



SOLUTIONS TO DECLUTTERING OBSTACLES

This document is inspired by Buried in Treasures 2nd Edition by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee (Bad Guy # 4: AVOIDANCE and EXCUSE MAKING).

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History

Individuals with hoarding behavior have the opportunity to attend Buried in Treasures (BIT) or intensive cognitive behavioral therapy courses at the Mental Health Association of San Francisco (MHASF). A group of graduates of previous BIT classes gathered together in our on-going drop-in group called, The Advanced Drop-in Group on Hoarding Behavior. The attendees explored the topic of Bad Guy #4: Avoidance and Excuse-making (Along with Possible Solutions). This document was inspired by the book, "Buried in Treasures" Help for Compulsive Acquiring, Saving, and Hoarding, 2nd Edition, by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee. The Advanced Drop-in Group then interpreted the material and added solutions to common excuses that prevent decluttering.

General Info

Bad Guy #4: Avoidance and Excuse Making: "For those who struggle with hoarding, hearing the words 'avoidance and excuse making' can trigger a negative reaction and send-up defenses. We've felt, or have been made to feel, like we've avoided responsibilities and made-up reasons for not meeting them. In fact, the reasons our 'stuff' is still in disorder and so hard to manage are much deeper. Avoidance and excuse-making are not the cause of hoarding, but attempts to cope with the unpleasantness associated with trying to manage it is." (Pages 48 -49 from "Buried in Treasures" 2nd Edition, by David F. Tolin, Randy O. Frost, and Gail Steketee).

Food for Thought - Questions to Ask Yourself

- 1) Has anyone ever said the following to me? "You're just making excuses to hang onto your excessive stuff."
- 2) Has anyone ever said to me the following? "You seem to do almost anything to avoid reducing the number of your objects?"
- 3) Do I feel that I really do make excuses and avoid the task of decluttering?
- 4) How does avoidance and excuse-making factor-in to my overall approach to decluttering?
- 5) Has avoidance been a pattern in my life?
- 6) Are there other activities that I avoid?
- 7) The first step in developing a clutter-free environment is to minimize the number of additional items I bring into my home. Have I honestly been mindful about what I bring into the home or am I still compulsively acquiring? It doesn't matter where I get the object. It could be free, from the street, or from a thrift store or garage sale. The object could be a gift or inheritance. It could be junk mail. Am I giving myself excuses to bring in and then keep these additional items?

How to Use this Document

Many people with hoarding behavior experience ambivalence about decluttering. They are of two minds. One part of them desperately wants to create a clear and serene living space. But another part of them resists changing the status quo. I have hoarding behavior myself and I have all kinds of reasons why I can't declutter.

This document is an exercise with the goal of helping to push through ambivalence by confronting the voice in our heads that says we can't declutter. We do this by first identifying what our justification is for not decluttering. We then come up with solutions to overcome that obstacle.

- 1) Look at the list below and select the number one or two most common reasons why we feel that we can't declutter.
- 2) The wording might not fit your reason exactly. Try to find the description that is closest to what you experience.
- 3) Now look at the next section for solutions to that obstacle.
- 4) If you are assisting someone with hoarding behavior:
 - a. Try and help them to identify the main reason(s) why they are not decluttering.

- b. Then offer them the list of tools for overcoming the obstacle.
- 5) ADD YOUR OWN SOLUTIONS!!!
- a. Decluttering is hard. Obviously there are many legitimate reasons why a person with hoarding behavior delays the process of decluttering. But many times my thoughts tell me I can't do something when, in truth, there may be some things I can do to help my situation.

List of Excuses and Avoidance Statements

- A. "My clutter isn't hurting anyone!"
- B. "I like things the way they are."
- C. "I don't have the time to address the issue of my excessive belongings."
- D. "I'm physically too weak."
- E. "I feel overwhelmed by the amount of stuff in my hoard and the amount of items I am releasing feels like just a drop in the bucket, so I give up."
- F. "I don't know where to start decluttering."
- G. "Nothing has worked before ... I give up."
- H. "Letting go of items makes me feel sad."
- I. "Eventually I'll move to a bigger place. Therefore, I don't have to concern myself with letting go of items now."
- J. "No one can make me do it! I just won't declutter!"
- K. "Since I can't do it perfectly, I won't do it at all."
- L. "I need my things to remember the past."
- M. "I can't do it, I'm too distracted."
- N. "It's worth too much money to get rid of."
- O. "Someone will get mad at me for getting rid of a gift they gave me. They want me to keep my objects."
- P. "The empty space makes me feel vulnerable."
- Q. "I won't be able to find anything."
- R. "I can't let this go. I might need it later."
- S. "I'll regret getting rid of it."
- T. "What if my home still doesn't look good even after I do all that work? So why should I try?"
- U. "I might make a mistake."
- V. "I don't deserve to feel good."
- W. "I want to keep the stuff so I can sell it and make some money."

