

**WEEK 5:**

**HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?**

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**BURIED IN TREASURES:**

**SUPPORT GROUP FOR HOARDING & CLUTTER**



**CLUTTER IS NOT JUST THE  
STUFF ON YOUR FLOOR - IT'S  
ANYTHING THAT STANDS  
BETWEEN YOU AND THE LIFE  
YOU WANT TO BE LIVING.**

**- Peter Walsh**

## WEEK 5 — BURIED IN TREASURES : SUPPORT GROUP FOR HOARDING & CLUTTER

### 2026 MEETING DATES & TIMES

TUESDAY'S 4:00PM-5:30PM

- ▶ 1. April 7th
- ▶ 2. April 14th
- ▶ 3. April 21st
- ▶ 4. April 28th
- ▶ 5. May 5th
- ▶ 6. May 12th
- ▶ 7. May 19th
- ▶ 8. May 26th
- ▶ 9. June 2nd
- ▶ 10. June 9th
- ▶ 11. June 16th
- ▶ 12. June 23rd

## SESSION TO SESSION

- ▶ Slides and handouts will be distributed at each session.
- ▶ Bring book to every session. Keep handouts/notes in one place.
- ▶ Write in your book.
- ▶ Set goals!
- ▶ What steps might you take to keep up with reading and home goals?

## WEEK 5: BURIED IN TREASURES WORKSHOP

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# SYLLABUS

- ▶ **Week 1:** Introduction & Getting to Know the Group
- ▶ **Week 2:** Assessing Clutter and Hoarding Challenges
- ▶ **Week 3:** Meet the Bad Guys
- ▶ **Week 4:** Meet the Good Guys
- ▶ **Week 5:** How Did This Happen?
- ▶ **Week 6:** Enhancing Motivation
- ▶ **Week 7:** Help with Reducing Acquiring
- ▶ **Week 8:** Sorting & Discarding - Preparation
- ▶ **Week 9:** Sorting & Discarding - Let's Go!
- ▶ **Week 10:** Taking on Your Brain
- ▶ **Week 11:** Maintaining Momentum
- ▶ **Week 12:** Planning Next Steps & Celebrating Success

