

## **Buried in Treasures Exercise: Take Photographs of Your Home**

Authors David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee wrote the book, *Buried in Treasures: Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (BIT). On page 34, they suggest that the reader with hoarding behavior take **BEFORE and AFTER** photos of their home as an assessment tool to evaluate progress.

Prior to taking the photographs, the authors recommend filling out a series of surveys to assess the level of severity regarding the amount of clutter present in the home. The surveys can be found in the later pages of this file.

1. **Hoarding Rating Scale** (by Randy Frost and Gail Steketee). The initial assessment tool is on pages 27 – 28 and the post-assessment is on page 188 of BIT.
2. **Is my home safe Assessment Tool** (by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee). The initial assessment is on page 29 and the post-assessment is on page 189 in BIT.
3. **Activities of Daily Living for Hoarding Disorder Assessment Tool** (by Frost and Steketee). The initial assessment is on page 30 and the post-assessment is on pages 190 – 191 of BIT.
4. **Home Environment Index Link Assessment Tool** (by Frost and Steketee). The initial assessment is on pages 32 – 34 and the post assessment is on page 191 – 194 in BIT.

Once these surveys or written assessment tools are completed, then the BIT authors recommend taking BEFORE and AFTER photographs.

### **“Taking Photographs (page 34 of Buried in Treasures, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**

(Lastly), take some photographs of your home. We know that this is not fun for some people. But it’s important to have a record of how things look BEFORE you start this program, so don’t skip this part! Grab a camera or your cell phone, and go from room to room taking pictures of the clutter. Store these photos somewhere safe, like on your computer hard drive or on a CD or jump drive (saving them electronically helps prevent adding to the physical clutter in the home). Later on in the program, we’re going to ask you to look at the pictures again so you can measure your progress.”

Towards the conclusion of the book, the authors then recommend that the reader with hoarding behavior then take AFTER photos.

### **“Maintaining Your Progress (pages 187 – 194 of BIT)**

Once you have had success in decluttering or controlling your hoarding, you must now face the important task of maintaining what you have accomplished. The first step is to make an honest appraisal of what you have accomplished in your efforts to control this problem.

### **Checking the Photographs**

At the beginning of this program, we asked you to take some photographs of your home. Hopefully you stored them electronically so they didn't add to the clutter. It's time to go take another look at them. Look carefully at each picture, then look at the condition of those same spaces now. Try to take a good honest look: what's better? What's not better? It's important to be balanced here – if parts of your home look better now than they did at the beginning, then give yourself a big pat on the back and congratulate yourself on your success! And if parts of your home don't look better, just recognize that these areas are where you're going to need to do some more work.

After you've had a chance to look at your photos, fill out the measures here.”

Footnote:

The authors then suggest that the person with hoarding behavior fill out the same surveys that they took earlier to evaluate the difference between the conditions of the home at the beginning of the Buried in Treasures workshop versus the condition at the end of the course.



Use the following test to find out if you have a problem with hoarding. For each question below, circle the number that corresponds most closely to your experience **DURING THE PAST WEEK**.

1. Because of the clutter or number of possessions, how difficult is it for you to use the rooms in your home?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mildly difficult		Moderately difficult		Severely difficult		Extremely difficult

2. To what extent do you have difficulty discarding (or recycling, selling, giving away) ordinary things that other people would get rid of?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No difficulty		Mild difficulty		Moderate difficulty		Severe difficulty		Extreme difficulty

3. To what extent do you currently have a problem with collecting free things or buying more things than you need or can use or can afford?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No problem		Mild problem		Moderate problem		Severe problem		Extreme problem

4. To what extent do you experience emotional distress because of clutter, difficulty discarding, or problems with buying or acquiring things?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
None		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extreme

5. To what extent do you experience impairment in your life (daily routine, job/school, social activities, family activities, financial difficulties) because of clutter, difficulty discarding, or problems with buying or acquiring things?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
None		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extreme

Generally speaking, we consider an issue to be significant when your response is 4 (moderate) or greater. If your score on items 1 (clutter), 2 (difficulty discarding), or 3 (acquiring) was 4 or higher, that suggests that at least some symptoms of hoarding are significant for you.