List of Potential Excuses and Possible Solutions to Those Excuses

Some of the motivational tools and ideas are mentioned more than once.

Q = Questions to ask yourself

S = Solutions

Purple Font = Excuse

A. "My clutter isn't hurting anyone!"

Q. Is this true? Who else might it be hurting? What about my family and friends? Does my clutter prevent me from having closer relationships because I don't feel comfortable entertaining people in my home? Do I avoid engaging in romantic relationships because my collections prevent me from bringing a potential mate into my home?

B. "I like things the way they are."

Q. Is this true? Would the property owner of the building I live in like things the way they are in my home? Would the Public Health Dept. approve of how things are in my home if they knew? How about the local Home Owners Association or the Tenants In Common Association? Do my neighbors like the way I live? Am I impacting the neighborhood? What are the consequences if the property owner doesn't approve of the condition of my apartment? What are the consequences if the Health Department gets involved? Is it possible that I'm in danger of hurting myself via a fire or a fall? Is my stuff worth the risk I am taking to my health, safety, and housing?

- 1) What are some other activities that can give me happiness besides my collections? What are other activities I can engage in besides acquiring even more objects? (See 200 Fun Things to Do Besides Shopping List).

C. "I don't have the time to address the issue of my excessive belongings."

Q. Is this true? What am I doing instead? If I am endangering my housing, how can other priorities be more important than addressing my collections? Which is more important ... avoiding eviction or the other things I spend my time on?

- 1) Set a timer for 10 minutes per day. Try decluttering during that period of time. Stop when the timer goes off.
- 2) Try book-ending with a clutter buddy. Bookending means contacting someone and letting them know what you are going to be working on. This technique helps people to stay accountable. This is done without judgement or criticism.
- 3) Remember to "Keep My Eyes on the Prize" (Good Guy #1 on 54 in Buried in Treasures 2nd Edition). That is to say, I can make a list of all the reasons why I want to declutter and look at the list every day to remind myself why I am putting in the work.
- 4) I could work with a calendar. I could actively schedule time to declutter. When I make a list of my daily goals on the calendar, I am more likely to accomplish those tasks. Plus having the items written down helps me to recognize my progress. It is also important to put down my "To Do List" as well as my "Ta Da List" or those items that I got accomplished. "We celebrate our victories, small and large." (Clutterers Anonymous or CLA literature).
- 5) It helps to let my clutter buddies know what my victories were for the previous day and what my goals are for the day ahead. That can help me with being accountable without judgement.
- 6) Talk to myself. Use a mantra. Say to myself, "One thing at a time" or "I can do this" or "This is uncomfortable but it is not dangerous etc."
- 7) Write a list of pro and cons for decluttering. (See page figure 4.1 of Buried in Treasures on page 37).

D. "I'm physically too weak."

- 1) I could hire someone to help me.
- 2) I could ask for help from loved ones.
- 3) I could ask for help from a church, or possibly from the government, or some other non-profit agency.
- 4) WORK, REST, PLAY. Do the WORK in small bites of time. Then I need to REST to regain my strength. Then I can reward myself for the work that I did by giving myself some kind of a pleasurable reward. Thus I can PLAY. Now I can do it again. Work for 5 minutes. Rest for 15 minutes. Then play for 10 minutes. Now do it again.