## WEEK 5 — BURIED IN TREASURES : SUPPORT GROUP FOR HOARDING & CLUTTER

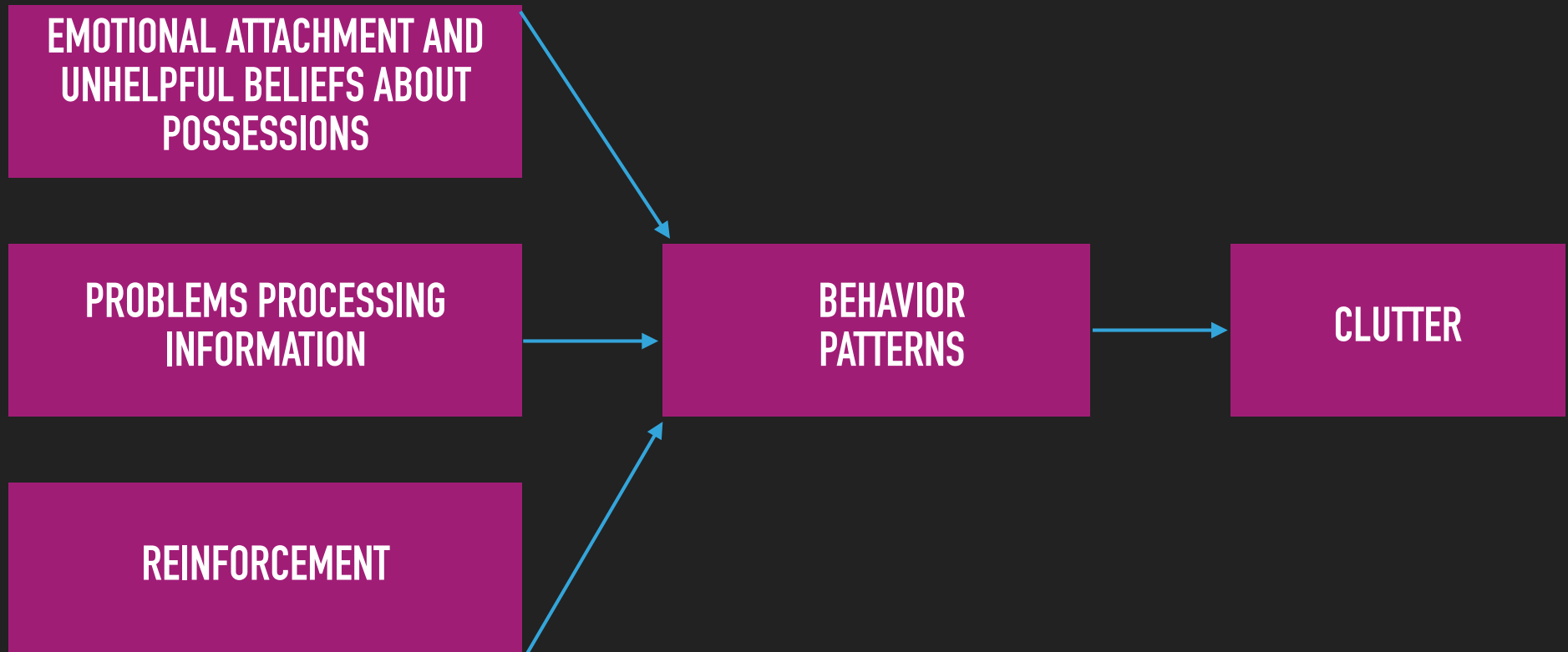
### GROUP COMFORT AGREEMENT

- ▶ We try not to ask other group members personal questions.
- ▶ What's said here, stays here.
- ▶ Please make "I" statements, only referring to your personal experiences.
- ▶ Participation is voluntary.
- ▶ The group will begin at 4:00 PM and end at 5:30 PM with a 5 minute break.
- ▶ Cell phones should be set to silent or vibrate; important calls will be taken outside of the room (or off camera).
- ▶ Please be on time. Contact Suzanne ([so@SuzanneOtte.com](mailto:so@SuzanneOtte.com)) for absences or late arrivals. A voicemail may also be left at (508) 645-6883. Please be on time. Group cancellation calls will be made by noon on the day of the group.

