

IMPLY ORGANIZED

Hoarding and the Elderly



Cheryl Spater
Organizing Specialist



Before



After



Before



After

How to help Them De-clutter

We inherit a lot from our parents, their traits, their looks and even their stuff - perhaps too much stuff.

Clutter is a growing problem today among all populations, including the elderly. To help your parents pare down, down-size, create more room in their home and/or make it safer to age in place, it is important to note the difference between hoarders and clutterers. Hoarders are obsessive about their stuff and will often need a trained professional specializing in obsessive/compulsive disorder to let go. Clutterers, the more common type, are more apt to let go with a little encouragement and support. Letting go reminds them that they are closer to the end of their lives, and many older people want to hold on. Explaining that letting go does not always signal loss but can also mean making space for something is a good way to ease anxiety. Keep in mind that items people don't want to let go of represent history and legacy. Embrace hearing the stories about any item in their home. You can try the following suggestions to help them part with their stuff:

- Find out how much the heirlooms are worth. Consult a local antique dealer. For the money motivated, resale can be a great inducer to de-clutter the home. A common mistake is that just because something is old, people assume it is "Antique Road Show" quality. They might need to be prepared for some disappointments.
- Be satisfied with slow, steady progress. Rome was not de-cluttered in a day. Even though you're dealing with their things objectively, your parents may not be. For many, starting is the hardest step, so be prepared to put in the extra time.
- Consider hiring an objective third party. You might be too close to help. A professional organizer might be more effective at navigating the emotional terrain. ***



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Hoarding and the Elderly (continued)



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• **Get family support.** Letting family members take a remembrance or keepsake is a great way to preserve the legacy, especially if the elder family member can see something valued or put to use.

• **Make a list.** A good way to start for the very clutter-challenged is with a small step in letting go, such as making a list of whom they want to give their things to when the time comes.

****I have worked with clients from 8-87 years young de-cluttering their lives, relocating, and more, with kindness and compassion. I'd be happy to help you with any of your organizational challenges.**

Happy Organizing!

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*Creating control
in the home and office*

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Your referrals are warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated.

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Professionals