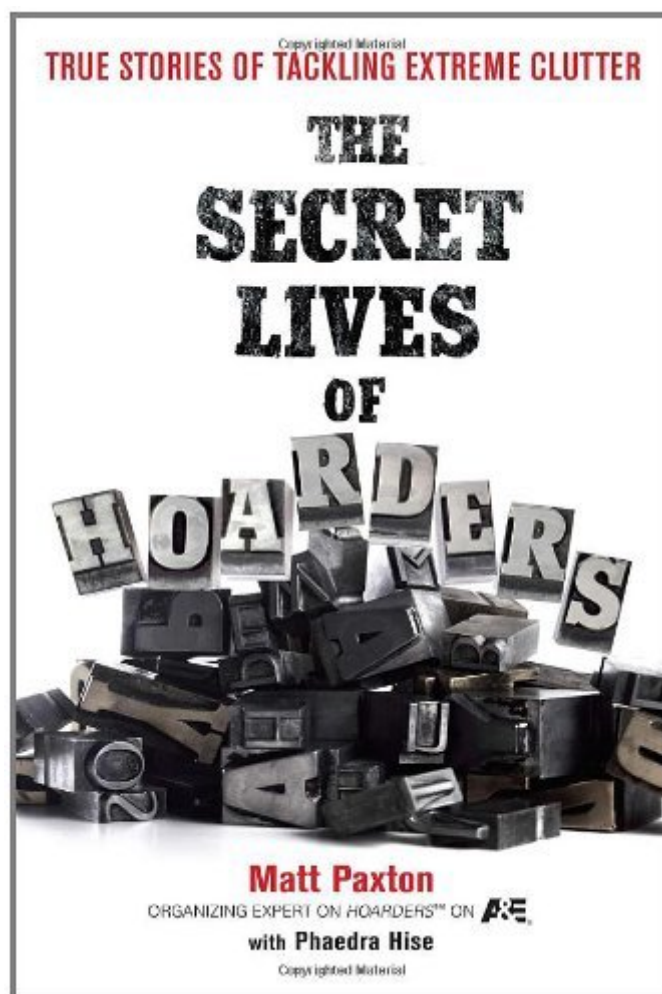


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# The Secret Lives Of Hoarders: True Stories Of Tackling Extreme Clutter



## Synopsis

On the front lines with extreme hoarders The Secret Lives of Hoarders is much more than harrowing tales of attacking the ugliest, dirtiest, and most shocking hoarding cases in the country. It is a behind-the-scenes look at this hidden epidemic- what it means, how to recognize it before it gets out of hand, and how to deal with it. Through his work with hundreds of clients in the worst circumstances- from the giant "rat's nest" that hid more than \$13,000 in cash to a vast cache of cartoon pornography to twenty-five years' worth of unopened mail-Matt Paxton has learned to understand this disorder and his clients' impulses to collect, to speak the hoarders' language, and to reach out to them with compassion and concern while avoiding criticism and judgment. Most important, he guides compulsive hoarders successfully through every step of the clean-up and healing process. The Secret Lives of Hoarders is an engrossing and sometimes unsettling look at extreme clutter but one that helps hoarders, their families, and their friends to find meaning in the chaos.

## Book Information

File Size: 2750 KB

Print Length: 259 pages

Publisher: TarcherPerigee; 1 edition (May 3, 2011)

Publication Date: May 3, 2011

Sold by:Â Penguin Group (USA) LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004MW3ZUO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #282,650 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #23

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Addiction & Recovery > Hoarding

#34 inÂ Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Addiction & Recovery > Hoarding #35 inÂ Kindle

