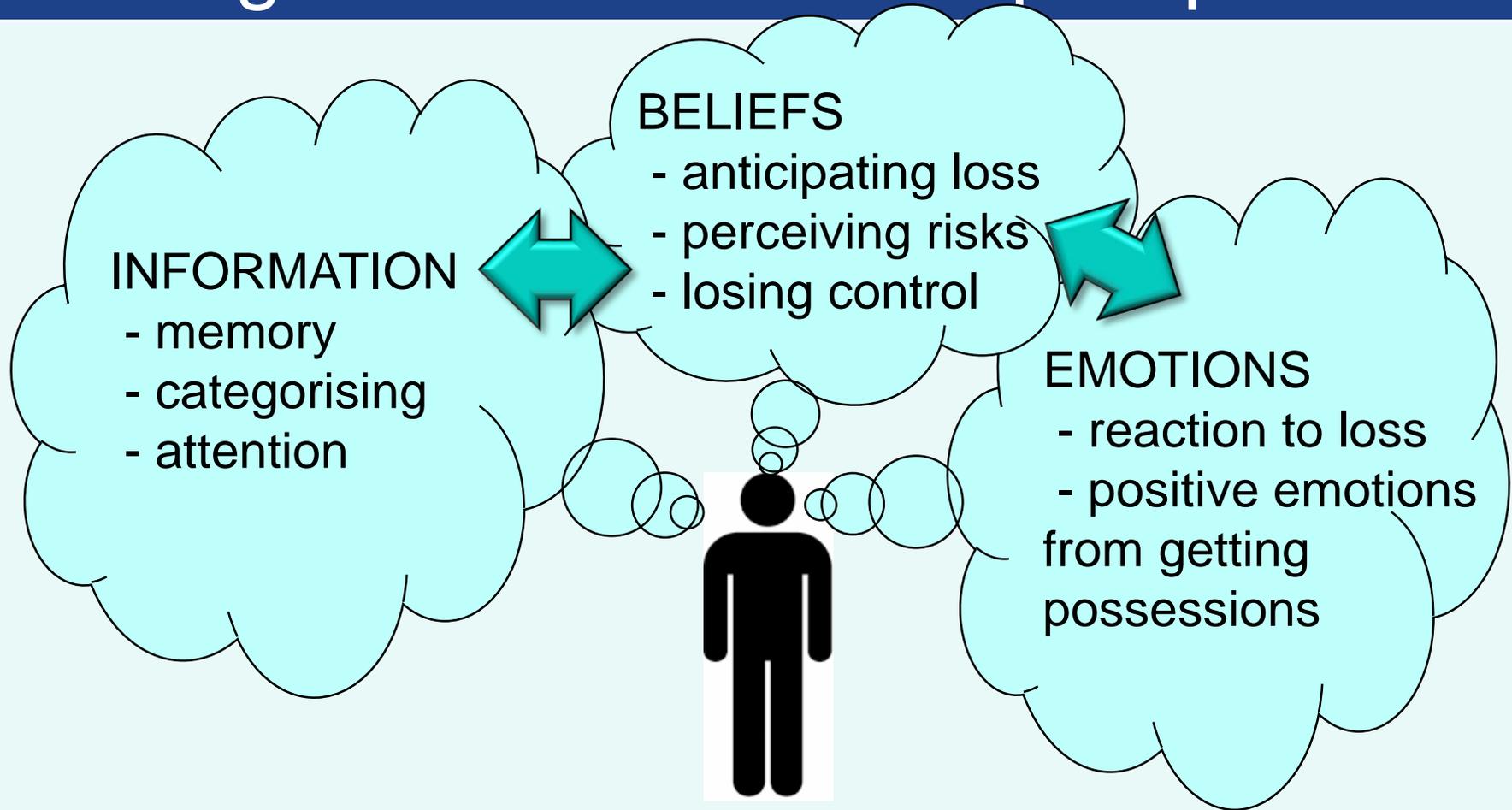
Why do people hoard?

Medical perspectives

- Strong familial heritability of hoarding behaviours:
 - upbringing?
 - genetics?
 - both?
- Common medical or mental health conditions linked to hoarding include:
 - Obsessive-compulsive disorder
 - Acquired brain injury
 - Autistic spectrum disorder
 - Dementia
 - Depression

Why do people hoard?