- 5) Start with 10 min. of productivity for the whole day and be happy with that. 10 minutes per day is over an hour in a week. I can get a lot done in an hour.
- 6) See if I am eligible for In-home Support Services (IHSS) or The Institute on Aging Support Services program at 415-750-4111 (or something similar in other regions).
- 7) Break the work down into small doable segments. Do what I can do and then hire out the rest.
- 8) Set up a comfortable work station, so I don't hurt myself any further.
- 9) I can take plenty of breaks.
- 10) Watch TV and get up during the commercials to declutter.
- 11) Lay in bed and be comfortable. Go to pages 129 through 134 in BIT. Come up with a list of categories for my belongings and where they belong. Make decisions about how many items I will keep within a particular category. Make a list of the objects I am willing to let go of. Start with the larger items. Give this list to the person who is agreeing to help me. That way there will be something they can start to work on as soon as they arrive.
- 12) Be willing to ask for help. Pray for the willingness to accept the help.
- 13) Pacing is a good tool!!
- 14) I kind of lie, and tell myself that I will get some work done when I get home from job. Then I don't do it. Maybe the solution is for me to do my decluttering when I have the most amount of energy? Maybe I'll get some stuff done in the morning before I go to work or on the weekends?
- 15) I can try and maintain a positive attitude despite my physical limitations. I can try to motivate myself to keep going. Maybe I could play music? Maybe I can do something to make it more enjoyable?
- 16) I can possibly re-double my efforts in trying to address my physical health issues.
- 17) Sometimes watching comedy on YouTube can be helpful because it can pick-up my mood. Humor can shift my focus in some way to re-energize myself.
- 18) I could attend Chronic Illness Anonymous for tools and to gather a sense of hope.
- 19) I could call the Friendship Line to pick myself up. (Please note that there may be an enrollment requirement such as being a low-income senior or an adult with disabilities etc. 24/7 call 888-670-1360 for more info).
- 20) Call The CA. Peer-Run Warm line at 855-600-WARM (9276) to talk to a Peer Counselor 24/7.
- 21) Go to a Clutterers Anonymous (CLA) Meeting. Contact www.clutterersanonymous.org. They have face-to-face meetings, Zoom meetings, and telephone conference calls.
- 22) Eat breakfast. Do a lot of self-care. Self-Care is different for different people. Some people like to read, especially a daily reader. Sleep well. Exercise. The point

is for me to be as gentle on myself as possible. The more refreshed I feel, the more likely I am to have the strength to declutter.

- 23) I can bring a box of stuff to where I am sitting down and kind of resting. I can sort and discard the items in the box WHILE I am sitting. I do need to have the area all set up. I need to have a receptacle for trash, recycling, donating, keeping, and shredding. I need to have these receptacles within reach.

E. "It's too overwhelming."

- 1) I can reach out for emotional support.
- 2) I can get a clutter buddy.
- 3) I can call The California Peer-Run Warm Line at 855-845-7415, available 24-hours per day, Seven days a week. This service is for California residents only. However, there are Talk Lines throughout the USA. I can use them when I'm feeling anxious about discarding or having trouble resisting acquiring an additional item.
- 4) Contact The Depression Bi-Polar Support Alliance. They have chapters available throughout the USA. They also have on-line support. Contact <https://www.dbsalliance.org/>
- 5) Call Recovery International. They have chapters available throughout the USA. They also have on-line support. Contact <https://www.recoveryinternational.org/>
- 6) Get a private one-to-one therapist. You can call the Warm Line and they can help you to find a therapist.
- 7) Call a friend.
- 8) Participate in Clutterers Anonymous (CLA) meetings. Contact www.clutterersanonymous.org.
- 9) Participate in Underearners Anonymous (UA) meetings. Contact www.underearnersanonymous.org
- 10) Start in one small area and gradually move on to the next small area. Don't tackle everything all at once.
 - a) I could put a sheet over all of the areas I am NOT working on. That way, the only area that is exposed, is the area I am working on.
 - b) Once I declutter an area, I can declare it a "clutter-free zone." Moving forward, the only thing that goes in that spot are the things that belong there. If I re-clutter the area, I get it back to maintenance condition as soon as possible.
- 11) I can use Chat GPT. This is an AI search engine. Sometimes it comes up with suggestions that don't make sense. However, it can write poetry and write essays. It can also come up with lists of suggestions and potential options. It can be

helpful for some people. I take the info with a grain of salt. There are also some AI bots with specific tones or themes that are helpful. They do say in the disclaimer not to do the things that are specific to the individual because they do have a training device. There is one that is mental health focused called Grace through the Hope and Health Center in Texas. There is another one that is called Goblin Tools that is a neuro-diverse based. You give it a task that needs to be broken down and it will help you think it through.