In addition, if your score on items 4 (distress) or 5 (impairment) was 4 or higher, that means that the symptoms of hoarding are having a real impact on your quality of life.



## Is My Home Safe?

Safety is a concern when hoarding is severe. Answer these questions to determine whether there are safety issues you need to address.

Type of problem	None	Somewhat/A little	moderate	Substantial	Severe
1. Is there any structural damage to the floors, walls, roof, or other parts of your home?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Does any part of your house pose a fire hazard (e.g., stove covered with paper, flammable objects near the furnace, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Are parts of your house unsanitary (bathrooms unclean, strong odor)?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Would medical emergency personnel have difficulty moving equipment through your home?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Are any exits from your home blocked?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Is it unsafe to move up or down the stairs or along other walkways?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Is there clutter outside your house (porch, yard, alleyway, common areas if apartment or condo)?	1	2	3	4	5

Add your scores for items 1–7. \_\_\_\_\_

This is your *Safety* score.

Your scores can be classified as:

- 7-13 Minimal
- 14-20 Mild
- 21-27 Moderate
- 28-30 Severe
- 31-35 Very severe

If you scored 21 or higher (moderate or worse), you may be living in an unsafe home. If you scored 3 or higher on any one question, this should be a high priority item to be addressed right away.



## Are Your Daily Activities Impaired by Hoarding?

Sometimes clutter in the home can prevent you from doing ordinary activities. For each of the following activities, please circle the number that best represents how much difficulty you experience in doing this activity because of the clutter or hoarding problem. If you have difficulty with the activity for other reasons (for example, physical problems make it hard for you to pick things up or walk easily), do not include this problem in your rating. Instead, rate only how much difficulty you have due to hoarding. If the activity is not relevant to your situation (for example, you don't have laundry facilities or animals), check the Not Applicable (NA) box.

Activities affected by clutter or hoarding problem	Can do it easily	Can do it with a little difficulty	Can do it with moderate difficulty	Can do it with great difficulty	Unable to do	NA
1. Prepare food	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Use refrigerator	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Use stove	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Use kitchen sink	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Eat at table	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Move around inside the house	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Exit home quickly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Use toilet	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Activities affected by clutter or hoarding problem	Can do it easily	Can do it with a little difficulty	Can do it with moderate difficulty	Can do it with great difficulty	Unable to do	NA
9. Use bath/shower	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. Use bathroom sink	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. Answer door quickly	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. Sit in sofa/chair	1	2	3	4	5	NA
13. Sleep in bed	1	2	3	4	5	NA
14. Do laundry	1	2	3	4	5	NA
15. Find important things (such as bills, tax forms, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	NA

These questions assess the extent to which clutter causes problems in daily functioning at home.

Step 1: Add your scores for items 1–15, excluding the items with NA (not applicable) ratings. \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2: Count how many questions (up to 15) you answered with a numeric score (not an NA rating). \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3: Divide the first number by the second number.

\_\_\_\_\_

For example, if your total score for items 1–15 was 45, and you gave numeric ratings for 14 items (meaning you made 1 NA rating), your score is  $45 \div 14 = 3.21$ . This is your *Activities of Daily Living* score.

Your scores can be classified as:

- 1.0–1.4 Minimal
- 1.5–2.0 Mild
- 2.1–3.0 Moderate
- 3.1–4.0 Severe
- 4.1–5.0 Very severe

If you scored 2.1 or higher (moderate or worse), the clutter has caused substantial difficulties in your ability to function in your home.



Clutter and hoarding problems can sometimes lead to sanitation problems. Please circle the answer that best fits the current situation in the home.

