

The **BEST** real-life stories



I just had so much stuff

My dear mum and me



It got out of control before I knew it

Grief turned me into a **HOARDER**

When Anita lost her mum, her love of collecting spiralled out of control

Anita Sulcs, 67, Melbourne, Vic

Your house is so messy. How can you live like this?' my friend asked.

Though her comments were hurtful, I knew what she meant. In every room there were piles of boxes, from floor to ceiling. It wasn't that I just needed to throw a few things out. The truth was, I was a hoarder.

All my life, I've collected things, but after my mum, Zaiga, died in October 2007, things got much worse.

With all my furniture, clothes and other

possessions, I moved into her already-cluttered home.

Though several friends offered to help me clear it, I just couldn't do it.

'Let's just chuck all this out,' one pal said.

'Let's not!' I replied, feeling anxious.

What she saw as junk, I cherished because it reminded me of my beloved mum. We were incredibly close, and every item, from tea-cosies to coathangers, was a precious reminder of her.

Overwhelmed by grief, I fell into depression. The only bright spots were my children, Aija, 31, and Zigis, 21.

My hoarding grew out

of control. I even had to put my bed in the living room as my bedroom became packed with boxes.

Then, in February 2015, I had surgery to replace my hip.

My hip was fixed but I suffered a rare complication called Purtscher's retinopathy, and I was partially blinded.

How will I manage in my cluttered home if I can't see properly? I thought, upset.

After I was discharged, social workers were sent to my house to check on my condition. They were clearly shocked at how much stuff was jammed everywhere.

'This woman may be able to help you,' one said gently, giving me the details of a de-cluttering professional.

That's when I got in touch with Wendy from Skeletons in the Closet. When she visited me, I felt embarrassed watching her eyes rake through all the piles. But she was friendly and encouraging.

'Let's sort things into a few tubs,' she said cheerily.

She told me to separate things into what could be given to charity or to friends, what should be thrown out, and what I wanted to keep.

Now my carport, once chock-a-block with boxes, is empty, and gradually the house is looking much more respectable!

Best of all, I no longer feel ashamed of my surroundings.

I've realised my hoarding was linked to my depression.

I'd urge any hoarders to seek help from professionals and supportive friends. And I'd ask anyone who knows a hoarder not to judge but instead offer help.

I set up a blog to talk about my journey, Hoarders Helping Hoarders! I just hope I can help others to know they're not alone. ●

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After

Gradually, I was able to clear the carport



Today, I feel much better

AS TOLD TO JACQUI LANG