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## Customer Reviews

As another reviewer said, Matt Paxton has walked the walk when it comes to hoarders and their homes. I've watched many episodes of the TV shows "Hoarders" (A&E, on which Matt appears), and "Hoarding: Buried Alive" (TLC), and am aware of a few hoarding situations in real life. I've always liked the way Matt comes across on the "Hoarders" episodes; usually I think he seems better informed and more effective at handling the hoarders than the designated "experts" on the show. I expected this book to be rich in anecdotes about hoarding, and was not disappointed. What surprised me, was the depth of knowledge of the mental, emotional and even physical conditions that lead a person to hoarding behavior, the levels and types of hoarding, and especially the most effective ways to organize a recovery effort. While careful not to present himself as a psychologist or similar counselor, Matt nevertheless displays a firm grasp of essentials that goes far beyond the actual logistics of physically cleaning and clearing out a hoarded home. He makes a strong case that a team is needed, that includes the hoarder, family members, the hands-on cleaning team, and others who may include social workers, counselors, clergy, friends and even building inspectors, depending on the circumstances. All that I've seen, heard, and read about hoarders, has left me feeling that it's all hopeless. Somehow, although he cites cases of backsliding, failures and other bad news, Matt's book has left me with a little hope. He's a man of empathy and common sense, who rebuilt his own life after hitting bottom from compulsive gambling. Until now, I would have recommended a book such as *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things* to someone who wants to understand hoarding. Now I would place Matt's book at the top of that reading list instead.

I've been a fan of Hoarders for years and think Matt Paxton totally rocks. Not only is he adorable but you can see he would do anything to help the hoarder. Is he extreme? Yes, sometimes. But he means well and usually gets the job done. I have several friends who are hoarders - not as bad as those profiled on the show - but getting there. Like a closet full of old newspaper articles and old sports memorabilia. Old clothes that are worn, stained, torn. Collectibles from political eras. No one needs to hold on to this kind of stuff. If you need it, scan it and keep on a thumb drive, Have a yard sale or sell on ebay. Or donate or discard. I have read this book several times, and have loaned it out a few times too. Once people realize that they need to start decluttering their STUFF in order to declutter their LIFE, they will start making a little progress. This book is a great guide to get started!

This book is by far the most insightful, succinct and easy to read book about hoarding. Matt is very

careful to remind the reader that he is not a psychologist/psychiatrist and that he is simply "speaking" candidly from his own experience. Despite all the books I have read on hoarding, Matt's book is the most effective means of demystifying why people acquire and continue to hoard. With compassion, Matt is able to explain that hoarders are not just "lazy slob" as the world may tend to think of them, but deep feeling human beings who desperately want to please others, but are easily hurt others... so hurt that they lose their ability to channel the hurt into more "acceptable" outlets. Instead they begin to hoard, be further ostracized, further isolated, further depressed and succumb to their compulsion to acquire and hoard... to the point where they cannot break the cycle. Matt talks about how hoarding and the resulting clutter and chaos fuel the hoarder's need to escape. Sadly, hoarders tend to escape to their favorite "watering hole" (store, thrift store, row of dumpsters) for a quick, albeit temporary, high. While this is no different than the alcoholic who is depressed about their alcoholism who drinks more to fend off the depression, families tend to feel that it is their right to demean and belittle the hoarder about their chaos. This demeaning is the worst thing the families can do... it only sends the hoarder spiraling further out of control. Matt does a superior job explaining how fragile hoarders really are and how families and friends need to approach the hoarder if they truly love them and want them to recover. Without non-judgemental acceptance and forgiveness from the families and a desire to change on the part of the hoarder, they may serve a life sentence in their own prison.

Love the show and Matt is my favorite person on the show. The book is an easy read with great insight for understanding hoarders and some tips for dealing with them. Being a level 1 hoarder, I have been able to understand myself better and evaluate my possessions and if I need them. My Husband is thrilled that I have been able to let go of things. He isn't much of a reader, but is willing to listen to the passages that are particularly helpful to me. Thank you Matt!!

Paxton and Hise have written a thoughtful, compassionate, how-to book that addresses hoarders with dignity. Paxton certainly has seen his share of depraved situations, but this book rises above and helps people approach and coach a hoarder. He admits curing a hoarder is not about the cleanup. Instead it is breaking the habits, raising self-esteem, and connecting hoarders with the outside. Paxton has developed a five-stage diagnosis for hoarders based on the state of their living quarters and their approach to clutter. He also is clear about his boundaries, he is not a psychologist or counselor and recommends help and follow-up for people in need. The book is well-organized, well-written, and easy to read. Several clients are followed over the course of their cleaning to show

the pitfalls, successes and relapses that can occur. The back includes a listing of resources for information, support, and cleaning. This is an excellent book if you suffer from hoarding or have family members who hoard.

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