



TOO HUNG UP ABOUT MATERIAL OWNERSHIP

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I was watching a magazine program on Saturday night television a month or two ago, and one of the featured stories was of a house somewhere in Manila which looked like a junkyard. It wasn't actually a junkyard but the lady of the house (a widow) had a fondness for hoarding stuff—old clothes, appliances (working or not), books dating back to her children's days in school (her children are all married and living with their respective families), things which her long-departed husband had used in his trade, simply things she had no use for in the present. Her daughter and grandson lived with her; it turns out her daughter was also into hoarding stuff of her own—old receipts and bags, primarily.

I was laughing really hard when I was watching the show as a defense mechanism—I saw myself and my mother in the people featured there. It was then that I realized that that behavior had a name after all. Right then, I wished the show had featured us instead, so we'd get the clean-up service they had provided to that family to de-clutter and remove all the unnecessary things found in that house.

My daughter has had classmates coming over to visit and repeatedly asking her if we had just moved into the neighborhood. My mother's co-teachers who used to come over for celebrations back when she was still in active service would remark about how our house looked like a department store with lots of stuff hanging or lying here and there and everywhere— boxes filled with stuff, books, clothes, old albums.

Suffice it to say, mom and I have mild compulsive hoarding behavior.

My mother had been regularly doing business with the roving junk shop boys in our neighborhood before the show, and has been doing more after that segment was aired. I guess knowing that what we had was a mild disorder of some kind has made it easier for her to do that. Oh, but there's still so much more to be rid of, and the coming summer vacation might be a great chance to seriously hunker down and do the clean-up more intensively.

As for me, I have got to get rid of the receipts I still have from three weeks ago.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you or anyone you know ever hoard anything? Why do people do this?
2. How are the writer and her family trying to fix the mild behavior problem? Do you think they'll succeed?
3. What advise would you give to a compulsive hoarder?
4. Why do some people find it hard to let go of material possessions?
5. Are you a person who is sentimental about things? Expound on your answer.