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Compulsive Decluttering Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

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How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Self-Assessment

Compulsive decluttering is a behavioral pattern characterized by an excessive and persistent need to continuously remove or discard possessions, often to an extent that significantly impairs one's daily functioning and well-being.

The following are common signs compulsive decluttering may be a problem for you. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I feel anxious when there are too many items around me, and I constantly need to get rid of things.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “I don't feel comfortable in my own space unless it's minimal and bare.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I often find myself discarding perfectly functional items because I feel overwhelmed by clutter.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I get distressed when I see other people's homes or workspaces that are not as neat and minimalist as mine.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I constantly worry about the accumulation of possessions and feel compelled to downsize regularly.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I feel a sense of relief and satisfaction after decluttering, but it's short-lived, and I always seek out more things to discard.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I frequently find myself purging items only to regret throwing them soon after and even repurchase them again.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I feel anxious when I receive gifts because I need to find a way to toss it out.”	1-2-3-4-5

Score: ____/40

1. Was there anything about your score that surprised you? If yes, what specifically?

2. Did any of the statements resonate with you more than others?

How Is Compulsive Decluttering Hurting You?

The following are some common ways compulsive decluttering may be impacting your life. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ Experiencing heightened anxiety and distress when possessions accumulate.
- ☐ Struggling to maintain meaningful relationships due to excessive focus on decluttering.
- ☐ Spending excessive time decluttering at the expense of other important activities.
- ☐ Difficulty in making decisions about what to keep and what to discard.
- ☐ Financial strain from constantly purchasing and discarding items.
- ☐ Experiencing a lack of stability or comfort in your living environment due to constant changes.
- ☐ Feeling disconnected from your belongings or surroundings.
- ☐ Engaging in compulsive decluttering as a way to manage stress or negative emotions.
- ☐ Being preoccupied with thoughts about decluttering, even to the detriment of other responsibilities.
- ☐ Feeling a sense of emptiness or loss after decluttering, rather than relief or satisfaction.
- ☐ Avoiding acquiring new possessions out of fear of clutter, leading to restricted living conditions.
- ☐ Experiencing shame or guilt around the amount of items you own.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Compulsive Decluttering Triggers

1. Identify Triggers

Take some time to reflect on what situations or emotions trigger your urge to declutter. Are there specific stressors or feelings that prompt the need to discard items? The following are some common example. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed with the amount of clutter in your space.
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions about what items to keep or discard.
- ☐ Fear of running out of space to store possessions.
- ☐ Guilt over accumulating too much stuff or past hoarding behaviors.
- ☐ Anxiety about the cleanliness or tidiness of your home.
- ☐ Obsessive thoughts related to organizing and decluttering.
- ☐ A desire for control or order in your environment.
- ☐ Perfectionism and a need for everything to be "just right."
- ☐ Difficulty finding things due to clutter.
- ☐ Moving or changing living arrangements frequently.
- ☐ Trauma or loss that resulted in a desire to simplify and control one's environment.
- ☐ The misconception that decluttering will solve current problems or challenges.
- ☐ An attempt to distract from underlying emotional or mental health concerns.
- ☐ A sense of accomplishment or satisfaction from the act of decluttering itself.
- ☐ The belief that fewer possessions equate to a simpler, more fulfilling life.

- ☐ Inability to tolerate visual or sensory clutter.
- ☐ The use of decluttering as a form of procrastination or avoidance of other tasks.
- ☐ Spring cleaning.
- ☐ Wanting to donate or give away unused belongings.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Emotional Responses

For each trigger you've identified, describe the emotional response you experience. Do you feel anxious, overwhelmed, guilty, or something else? Understanding your emotions can provide insight into the underlying reasons for your behavior.

Track Urges

Over the next week, pay attention to moments when you feel the impulse to declutter. Note the time of day, the specific items or areas you feel compelled to tidy, and the emotions you are experiencing at that moment.