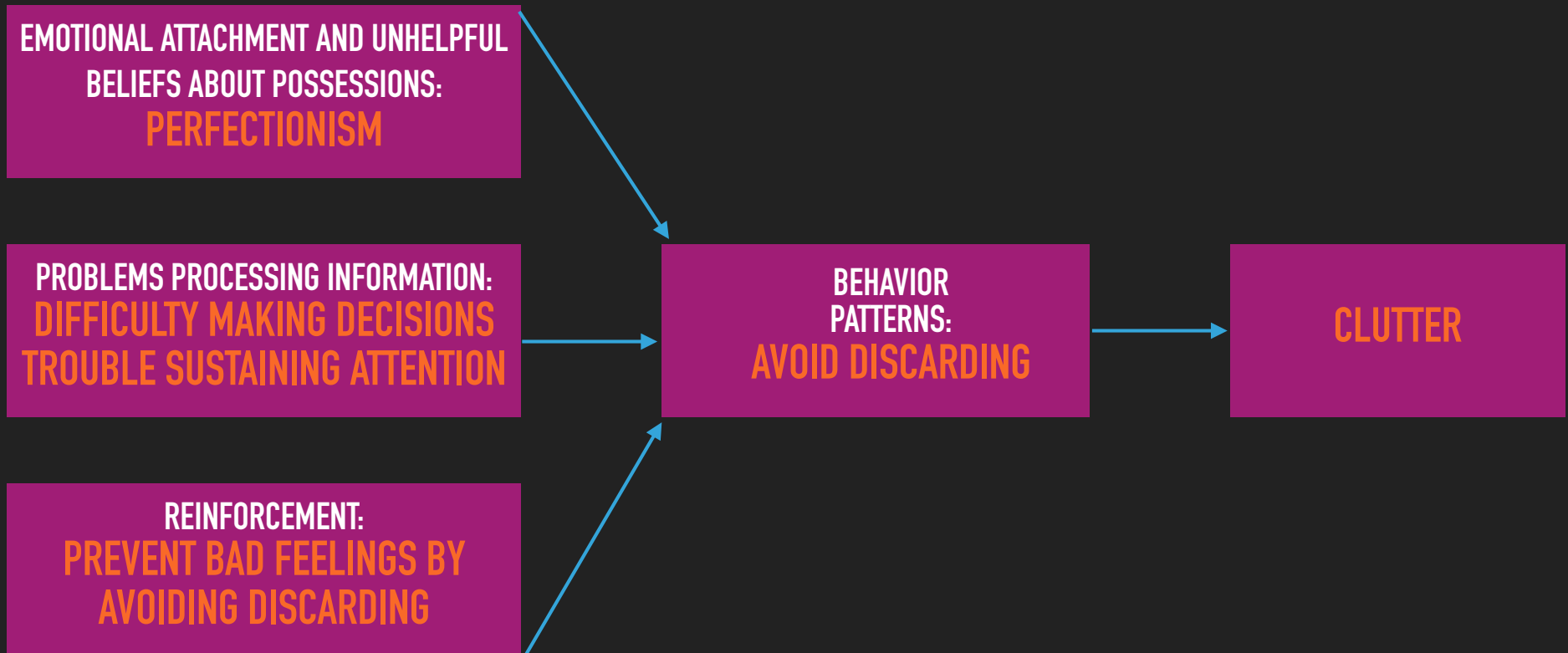
## CHECK-IN

- ▶ **Mood Rating:**  
(0-10) + share one sentence to describe a success related to your decluttering efforts
- ▶ **Share Insight:**  
What have been the best things about this group so far?

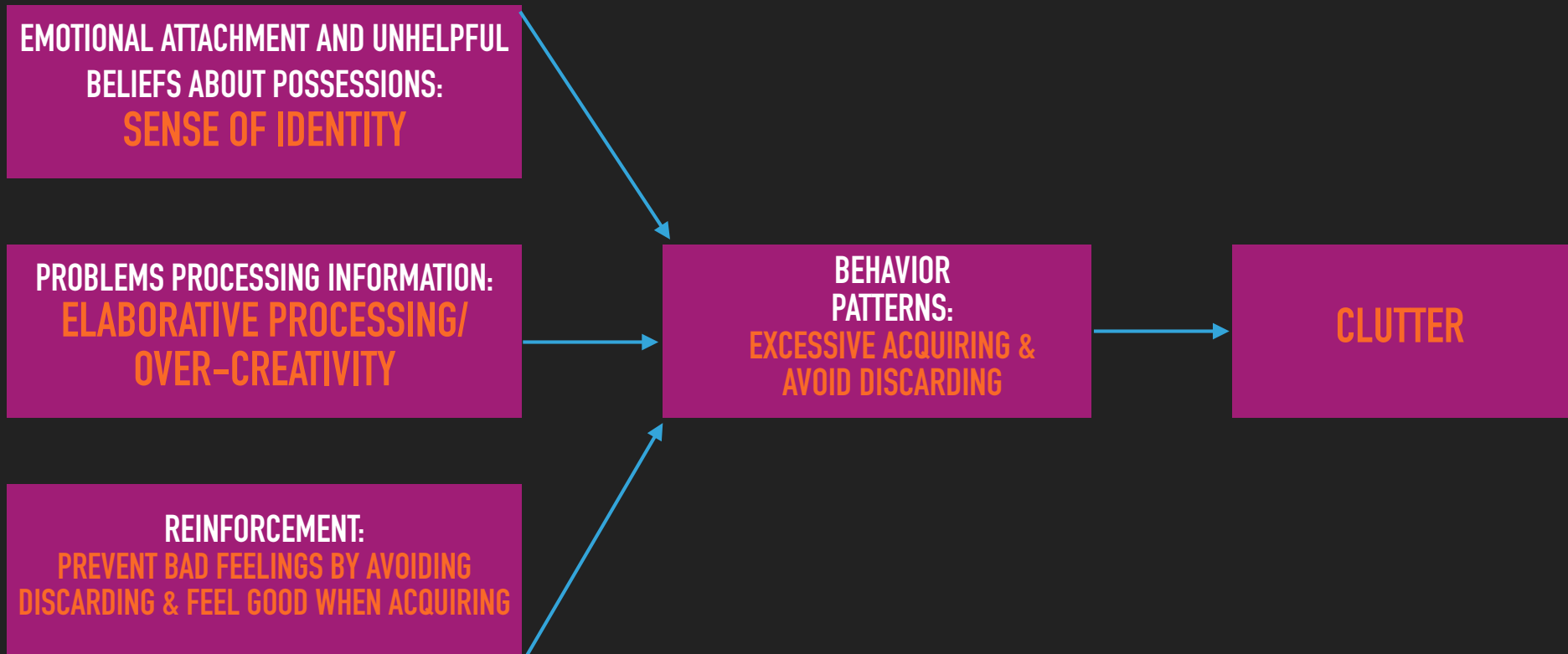
## MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR REASONS FOR CLUTTER