A cognitive-behavioural perspective



Why do people hoard?

Psychodynamic perspectives

- Loss, shame, anxiety or fear following traumatic life experiences
- The 'hoard' as a cocoon representing safety
- The things in the hoard perform psychological functions:
 - the person projects the self into things
or
 - things 'compensate' for rejection or loss

“no gap between
being and having”
(Winters 2015)

Why do people hoard? What people themselves say

Sense of achievement and worth bound up in possessions

“We – people who self-neglect – we cling on to our triumphs.”

The effects of previous life experiences

“I think it was just, as I say, because everything was took away from me at an early stage.”

Concern with needing things in future

“My whole psyche – and my father’s – was if it’s useful, save it. [...] Everything in my eyes – then and indeed now – has potential use.”

“I don’t have time to make a note of everything [...] so I’m very fearful of throwing something away.”

Why do people hoard?

What people themselves say

Not enough space

"[The flats]'re pigeon-holes, to tell you the truth."

Environmental principles about waste

"That's what I mean. We live in a throwaway society – it's a nightmare."

Having different standards to others

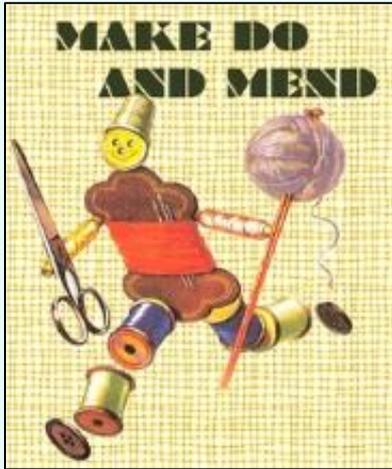
"I've noticed over the years that I didn't give two monkeys. "

Things stand for or facilitate relationships

"I want things that belonged to people so that they have a connection to me."

"People know that I might have things that they are short of, so I feel needed."

Why do people hoard? What people themselves say



“All hoarders are individuals with individual reasons.”

What people who hoard say about assessment and engagement

“It does not work forcing things on people. It made me worse.”

“people like me, we’re not proud of the state and he came in and said, ‘you’ve got a lot of stuff’ and of course there was a lot of, the stress levels were very high.”

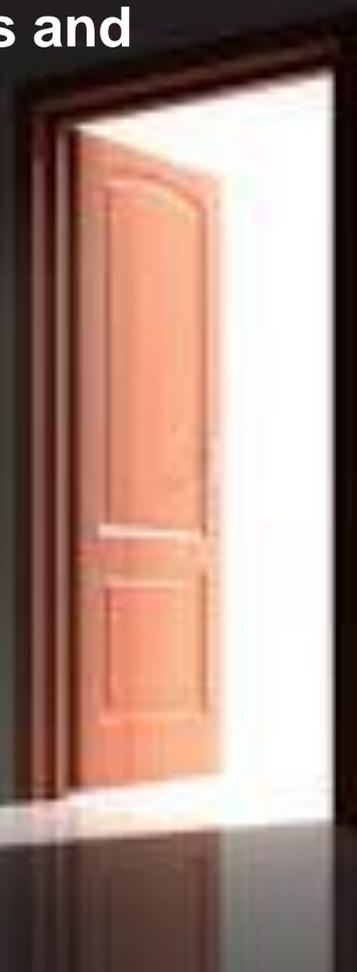
“The social worker said, ‘I can’t see your toilet, your bed’. [...] That’s further down the line. But he was doing things by the book, which was quite unnecessary - had I been a different person, I would be in terror.”

“She’s putting a lot of pressure on me, she knows I’ve got a mental illness and the root cause of hoardism is anxiety and ... she just makes mine worse.”

“... they weren’t helping, they were just leaving it for me to do.”

