

## **Notes from a Hoarder's Son by Michael Tynan**

My journey began in 2016, when a police officer called me to let me know that my mom had been detained due to an incident with her car. He couldn't tell me a lot, but he wanted to reach out and tell me to call my mom who lived in Tucson, AZ.

Of course I called my mom, and according to her, everything was fine. I ended up flying down and that is when I noticed it. ( I had not been there in a year.) She isn't your typical hoarder. She hoarded collectibles (paintings, crystal glassware, and candles). 100's of paintings/candles, and 1000+ glass. The house had walkable space and was neat where you could see the floor, but every closet, cabinet, crawlspace and garage was packed. Every wall had some kind of painting or art piece. My mom was always very organized so this surprised me. Even more alarming was that she didn't recognize a problem. I also experienced her driving, which was very fast and disregarding of traffic laws. She was visiting multiple thrift stores daily.

This began a long series of tests (medical), calls to different agencies (aps, mental health, police, support groups, etc.), and many, many, many, arguments and tears. I agreed to do this workshop, because I want people to know that they are not alone. If my experience could help one person get through it, or save them from one day of heart ache, then I am happy. For our family, after 2 years, mom is settled in a memory care unit 20 minutes from me. More importantly, she is safe.

What I didn't know then was that the process is very difficult and life changing. So here are some helpful tips;

- No Hoarder situation is the same. Finances, mental health, level or degree of hoard, state and county resources are different as well. You will need to take some time to research what is available in the area
- APS, Hospitals, police and other agencies don't do much for you if you don't have guardianship/conservatorship, but that is a whole different process. My advice is to keep a diary of incidents and contact appointments with agencies. Ask them to document their statements in writing or with a form so you are able to make a case legally later if needed.
- My mother agreed to give me guardianship and conservatorship. Voluntary compliance is much easier, however I know our family was very lucky.
- Know that nothing will be fast. I am very serious about saying NOTHING. Finding solutions and compromises is a tedious task. It will suck away time from your job, family and other activities.

- Don't believe in happy endings and miracles. I want to say that everything will turn out okay, but the reality is that happy is just re-defined. For my mom, who was diagnosed with multiple things, we had to realize that the former life was gone, and her illness has forced a new one. We just had to re-adjust what our definition of happy was.
- Seek help from support groups, siblings or therapists. Don't try and tackle it alone. No one should be a martyr. It can be overwhelming to deal with this situation.

If you need any advice, or just want to talk, feel free to email me. [Mptynan@yahoo.com](mailto:Mptynan@yahoo.com)