## EXAMPLE #1 OF “REASONS FOR CLUTTER” MODEL



## EXAMPLE #2 OF “REASONS FOR CLUTTER” MODEL



## HOARDING IS NOT JUST A HOUSE PROBLEM ...

- ▶ Unless the **person** makes fundamental, sustainable changes in how he or she thinks, feels, and acts (alters the way (s)he relates to possessions, the problem is still there.
- ▶ When **someone takes over the discarding process**, the person with the hoarding problem usually continues to acquire and save items until the house fills up again - sometimes more than before the clean-out.

## 1. HOARDING IN YOUR THOUGHTS (BOX 1)

- ▶ **Thoughts and beliefs** become so entrenched that create inflexibility and get in the way of making wise choices.
- ▶ **Common beliefs:**
  - ▶ **Usefulness, Waste, and Responsibility:** I can think of some ways to reuse this item. Therefore, I am responsible for doing so and if I fail to do so, I'm being wasteful. I will be lousy person. But right now, I'm tired and stressed and I don't have enough time, so I can't follow through with the plan. To avoid being a lousy person, I'll hold on to the item until I can deal with it. (That time almost never comes.)

## 1. HOARDING IN YOUR THOUGHTS (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Thoughts and beliefs >> Common beliefs:**
  - ▶ **Overly Creative Thinking:** A person's creativity exceeds his or her physical capacity to carry out the the plan. People who clutter/hoard are highly creative and intelligent and come up with idea after idea, saving things for all sorts of reasons but never following through with plans.
  - ▶ **Perfectionism:** The prospect of making decisions - the "wrong" decisions is overwhelming.

## 1. HOARDING IN YOUR THOUGHTS (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Question:** Beliefs about usefulness, waste, and responsibility?
- ▶ **Question:** Overly creative thinking?
- ▶ **Question:** Does perfectionism play a role?
- ▶ **Question:** Sentimental attachments make it hard to let go?
- ▶ **Question:** Identity beliefs support your reasons to collect?
- ▶ **Question:** Do your items relate to safety, security, control?

## 2. HOARDING IN THE BRAIN (BOX 2)

- ▶ **Brain scans (fMRI):** frontal lobe activity too low (judging the relevance or importance of things) and too high (making decisions about keeping or discarding personal possessions.) Messaging is received differently.
- ▶ **Attention:** External demands (to attention) take person off task during sorting & discarding. When acquiring, tied to become "locked on" to an item.
- ▶ **Categorization:** When sorting own possessions, difficult to sort into large categories; many small ones instead.

## 2. HOARDING IN THE BRAIN (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Decision-Making:** Indecisiveness can be linked to beliefs (perfectionism) and/or difficulty processing the information required to make a decision.
- ▶ **Memory:** Difficulty remembering things and use of physical objects as reminders.