*To what extent are the following situations present in the home?*

1. Fire hazard
  - 0 = No fire hazard
  - 1 = Some risk of fire (for example, lots of flammable material)
  - 2 = Moderate risk of fire (for example, flammable materials near heat source)
  - 3 = High risk of fire (for example, flammable materials near heat source, electrical hazards, etc.)
2. Moldy or rotten food
  - 0 = None
  - 1 = A few pieces of moldy or rotten food in kitchen
  - 2 = Some moldy or rotten food throughout kitchen
  - 3 = Large quantity of moldy or rotten food in kitchen and elsewhere
3. Dirty or clogged sink
  - 0 = Sink empty and clean
  - 1 = A few dirty dishes with water in sink
  - 2 = Sink full of water, possibly clogged
  - 3 = Sink clogged with evidence that it has overflowed onto counters, etc.
4. Standing water (in sink, tub, other container, basement, etc.)
  - 0 = No standing water
  - 1 = Some water in sink/tub
  - 2 = Water in several places, especially if dirty
  - 3 = Water in numerous places, especially if dirty
5. Human/animal waste/vomit
  - 0 = No human waste, animal waste, or vomit visible
  - 1 = Small amount of human or animal waste (e.g., unflushed toilet, on bathroom or other floor)
  - 2 = Moderate animal or human waste or vomit visible in more than one room
  - 3 = Animal or human waste or vomit on floors or other surfaces
6. Mildew or mold
  - 0 = No mildew or mold detectable

- 1 = Small amount of mildew or mold in limited amounts and expected places  
(for example, on edge of shower curtain or refrigerator seal)
  - 2 = Considerable, noticeable mildew or mold
  - 3 = Widespread mildew or mold on most surfaces
7. Dirty food containers
- o = All dishes washed and put away
  - 1 = A few unwashed dishes
  - 2 = Many unwashed dishes
  - 3 = Almost all dishes are unwashed
8. Dirty surfaces (floors, walls, furniture, etc.)
- o = Surfaces completely clean
  - 1 = A few spills, some dirt or grime
  - 2 = More than a few spills, may be a thin covering of dirt or grime in living areas
  - 3 = No surface is clean; dirt or grime covers everything
9. Piles of dirty or contaminated objects (bathroom tissue, hair, toilet paper, sanitary products, etc.)
- o = No dirty or contaminated objects on floors, surfaces, etc.
  - 1 = Some dirty or contaminated objects present around trash cans or toilets
  - 2 = Many dirty or contaminated objects fill bathroom or area around trash cans
  - 3 = Dirty or contaminated objects cover the floors and surfaces in most rooms
10. Insects
- o = No insects are visible
  - 1 = A few insects visible; cobwebs and/or insect droppings present
  - 2 = Many insects and droppings are visible; cobwebs in corners
  - 3 = Swarms of insects; high volume of droppings; many cobwebs on household items
11. Dirty clothes
- o = Dirty clothes placed in hamper; none are lying around
  - 1 = Hamper is full; a few dirty clothes lying around
  - 2 = Hamper is overflowing; many dirty clothes lying around
  - 3 = Clothes cover the floor and many other surfaces (bed, chairs, etc.)
12. Dirty bed sheets/linens
- o = Bed coverings very clean
  - 1 = Bed coverings relatively clean
  - 2 = Bed coverings dirty and in need of washing
  - 3 = Bed coverings very dirty and soiled

13. Odor of house

- 0 = No odor
- 1 = Slight odor
- 2 = Moderate odor; may be strong in some parts of house
- 3 = Strong odor throughout house

*During the last month, how often did you (or someone in your home) do each of the following activities?*

14. Do the dishes

- 0 = Daily or every 2 days; 15 to 30 times per month
- 1 = 1 or 2 times a week; 4 to 10 times per month
- 2 = Every other week; 2 or 3 times per month
- 3 = Rarely; 0 times per month

15. Clean the bathroom

- 0 = Daily or every 2 days; more than 10 times per month
- 1 = 1 or 2 times a week; 4 to 10 times per month
- 2 = Every other week; 2 or 3 times per month
- 3 = Never; 0 times per month

To score the HEI, sum the responses for all 15 items. The average score for a large Internet sample of people with hoarding was 12.7 (standard deviation = 6.9; range = 0–43). A score of 2 or above on any question warrants attention.