Engaging with people who hoard

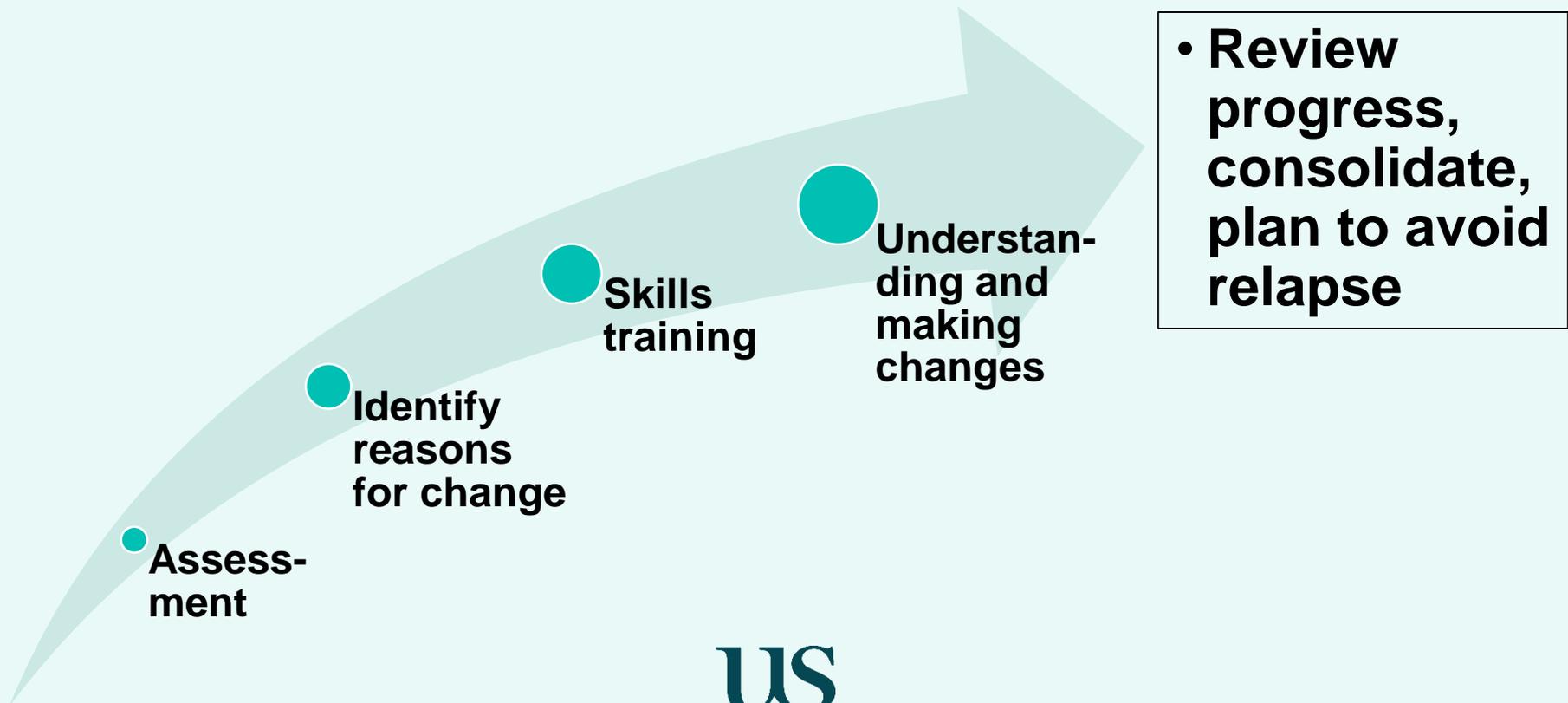
- **Recognition of what the hoard means and its purpose**
- **Focusing on reducing harm before reducing stuff**
- **Qualities of humanity and patience**
- **Self-awareness**
- **Honesty**
- **The balance between ‘hands-on’ and ‘hands-off’**
- **Willingness to ‘roll up their sleeves’**
- **Finding scope for baby steps**



Intervention with hoarding

- Relationship-based working
- Motivational interviewing techniques
- Harm reduction
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy for hoarding
- Signposting to support groups and self-help resources
- Keeping the door open

Intervention with hoarding



Intervention with hoarding: Support groups

- May be seen as an 'acceptable' form of treatment, where the person is considering change
- Can help break down stigma around 'hoarding' and increase social engagement
- Not suitable for everyone
- *Help for Hoarders* is a starting point to identify groups and resources

“It helped me realise that I’m not a complete out-of-space weirdo and that it is a lot more common than people realise.”

“You’ve got to be in it to know it.”

Conclusion

Important to:

- Try to find 'the meaning of the mess'
- Be aware of own reactions, avoid judging
- Carry out careful risk assessment
- Work positively (and patiently) on skills, understanding and practical solutions



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