## 2. HOARDING IN THE BRAIN (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Question:** Difficulty keeping attention focused on decluttering and organizing?
- ▶ **Question:** Challenges with categorization?
- ▶ **Question:** Problems with decision making?
- ▶ **Question:** Is memory an issue relative to sorting, discarding, and decision making?

### 3. HOARDING IN YOUR EMOTIONS (BOX 3)

- ▶ **Feeling Rotten:** Emotional discomfort typical in people who experience hoarding (feelings may persist or come and go):
  - ▶ Sadness, grief, loneliness, or longing.
  - ▶ Anxiety, fear, tension, or worry.
  - ▶ Guilt, regret.
  - ▶ Anger, frustration, irritability, or annoyance.
- ▶ **Acquiring and saving** behaviors (oftentimes) is an attempt to get **relief from unpleasant feelings.**

### 3. HOARDING IN YOUR EMOTIONS (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Sentimental** attachment (including anthropomorphism)
- ▶ Feelings of **identity** (p. 75 "Bill")
- ▶ Feelings of **safety, security, and control** (physical & emotional)
- ▶ **Positive feelings** (excitement, joy, wonderment, pleasure when acquiring or finding a lost item) can interfere with rational thinking about the costs of acquiring and hoarding.

## 4. HOARDING IN YOUR BEHAVIOR (BOX 3 & 4)

- ▶ Possessions evoke **moods**.
- ▶ Moods become powerful **motivators**.
- ▶ Discarding a possession may evoke anxiety, fear, or other **unpleasant feelings**.
- ▶ Frustration and anger may arise from feeling **pressure to discard**.
- ▶ Behaviorally, a person may avoid the feelings of discomfort by **not working on discarding but acquiring** instead. Avoidance or acquiring is a way to gain relief from feeling bad.

## 4. HOARDING IN YOUR BEHAVIOR (CONTINUED ...)

- ▶ **Question:** Identify with reinforcements for “treasure hunting”?
- ▶ **Question:** Feelings you might be avoiding by keeping something you don't need or acquiring a new item?
- ▶ **Question:** Sorts of behavior patterns do your attachments, processing difficulties, and reinforcements lead to? Acquiring? Difficulty letting go?
- ▶ **Question:** What sorts of behavior patterns do your attachments, processing difficulties, and reinforcements lead to? Acquiring? Difficulty letting go?

# GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

- ▶ Understand why you save things.
  - ▶ Create living space you can use.
  - ▶ Find your things.
  - ▶ Improve your decision-making skills.
  - ▶ Reduce acquiring and enjoy other activities.
  - ▶ Reduce clutter.
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- ▶ Which excite you the most?
  - ▶ What are you priorities?
  - ▶ Which do you think will be most difficult?

### GOAL SETTING

- ▶ At the close of each group, we will ask each person to set a short-term clutter-related goal for the week between sessions.
  - ▶ Identify the area or problem you'd like to work in/on. Be specific.
  - ▶ Define what you want to achieve.
  - ▶ Create your plan. Write your goal.
  - ▶ Set a timeline. Scheduling your work may help.
  - ▶ Learn by doing. If needed, adjust your goal along the way.
  - ▶ Be realistic. Clutter likely didn't accumulate in a short period of time. Be thoughtful about taking on a goal that is too ambitious.
  - ▶ Share your progress during group time.

## PREPARING FOR NEXT SESSION

- ▶ Read chapter 7 in the Buried in Treasures (BIT) book (Enhancing Motivation) and complete the exercises.
- ▶ Complete Homework Form for Session 6 and bring to next group.
- ▶ Questions? Please e-mail Suzanne at [so@SuzanneOtte.com](mailto:so@SuzanneOtte.com).

## CHECK-OUT

- ▶ Mood rating (0-10)
- ▶ Your goal for the next week between sessions?
- ▶ One encouraging word to leave the group with.
- ▶ Next session: Tuesday, May 12th at 4:00PM