- 12) When I am feeling overwhelming I can feel like it is a spiritual problem. I can ask my spiritual guides to protect me from the “overwhelm.” I can then ask them to help me to do one little thing that is in front of me and not try to fix my whole life at once.
- 13) I can remind myself to look at the small gifts in the present. I can try to look for something to be grateful for.
- 14) I can put the timer on for 15 min. and stop when it goes off. I can then rest after the timer goes off. I can ask myself if I can manage to go another 15 min.
- 15) There is nothing that works every single time. I have to experiment.
- 16) I listen to some of the decluttering channels such as “A beautiful Mess” or “Midwest Magic Cleaning. These are on YouTube. They offer themselves as being “body-doubling”
- 17) I have debilitating thoughts, sometimes I have to fight my brain and just take the action for five minutes despite what my mind is saying. This makes me feel more empowered. This has helped me in the past. It can be called behavioral activation. I take the action despite how I feel. I may feel better AFTER I take the action.

F. “I don’t know where to start decluttering.”

- 1) Always start with health and safety. (See the SF Health and code). Check out pages 27 through 34 in Buried in Treasures, 2nd Edition for some ideas.
- 2) I could ask my clutter buddies to help me figure out where to start.
- 3) I could work on an area that motivates me the most. Maybe I love to cook but I haven’t been cooking. There has just been too much stuff in the kitchen for me to cook. I’ll start by decluttering the stovetop.
- 4) I could start anywhere ... I just need to start.
- 5) I could just close my eyes and play pin the tail on the donkey. Wherever my finger goes ... that’s where I’ll start.
- 6) I’ll ask a Peer Counselor to help me figure out where to start.

- 7) I'll take a Buried in Treasures class and do the exercises in there. Maybe I'll get an idea as to where to start in there?
- 8) I'll take a leap of faith. I'll be open to what others have to say.
- 9) I could attend an Unburied from Treasures Group. These are follow-up groups for graduates of Buried in Treasures classes. My buddies in that group might be able to inspire me as to where to start.

G. "Nothing has worked before ... I give up."

- 1) I need to be gentle with myself. I can't give up hope. I have to forgive myself. Having too much stuff might well be part of a mental health issue. I can't be mad at myself for having an illness.
- 2) I'll have to remember to reward myself along the way. (See 200 Fun Things to Do Besides Shopping List).
- 3) It took a long time for me to acquire my collections. It is going to take a long time to release it. I can't expect it to change overnight.
- 4) I'll be open to investigating other co-occurring conditions. Perhaps I have clinical depression as well as collecting behaviors? Perhaps assistance from a therapist for the clinical depression will also help with the collecting behaviors?
- 5) I'll recognize my accomplishments (small or large) as I go along.
- 6) I'll employ general wellness tools too. I'll focus on exercise, healthy eating, meditation, rest, and drinking plenty of water etc.
- 7) This is not a moral issue. I have a mental health issue and I can forgive myself for this problem.
- 8) I'll seek out inspiration from those in whom the problem has been resolved or lessened.

H. "Letting go of items makes me feel sad."

- 1) I could go slowly. Change is difficult.
- 2) I could find other things that bring joy into my life besides the acquisition of new belongings or hanging on to old items. (See 200 Fun Things to Do Besides Shopping).
- 3) I could use my Wellness Recovery Action Plan (W.R.A.P.) Wellness Toolbox. If I don't have one, I could learn the W.R.A.P approach. MHSF can help me create a WRAP

plan through Peer Connections. Contact

peersupportservices@mentalhealthsf.org. This program is for SF Residents only.

- 4) I could try to remember that “people and relationships are more important than my lifeless and inanimate objects.” (Quote from CLA).
- 5) I could attend various groups at MHASF, such as Coping with Anxiety, Stress and Wellness, Depression, OCD, Adults on the Autism Spectrum, and Hearing Voices etc.
- 6) I’ll start with the “low hanging fruit” and let go of the easier stuff first. (See the exercise on pages 129 through 134 to discover what items would be the easiest for me to release. Obviously this is different for different people).

