

## **Vignette Five**

I was told by the care manager that this guy had obsessive compulsive disorder – that’s what he had and he is living with it – he’s causing a big issue at home, he lives with his parents, he holds on to things and it has been an ongoing thing for a long time. The parents are supportive but at the same time are very upset about the whole thing, his bedroom, everything is all filled up with stuff and he has to move out and sleep in another room and this is a big issue and there are all sorts of things and mice and the place is teeming and he showed me the place and you can see up to the windows is filled with all sorts of stuff. He said, what you have to do is get him out of the house, he’s stuck in the house all the time, get him out of the house as much as possible so that me, the team along with his parents, can get a professional cleaner in. Your job is to get him out of the house and give us the opportunity to get all the stuff out. So, that’s what I was told. So I said – OK I’ll try – I went and met him and he seemed such an intelligent young man and I was amazed. Of course, he had a lot of anxiety as he knew this was going to happen and when I met him he understood that I had come to support him but he was not too sure because I was acting like his mental health team. I said to him ‘I am here to support you and I am very happy to come and support you in any way. I am a support worker, I am not in a clinical team, I am coming from social and how to get about life. I didn’t want any clinical labels, I don’t use them and I don’t want to hear them, so we will just get about and I spoke about him and the day to day and what do you want to do. I’ll take you out and whatever you want’. ... the way I connected with him was when I said ‘hey, we all like to keep certain things which are dear to us and in my case I have. Sometimes my family don’t approve saying why are you keeping these old clothes? Or why are you keeping these’ and they are important as an emotion, something that is like a lifeline. So I said on the other side of the coin there is also the fact that if you are staying with your family, you also have certain responsibilities – it’s not your place, they are doing a favour and you all live together. So we also have respect. I suggested there are things we should be able to keep that really matter to us but other things, especially should be recycled. So I asked him if he had anything to recycle and ‘what have you got in your room – I’m sure you must have collected a lot of interesting stuff that could be recycled’. So after many, many support sessions he opened up and said ‘well, I’ve got a lot of magazines and books and of course videotapes, documentaries’. So I suggested to him - I wanted to give him empowerment, I wanted him to make the decisions about what to keep and what to throw rather than someone coming in and forcibly removing everything. Because whenever I went there he said to me ‘hey, this weekend, my dad or care manager, they are planning to remove stuff’ so with the anxiety he couldn’t sleep. So he used to say he couldn’t sleep and so I said that before that happened he should be the one who should decide what is to be kept and what is to be thrown out. So I said I’d bring him boxes and he would put the stuff from the room and have this box for things to keep and trash in those bags. But I wanted to tell him that he couldn’t hang on to things, especially books and magazines now; we have moved from that stage to the internet any time you want to look for something.

So, there's no need to store lots of magazines or if there were things that were interesting, you can still go to the internet and find out about it. So he understood what I was saying. That made it easier for me. So we managed to get rid of most of his magazines through recycling and I told him that he was not really throwing them away, he was giving them to somebody or a home somewhere so you're doing a good deed. So think that way. Of course, initially it was hard, I had to do it along with him but then after a time when I came I asked him whether he had done anything and he'd say yes, I did. It took about 8 months to finally clear the whole thing ... So, at the moment it's all in private storage, he pays a small rate for that, he's happy. The room is all cleared up, it's nicely done and he's changed and the best thing is, during this time, he has moved from the team, he's just being liaised by the doctor, the GP. He self-medicates and he's really outgoing.