Date	Specific Items or Areas	Emotions	Notes
<i>e.g., Monday, morning</i>	<i>Office desk</i>	<i>Restlessness</i>	<i>Spent 20 minutes cleaning and organizing</i>

Challenge Your Thoughts

1. Identify Negative Thoughts

Write down the negative thoughts that typically arise when you feel the urge to compulsively declutter. The following are some common example. Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ "I can't relax until everything is perfectly organized."
- ☐ "I feel overwhelmed by the amount of clutter around me."
- ☐ "If I don't declutter, my space will become chaotic and unlivable."
- ☐ "Having clutter makes me feel like a failure or lazy."
- ☐ "I need to get rid of things to have a fresh start."
- ☐ "I can't focus or think clearly in a cluttered environment."
- ☐ "If I don't declutter, I won't be able to find anything."
- ☐ "Decluttering is the only way I can regain control over my life."
- ☐ "I feel guilty for accumulating so much stuff."
- ☐ "I'm afraid of losing important items if I don't constantly declutter."
- ☐ "The presence of clutter makes me anxious or stressed."
- ☐ "I won't be happy or content until my surroundings are clutter-free."
- ☐ "If I declutter, I'll finally feel a sense of accomplishment."
- ☐ "Having too much stuff weighs me down emotionally."
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Examine Evidence

Evaluate the evidence for and against these negative thoughts. Are there times when these thoughts have proven to be inaccurate or unhelpful?

Thought:

Example: "Decluttering is the only way I can regain control over my life."

Evidence for	Evidence against
<i>e.g., I've noticed that in the past, decluttering has provided me with a sense of organization and order.</i>	<i>While decluttering may offer temporary relief, it may not address the deeper issues contributing to my feelings of being out of control.</i>

3. Consider Alternative Perspectives

Imagine how a friend or family member might view the situation. What advice would they give you?

Example: they may suggest trying out alternative coping strategies before turning to decluttering. They may also remind me to consider the deeper root causes of my feelings of being out of control.

4. Reframe Negative Thoughts

Transform your negative thoughts into more positive and constructive statements.

For example, instead of thinking "I have no control over anything in my life," I could try reframing it as "I have the ability to make small changes that will help me feel more in control."

Practice Affirmations

Create affirmations or positive statements that challenge and replace your negative thoughts. Repeat these affirmations regularly to reinforce new, healthier beliefs. The following are some common example. Check off the ones you want to use or add more to the list:

- ☐ I am in control of my belongings and my environment.
- ☐ I release the need to constantly purge and declutter.
- ☐ I value my possessions and the comfort they bring into my life.
- ☐ I find peace in organizing and maintaining my belongings.
- ☐ I honor the sentimental value of my possessions.
- ☐ I practice self-compassion as I navigate through my relationship with my belongings.
- ☐ I am grateful for the things I own and the purpose they serve in my life.
- ☐ I trust myself to make thoughtful decisions about what to keep and what to let go of.
- ☐ I prioritize my emotional well-being over the need for perfection in my surroundings.
- ☐ I deserve to feel at ease in my environment without the constant need to declutter.
- ☐ I release the compulsion to declutter as a way to cope with stress or anxiety.
- ☐ I embrace a healthy balance between owning and letting go of possessions.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Reflect on the Consequences

1. Identify the Behavior

Reflect on the specific behaviors associated with compulsive decluttering. This might include constantly discarding items, feeling distressed when possessions accumulate, or spending excessive time organizing and reorganizing belongings.

2. Consider Short-Term Consequences

Think about how compulsive decluttering affects your daily life. Consider the immediate impact on your emotions, relationships, and productivity.

3. Explore Long-Term Consequences

Consider the broader implications of compulsive decluttering. How does it impact your financial situation, living environment, and overall well-being? Are there missed opportunities for socializing or pursuing hobbies due to excessive focus on decluttering?

4. Recognize Emotional Responses

Pay attention to the emotions that arise during compulsive decluttering. This may include anxiety, guilt, or dissatisfaction.

Challenging Perfectionism

1. Identify Perfect Standards

List the perfect or ideal standards you hold yourself to when it comes to decluttering. This could include having a perfectly organized and minimalistic living space, feeling a constant need for cleanliness, or fearing that any clutter reflects personal failure.

2. Recognize Consequences

Identify the consequences of striving for these perfect standards. This could involve feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, or an excessive amount of time and energy devoted to decluttering at the expense of other important aspects of your life.

3. Set Realistic Goals

Set realistic and achievable goals for decluttering that align with a balanced lifestyle.

4. Prioritize what truly matters

Identify the areas of your life that are most important to you and allocate your time and energy accordingly.