I. “Eventually I’ll move to a bigger place. Therefore, I don’t have to concern myself with letting go of items now.”

Q. Will that really solve my problem? Is it possible that I might fill up a bigger place making the new, and big place over-crowded too? How realistic is that I will actually move? When? How big of a place will I be able to afford? Wouldn’t I still have to “deal” with the stuff because I would still have to pack it all up? Do I really want to continue to live with this situation until I can move?

- 1) I’ll investigate the housing market in my area. How much would it cost to purchase or rent a bigger home or apartment? I’ll look at my budget and ask myself how soon I would be able to afford a larger place?

J. “No one can make me do it! I just won’t declutter!”

Q. Are these objects worth risking my housing, my health, and my relationships? Are there a lot of people who are being evicted in my area due to hoarding behaviors? What are my rights? What are the health and safety laws in my community? Would the health department be able to force me to make any changes?

- 1) I’ll take action and become aware of the housing market in my community.
- 2) I’ll check out eviction defense lawyers. I know there are some low-cost or even pro-bono legal assistance in many areas of the county. (See the MHASF document on low-cost legal aid in the SF Bay Area).

K. "Since I can't do it perfectly, I won't do it at all."

Q: I could test my thinking. It may feel like I would die if I let go of my beloved possessions. But is this really true? Is it really so terrible to make a mistake and let go of something I might regret parting with? On a scale of one to 10, how bad do I think it would be to release an object? On a scale from one to 10, how bad does it feel after a half hour, after an hour, after an hour and a half and so on? Is it better to live in a home that is overcrowded or throw something away?

L. "I need my things to remember the past."

Q: Do I believe that letting go of the object means that I will forget my memory? Do I think I am being disrespectful of loved ones who have passed if I let go of objects that belonged to them? What would my departed loved ones want for me? Would they want me to be surrounded by objects that belonged to them that I don't use or would they want me to live in a comfortable and serene space?

- 1) I could take a photograph of the objects before I discard them.
- 2) I could set a limit of how many items of a particular category I will keep. For example, I will keep only the most meaningful Christmas tree decorations and let go of the rest. I will keep ___ (X amount) and let go of the rest.
- 3) I'll keep the best and let go of the rest.
- 4) I love Aunt Dot but she has passed away. I have 15 items that I don't use that remind me of Aunt Dot. Could I manage to hang on to one or two of these items and then preserve my photos of Aunt Dot? What would Aunt Dot want for me?
- 5) I could make small shrines to some of the people who have departed. I can create a space of honor for them in a specific place instead of having items haphazard throughout the home.
- 6) I could ask my children if they want to keep items from their childhood instead of me hanging onto it. How long do I really need to hang on to their report card from the 4th grade? They are adults now.
- 7) I can write a journal with to record my memories instead of hanging onto objects. I could create scrap books.

- 8) I could consider that it might feel good to “spread the wealth.” If I’m not using these objects, perhaps it would feel good to pass these items on to others who would appreciate them. This stuff is just collecting dust at my house.

M. “I can’t do it, I’m too distracted.”

- 1) I could bookend with a clutter buddy.
- 2) I could write down my goals so I can remember what I am working on.
- 3) I can work on breaking down my projects in to smaller steps. Thus, I can work on each step separately instead of getting distracted by the entire project.
- 4) I could reward myself when I accomplish each of the small steps. (See 200 Fun Things to Do Besides Shopping).
- 5) I could reduce my field of vision. I could lay a sheet over the area that I’m not working on and just work on the area that I’m focusing on.
- 6) I could create an atmosphere conducive to concentrating
 - a) I could turn off my cell phone.
 - b) I could turn off the TV (Footnote: sometimes the TV helps too. I need to experiment and figure out what works for me).
 - c) I could tell the other people in my home I’m busy.
 - d) I could establish access to containers for trash, recycling, donating, and selling for my sorting session.
 - e) I could serve myself a favorite beverage.
 - f) I could turn on background music.
 - g) My colleague Varian wears a special decluttering outfit to reinforce the idea he is working on his home and nothing else. He wears a tutu.
- 7) I could put a timer on for 10 minutes and stop when it rings.
- 8) I could prioritize - more important tasks should be done first.
- 9) I could schedule time on my calendar and devote it to decluttering.
- 10) I could work in one small area. I could ponder the wisdom of working in multiple areas at the same time.
- 11) I could consider doing one thing at a time. I could evaluate my effectiveness while multi-tasking. Maybe I do better multitasking but maybe I don’t. I’ll test it out. (It might depend on what the project is)?
- 12) 27% of the people with collecting behaviors also have attention deficit disorder. I could try reading up on it. There is a reference to it on page 23 in the Buried in Treasures 2nd Edition book. Some people have found the following organization to be helpful. <https://add.org/adhd-support-groups/>

