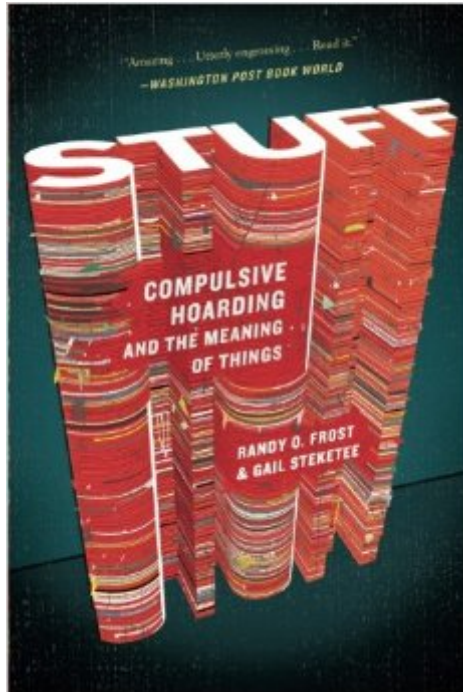


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Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding And The Meaning Of Things



Synopsis

What possesses someone to save every scrap of paper thatâ€™s ever come into his home? What compulsions drive a woman like Irene, whose hoarding cost her her marriage? Or Ralph, whose imagined uses for castoff items like leaky old buckets almost lost him his house? Or Jerry and Alvin, wealthy twin bachelors who filled up matching luxury apartments with countless pieces of fine art, not even leaving themselves room to sleep? Randy Frost and Gail Steketee were the first to study hoarding when they began their work a decade ago; they expected to find a few sufferers but ended up treating hundreds of patients and fielding thousands of calls from the families of others. Now they explore the compulsion through a series of compelling case studies in the vein of Oliver Sacks. With vivid portraits that show us the traits by which you can identify a hoarderâ€”piles on sofas and beds that make the furniture useless, houses that can be navigated only by following small paths called goat trails, vast piles of paper that the hoarders â€œchurnâ€• but never discard, even collections of animals and garbageâ€”Frost and Steketee explain the causes and outline the often ineffective treatments for the disorder. They also illuminate the pull that possessions exert on all of us. Whether weâ€™re savers, collectors, or compulsive cleaners, none of us is free of the impulses that drive hoarders to the extremes in which they live. For the six million sufferers, their relatives and friends, and all the rest of us with complicated relationships to our things, *Stuff* answers the question of what happens when our stuff starts to own us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stuff is first and foremost about hoarders-people who keep so much stuff in their homes that it negatively affects their lives- but it is also about all of us. Stuff forces its readers to look at themselves and wonder: why do I have all this stuff?I agreed to read Stuff because hoarding fascinates me, and my family has had some experience with it. My husband's grandfather kept a very cluttered house, eventually filling an entire pole barn full of items from yard sales and the trash. Going through his items after his death was excruciating, and it was difficult to understand why he kept a broken rake, toy cars with only two wheels, and Tiffany lamps all together.According to the book, my husband's family is not alone. In fact, SIX MILLION Americans suffer from hoarding, and only recently are doctors beginning to understand its complications. It is a bizarre combination of nature and nurture-both genes and family conditions have been identified as factors. I had the misconception that most hoarders were elderly, and that the Great Depression had led to their condition. Frost and Steketee quickly addressed this false logic by explaining that in their research most hoarders have never experienced a period of extreme need or want.Instead, they argue, most of them had a childhood of extreme disconnect/isolation from their parents. Their "recent research indicates that an absence of warmth, acceptance, and support characterizes the early family life of many hoarders, perhaps leading them to form strong emotional attachments to possessions." Therefore, as children they learned to become attached to objects rather than people.Still, I was amazed to learn that there are a variety of reasons why hoarders keep these items.

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