Emotional Regulation

1. Identify Emotions

List down the emotions that arise when you engage in compulsive decluttering. This could include anxiety, guilt, fear, shame, sadness, or even relief.

2. Rate Intensity

Rate the intensity of each emotion on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being mild and 10 being intense. This will help you understand which emotions have the most impact on your decluttering behaviors.

3. Reflect on Triggers

Identify the triggers or situations that elicit these emotions. It could be specific events, thoughts, or even environmental factors that prompt the compulsive decluttering response.

4. Challenge Thoughts

Challenge any negative or distorted thoughts associated with these emotions. Ask yourself if your thoughts are realistic, helpful, or driven by underlying beliefs that may not be accurate. Consider alternative perspectives or ways of thinking.

5. Create an Emotional Toolkit

Create a list of specific actions or techniques that you can use to regulate each emotion. For example, deep breathing exercises to manage anxiety, journaling to process guilt or shame, or seeking social connections to alleviate sadness.

Alternative Coping Strategies

Brainstorm healthier ways to cope with the triggers you've identified. This could include mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, or engaging in enjoyable activities.

1. Deep Breathing

When faced with the urge to declutter excessively, take a few moments to focus on slow, deep breaths.

Inhale deeply through your nose, hold for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth.

This can help reduce anxiety and provide a brief pause to disrupt the impulse.

2. Self-Reflection

Instead of immediately acting upon the urge to declutter, set aside some time for self-reflection.

Ask yourself why you feel the need to declutter excessively and explore any underlying emotions or anxieties that might be driving this behavior.

Journaling or speaking with a trusted friend or therapist about these thoughts and feelings can be helpful.

3. Distraction Techniques

Engage in activities that divert your attention away from the urge to declutter.

Find hobbies or tasks that bring enjoyment or relaxation. The following are some common example. Check off the ones you want to try or add more to the list:

- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Painting or drawing
- ☐ Gardening
- ☐ Yoga
- ☐ Playing a musical instrument
- ☐ Cooking or baking
- ☐ Hiking
- ☐ Knitting or crocheting
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Meditation
- ☐ Playing board games
- ☐ Writing or journaling
- ☐ Volunteering
- ☐ Playing sports
- ☐ Woodworking
- ☐ Sewing
- ☐ Cycling
- ☐ Dancing
- ☐ Watching movies or TV shows
- ☐ Playing with pets
- ☐ Calligraphy
- ☐ Tending to houseplants
- ☐ DIY projects
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Setting Boundaries

Clearly define what constitutes healthy decluttering and what crosses the line into compulsive behavior. Consider factors such as frequency, intensity, and impact on daily life.

Consider using the following prompts to guide your boundary-setting process:

- What are my decluttering goals?

- How often do I want to declutter? (e.g., once a month, twice a year)

- What specific areas of my home am I comfortable decluttering? (e.g., bedroom, kitchen, closet)

- What items am I comfortable decluttering? (e.g., clothes, books, kitchen gadgets)

- What will be my cue to stop decluttering when I've reached a healthy limit?

- What alternate activities can I engage in when the urge to declutter becomes overwhelming?

Behavioral Experiments

Engage in controlled experiments to gradually expose yourself to situations where you can resist the urge to declutter excessively. This can help in desensitizing the anxiety associated with not decluttering.

1. Create a Hierarchy

Start by creating a hierarchy of cluttered areas or objects based on the level of distress they cause you. For instance, if your bedroom, living room, and kitchen are trigger points, rank them from least distressing to most distressing.

2. Set Objectives

Set specific objectives for each level of the hierarchy. Start with something manageable and gradually progress towards more challenging tasks.

For example:

- *Level 1: Spend 10 minutes in a mildly cluttered bedroom without decluttering.*
- *Level 2: Sit in a moderately cluttered living room for 15 minutes without tidying up.*
- *Level 3: Spend 20 minutes in a highly cluttered kitchen without organizing or discarding anything.*

3. Practice Exposure

Begin with the first level on your hierarchy. Sit in the designated area for the specified time, resisting the urge to declutter. Pay attention to any uncomfortable thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations that arise. Utilize coping strategies such as deep breathing or grounding techniques to manage anxiety.