- 13) I could investigate mindfulness meditation. This technique sometimes helps people focus more intently when working on a project.
- 14) I could make the list of categories of what to do with the objects (keep, give away, sell etc.). I could use these categories when I feel overwhelmed with decisions.
- 15) I could touch base with my clutter buddy and use them as a “witness.” Sometimes it is helpful to have someone in the house, on Zoom or on the phone; just to be there.
- 16) I could use other clutter buddy tools too.

N. “It’s worth too much money to get rid of.”

Q. If I’m not really using it, is it really worth the amount of space it is taking up? How much is storing this object costing me in terms of the loss of my self-esteem? Am I renting living space or am I living in a storage unit. Am I living in a landfill, a recycling bin, or a thrift store? Even though these objects have value, are they really more valuable than living in a comfortable home?

- 1) I could try selling the object to try and re-coup some of my expenses.
- 2) I could donate it for the tax write off
- 3) I could give it away to friends or family.
- 4) I could limit the number of items I have per category. For example, how many white blouses do I REALLY need? 40, 20, 15, 10, or 5? How much room do I have for my blouses? What other colors do I want to wear besides white? How much room in my closet or dresser do I have available for blouses?
- 5) I could develop a list of Decision Making Questions to help me to decide what to keep and what to discard. (See the exercise on pages 148 and 149 of Buried in Treasures 2nd Edition).

O. “Someone will get mad at me for getting rid of a gift they gave me. They want me to keep my objects.”

Q. Which is more important, their anger or me having a comfortable home to live in? If they care about me, wouldn’t they want what is best for me?

- 1) I could ask my loved one if they want to keep this object for themselves.

- 2) I could ask my loved ones to give me “experience-based gifts” in the future. In other words, I could ask my loved ones to give me a gift-certificate to a restaurant instead of giving me an object. That way, we could go out to a meal together instead of me just filling up my space with even more stuff. I could also ask them to buy me something that is perishable. They could buy me flowers because eventually they will die and I will be forced to throw them out.
- 3) I could make sure that I do all of the follow-up steps when I purchase an object for a loved one. Many a times, I have purchased an object but didn't get it to the person. Now it is part of my clutter.
- 4) I could do gift-shopping from my own home instead of going down the slippery slope of entering into a store to buy gifts for others. Often, I have purchased stuff for myself when I go gift shopping for others.

P. “The empty space makes me feel vulnerable.”

Q. What are some other things I can do to fill up the space? What are some other things I could do to feel more secure? Do the objects actually MAKE me more secure or does it just feel that way? What can I do to assist me when I'm getting anxious during the decluttering process?

- 1) I could try and quiet my thoughts. I could move on to something else besides decluttering and then wait until I'm in a better space before I declutter. However, I can't wait toooooo long to begin decluttering again.
- 2) I could pray and meditate.
- 3) I could try using grounding exercises to help me move through the anxiety.
- 4) I could try doing something enjoyable. I could try doing something off of the “200 Fun Things to Do Besides Shopping” list.

Q. “I won't be able to find anything.”

Q. In truth, how well do I find things now?

- 1) Eventually, it will be easier to keep things organized with fewer objects. There will be fewer things to keep track of.

- 2) I could put things in boxes and label the outside of the box. This would at least “containerize my stuff.” This would help until I get the stuff better organized. It would look “prettier” and that might help my mood.
- 3) I could write a blueprint of my stuff stating where the things are. For example, “Scissors: Desk drawer.” There is an exercise on pages 129 to 134 in Buried in Treasures 2nd Edition that is helpful for this problem.

R. “I can’t let this go. I might need it later.”

Q. Is it better to live in a peaceful place now and need something later; or is it better to live in chaos and have things that I may never need or never be able to find? How often do I need an object but I can’t find it. Then I go out and buy the object again because I couldn’t find it? Is this an effective use of my time, energy and money? How useful is it to have an object that I need or want but I can’t find the object when I need or want it because it is hidden amongst the rest of my stuff? Is it better to have fewer objects so I can find things when I need them? It may be true that I might have to purchase or replace some items in the future but what price tag would I put on my well-being? What price to I put on my serenity, safety, health, or housing?

