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## Hoarding Interview

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Client initials: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What kind of home do you live in? Who else lives there with you?

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- 2) Let's talk about the rooms in your home. [Use the Clutter Image Rating pictures to determine the extent of clutter in each room and also in other living spaces like the attic, basement, garage, car, etc.] How much does the clutter interfere with how you'd like to use each room and which rooms bother you most?

Living room: \_\_\_\_\_

Dining room: \_\_\_\_\_

Kitchen: \_\_\_\_\_

Bedrooms: \_\_\_\_\_

Bathrooms: \_\_\_\_\_

Hallways: \_\_\_\_\_

Basement: \_\_\_\_\_

Attic: \_\_\_\_\_

Porch: \_\_\_\_\_

Garage: \_\_\_\_\_

Yard: \_\_\_\_\_

Car: \_\_\_\_\_

Work or office space: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Do you keep any items in other places outside your home like a storage space, another person's home, and so forth? How much stuff is there and what kinds of items?

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4) What kinds of things do you save? For example, what would I mainly see in these rooms?

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5) Tell me how you feel—your emotions—when you look at or think about the clutter?  
(e.g., anxiety, guilt, sadness, pleasure, etc.)

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6) How much discomfort would you feel if you had to get rid of some of your \_\_\_\_\_? (Ask about each major category of items identified earlier, such as books, junk mail, kitchen trash, bottle caps.)

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7) Which rooms would you like to work on first? Why? Which one will be easiest and which one most difficult? Why? (Discuss where the pros and cons with regard to the usefulness of space if clutter is cleared, the quickest visual improvement in the space, the most pressing need to locate important items, the most reduction of distress, and so forth.)

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8) Are your possessions organized in some way? How do you decide what goes where? How well does this plan work for you?

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9) How do you acquire new things? Tell me about the most recent things you got—how did you get them (e.g., shopping, store sales, yard/tag sales, trash picking, free things)?

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**Hoarding Interview** *continued*

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- 10) Let's talk about the sequence of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors when you acquire new items. For example, the [most recent items acquired], how did you feel when you first got it and what were you thinking? What did you do with it once you got it home?

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- 11) What happens if you try to avoid getting something?

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- 12) Tell me about why you save these items. (If clients do not mention the reasons below, ask about each.)

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- a. Sentimental: Do you save things because they seem sentimental or emotionally significant to you? That is, you are so emotionally attached items that you do not want to part with them? Can you give an example?

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- b. Instrumental/useful: Are you afraid of losing important information you might need someday when you try to throw something out? Are you concerned about being wasteful because the object may eventually be put to good use? Can you give an example?

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- c. Intrinsic/beauty: Do you save things just because you like them or think they are pretty? Do you think they will be valuable someday? Can you give an example?

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13) Do your family members or friends help you get items or store them for you?

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Do some people help you organize things you can't deal with?

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What about helping you get rid of things?

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Does anyone get upset by your collecting and clutter or do they mostly tolerate it?

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Do you prevent others from touching your things?

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Are your family members/significant others supportive of treatment? If so, would any of them be interested in coming with you to a treatment session?

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14) Does the clutter present a health or safety problem for you or your family? (If yes) What kinds of problems (e.g., falling, fire hazard, hygiene, medical problems, nutrition, insect)? (If no) Do other people think the clutter presents a problem for you or for your health or safety?

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15) Has your buying or acquiring things caused any problems (e.g., family arguments, financial burden or debt, negative mood such as guilt, depression, anxiety)? (If yes) What kinds of problems? (If no) Do family or friends think buying or acquiring items is causing any problems?

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16) Has your social life been affected by the clutter (e.g., avoids having visitors; avoids going to others home because can't reciprocate)? Are you interested in having some people come over once the clutter is less of a problem? Who, for example?

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**Hoarding Interview** *continued*

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17) Do you have any problems with washing, checking, putting things in order, repeating actions, or other mental compulsions? Do these thoughts and behaviors affect the hoarding problem (e.g., contamination fears make it difficult to put things away, checking lengthens the time it takes to put away or discard items)?

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18) Do other family members have hoarding problems? Who? Tell me about the saving and clutter.

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19) When you were young, did you spend a lot of time in any other household (e.g., grandparents, other family members, friends) that was cluttered?

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20) Did anyone in the household you grew up in acquire things excessively? Who? What types of things?

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21) When you were a child, did you experience any kind of deprivation (e.g., not enough to eat, not enough clothes, too few toys, no spending money) or serious losses (e.g., death, major move, fire)? How old were you when this occurred? Do you think it has any relationship to your hoarding problem?

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22) When was the first time you noticed that you had trouble acquiring too many things, throwing things away, or had a lot of clutter in your home? How old were you? Was anything special going on in your life at that time (e.g., traumatic experience, moving, loss of a family member, etc.)?

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23) Have you had any previous therapy (medication, behavior therapy, psychotherapy, family efforts to help) for hoarding problems? What about for other types of problems? How long did the treatment last? Did it help? Why or why not? (Later you will need to give a rationale for the hoarding treatment that addresses concerns the client may have because of previous treatment experiences.)

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24) Have other people tried to intervene in the hoarding problem? Have you ever been contacted by landlords, health department officials, or other officials about problems related to their hoarding. What happened? What was your reaction?

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25) Are there other aspects of hoarding you haven't mentioned like legal or financial problems, problems with collecting animals, special embarrassments?

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