4. Monitor Your Reactions

After each exposure session, take note of your reactions. Did the distress decrease over time? Were you able to resist the urge to declutter? Monitor any changes in your emotions and thoughts throughout the process.

Exposure Session	Duration Spent	Level of Distress (1-10)	Urge to Declutter (1-10)	Changes in Emotions/Thoughts
<i>e.g., Bedroom</i>	<i>10 min</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>Initially anxious, wanted to tidy up, but managed to resist after deep breathing.</i>

Exposure Session	Duration Spent	Level of Distress (1-10)	Urge to Declutter (1-10)	Changes in Emotions/Thoughts

5. Reflect and Adjust

After completing each experiment, take time to reflect on your experiences. What did you learn about your relationship with clutter and the urge to declutter? Use this insight to adjust your future experiments and refine your approach.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

6. Gradually Progress

As you become more comfortable at each level, gradually move up the hierarchy. Increase the exposure time or face more cluttered areas. Remember to be patient with yourself and not rush through the steps.

Practice Self-Compassion

1. Loving-Kindness Meditation:

- Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
- Repeat the following phrases silently or out loud, directing them towards yourself:

"May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be healthy. May I live with ease."

- As you repeat these phrases, visualize sending love, kindness, and compassion towards yourself.
- Continue the meditation for a few minutes, gradually extending the well-wishes to others as well.

2. Self-Compassionate Touch:

- Place your hand on your heart or any other comforting place on your body.
- Take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to feel the gentle touch.
- Offer yourself words of comfort and understanding, such as "I am here for you" or "You are doing the best you can".
- Allow the soothing touch and kind words to nurture a sense of self-compassion and care.

3. Mindful Self-Compassion Break:

- Take a mindful pause during your day when you feel overwhelmed or stressed.
- Close your eyes and bring awareness to your breath.
- Recognize and acknowledge the difficulties you are experiencing, allowing yourself to fully feel them.
- Offer yourself words of compassion and understanding, such as "This is a moment of suffering. It's okay to feel this way."
- Remind yourself that suffering is a part of the shared human experience and that you are not alone in your struggles.
- Take a few moments to offer yourself self-compassion before resuming your activities.

4. Self-Compassion Letter:

- Write a compassionate letter to yourself, addressing the difficulties or challenges you are currently facing.
- Explore how you would offer support and encouragement to a close friend going through a similar situation.
- Remind yourself of your strengths, resilience, and the progress you have made.
- Keep the letter in a safe place and read it whenever you need a reminder of your own self-compassion and inner strength.

Dear _____

[illegible]

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No dedicated DSM diagnosis · non-diagnostic construct
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated CDDR diagnosis · non-diagnostic construct
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- A symptom checklist or self-rating cannot establish diagnosis. Any diagnostic discussion must address clinically significant distress/impairment, required course or duration where applicable, developmental and cultural context, substance/medication and medical causes, comorbidity, exclusions, and reasonable differentials without reproducing copyrighted criteria.

Document-specific corrections

- Describe Compulsive Decluttering as a contextual, functional, occupational, umbrella, or proposed construct-not a confirmed diagnosis-unless a separately recognized disorder is assessed.
- Where Compulsive Decluttering discusses symptoms, add the missing diagnostic frame: clinically meaningful distress/impairment, relevant course or duration, exclusions, developmental and cultural context, substance/medication or medical causes, and plausible differentials.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 18]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Revise exposure content on pages [24, 25, 26, 27] to require consent, an objectively safe graded hierarchy, condition-specific response guidance, progress review, and stop/reassessment criteria; never equate flooding with effective exposure.
- Revise trauma/protocol material on pages [29]: distinguish stabilization and reflection from trauma processing, state training/scope requirements, and add dissociation, acute-risk, and destabilization safeguards.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 18] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content; extracted candidate names include: Self-Assessment . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- For Compulsive Decluttering, exposure must be voluntary, graded, condition-specific, and conducted only in objectively safe and lawful situations. Do not prescribe flooding; screen medical limitations, trauma cues, dissociation, intoxication, and whether avoidance reflects real danger rather than phobic fear.

Crisis and current resources

- For Compulsive Decluttering, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. · Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>

2026 Clinical Alignment

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- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
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- <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/ptsd/>
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>