- 1) I could try to trust that the future will take care of itself. I could try and trust that when I need a fact or item, it will be available to me.

S. “I’ll regret getting rid of it.”

Q. Is it better to live in a peaceful place now and need something later; or is it better to live in chaos and have things that I may never need?

T. “What if my home still doesn’t look good even after I do all that work? So why should I try?”

Q. How would I know beforehand what my place will look like afterward? If I don’t try, I can’t succeed.

- 1) I know there are other people who have experienced a similar history with objects as I have had. They are now living in decluttered spaces. If it is possible for them, then maybe, just maybe, it is possible for me?

U. "I might make a mistake."

Q. Which is worse; making a mistake or living in an uncomfortable/unhealthy environment?

- 1) I know it doesn't feel like it but intellectually I really do know that it is okay to make a mistake. Just because I have made a mistake doesn't mean that I AM A MISTAKE!!!!
- 2) I can begin my decluttering journey by starting with the "the low-hanging fruit." I'll make the easier decisions first. Then I'll put those decisions into actions. After a while, it will get easier and easier to make decisions as I practice discarding.
- 3) There is an exercise on pages 126 through 128 that is useful for problem solving. I can try using that to lower my fear of making a mistake.
- 4) I can talk to my Clutter Buddy and ask them what I should do about a particular issue. That might help me to feel more secure about making a mistake.
- 5) I could talk to a therapist and ask their opinion.
- 6) I could call the California Peer-Run Warm Line and ask them what they think.
- 7) I could attend a support group at The Mental Health Assoc. of SF and talk about what is worrying me. I could ask for feedback in the group, especially from the group facilitator.
- 8) I could join a Clutterers Anonymous Co-Sponsorship Step Study Group. When problems come up, I could ask my Co-Sponsors what they think about my worries. I could contact info@clutterersanonymous.org for more info on CLA and on the Co-Sponsorship Groups. www.clutterersanonymous.org
- 9) I could try and get a one-to-one sponsor in CLA and ask them about my worries. It is harder to find a one-to-one sponsor than it is to get in a Co-Sponsorship Group.
- 10) I could pray and meditate to strive to find the answers to my worries.
- 11) I could write and do some journaling to try and figure out what I should do about a given situation. A Pro and Con list might be especially useful.
- 12) I could seek out the consultation of a spiritual advisor such as a clergy, priest, or a rabbi etc.

V. "I don't deserve to feel good."

Q. Is that really true? Why am I beating myself up like this? Why am I punishing myself? Is this kind of self-punishment really fair to me? Is this fair to my family or friends? Q. What would I say to someone else if they made this comment?

- 1) I could force myself to write a list of 5 things that I like about myself. Maybe I won't believe those five things, but I could write it anyway. Then the next day, I could write five more. I could keep this up until I have a list of 100 things.
- 2) I could look in the mirror every day and say, "I love you" to the image in the mirror.
- 3) I could google, "Exercises to increase self-esteem."
- 4) I could volunteer my time at a charity that I believe in. Maybe I could serve meals to the poor or pet the animals in the shelter. If I do things that make me feel like I am doing something positive, I might also start to feel better about myself too?

W. "I want to keep my stuff so I can sell it and make some money."

Q. Am I actively selling items or am I just thinking about it? Am I acquiring things and telling myself that I am getting it so I can resell it (but then I don't sell it)? When was the last time I actually took the action of selling something? When do I honestly think that I will sell something? How much money can I reasonably expect to get for these items? Is it worth the time and energy to try and resell these items? Have I considered donating the items and then getting a tax write-off? What is preventing me from taking the action of selling my excess items?

- 1) I could look on the various sales platforms and do research. I could look on Craig's List, Ebay, and other resources. What are the steps I need to take? I could take the steps.
- 2) I could do a garage sale. I could take note of how much time, energy, and effort it takes to do a garage sale. I could then decide if it is worth the money that I take in.
- 3) I could pay for a booth at a swap meet and get rid of items.
- 4) I could start selling things right away.
- 5) I could stop acquiring additional items until I sell ____ (X) amount.