

Collaborative Therapy for Clutter Management[®]

DEFINITION OF COLLABORATIVE THERAPY:

Collaborative Therapy (CT) is emerging as a model to address the blended and often complex needs of the clutterer and hoarder. CT usually involves an organizer and a therapist, and may include counselors, coaches, family and community service agencies. Working side-by-side with clients, the team facilitates interventions that help create and maintain environmental change in the home or business, as well as lasting therapeutic change within the client.

This is a challenging, yet supportive effort to assist clients in removing excessive items to which they feel extremely attached. These items may represent conflicted/symbolic parts of themselves. Using “best practices” as defined by current research, CT helps clients identify and reframe the emotional and physical connections to their “stuff”, develop alternatives for long-term solutions, and make more effective decisions when de-cluttering.

The collaborative approach begins with an information gathering session which can be initiated by an organizer or a therapist. Ideally, this initial interview is conducted jointly by the organizer and the therapist in the client’s home or place of business. Quite often, clients will first meet an organizer who will later recommend a therapist or vice versa. Under these conditions, each professional will gather their initial information separately, and share the collaborative therapy model as a method of working together to achieve desired goals and lasting change.

The Collaborative Interview includes:

- Review of client history
- Assessment of current psychosocial/behavioral functioning (strengths and challenges)
- Determination of CT team players and their role
- Evaluation of household or business. Consider using the Clutter Hoarding Scale[®]
- Photographs of the environment, if possible
- Initial goal setting
- Statement of commitment and signed agreements (including confidential release agreements)

Team collaboration is built on mutual trust and respect. The highest ethical standards, which include confidentiality, are central tenets of team communication when working together to achieve the client’s goals. The Collaborative Therapy team maintains an on-going dialogue that facilitates the removal of emotional and environmental clutter.

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