



Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things

Randy O. Frost, Gail Stekeete

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What possesses someone to save every scrap of paper that 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?

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 hoarder - 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 churn but never discard, even collections of animals and garbage - Frost and Steketee illuminate the pull that possessions exert on all of us.

Whether we're savers, collectors, or compulsive cleaners, very few of us are in fact free of the impulses that drive hoarders to the extremes in which they live. For all of us with complicated relationships to our things, *Stuff* answers the question of what happens when our stuff starts to own us.

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