A I failed to recognise the person.

B I realised I had forgotten something.

C I insisted on something.

D I was upset by personal criticism.

E I had been given incorrect information.

F I was pleasantly surprised.

G I refused a request.

H I was amused by something.

21 *Speaker 1*

22 *Speaker 2*

23 *Speaker 3*

24 *Speaker 4*

25 *Speaker 5*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

You are going to read a magazine article about people unable to throw old things away. For questions 31-36, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

My hoarder mum and me

I'd always considered my father to be something of a hoarder. Our family home was flanked by a pair of garages but neither was used for anything as prosaic as parking cars. Instead, they both bulged, ceiling to floor, with a bizarre and ever-growing menagerie of stuff: old windsurfing magazines, broken kettles, mouldy carpets, two dozen or more used stick deodorants. At the time, the rest of the family thought my father's stockpiling of apparently redundant objects was funny, a harmless eccentricity shared by middle-aged men nesting in garages and sheds across the land.

Years later, when Obsessive Compulsive Disorder became a recognised medical condition, I started to wonder if those overflowing garages might have been bad for his health. Watching the moving documentary My Hoarder Mum and Me put my father's relatively benign symptoms into context. In it, Vasoulla, a lifelong hoarder and mother of TV presenter Jasmine Harman, invited a film crew into her home, or rather, her multi--storey storage facility. Every room in Vasoulla's house contained more stuff than space. The staircases were almost impassable and in the kitchen, Vasoulla had problems chopping vegetables because every flat surface had already been commandeered by clutter. The house would have looked tidier if it had been struck by a tornado.

To her credit, Vasoulla realised that she had a serious problem, not least because her hoarding had been going on – and getting worse – for years. Her grown-up sons remembered thinking it normal for dinner to be served in a bedroom; it was the only room that could accommodate the whole family. The hoarding had evidently been especially hard on Jasmine. All the way through my life I've felt that my mum's stuff was more important than me,' she reflected quietly. Any Freudian analysts watching will have been scribbling in their notebooks when Jasmine told us she now presents a TV property series that helps people to find their ideal homes. In contrast to Vasoulla, Jasmine 'vacuums everything, sofas, chairs, even the kitchen worktops.'

Over the course of the documentary, which followed the family over several months, Jasmine coaxed and cajoled Vasoulla to jettison at least some of her junk. It was a slow, painful process – Vasoulla had been known to buy back her own possessions just hours after donating them to charity. In need of professional help, Yasmin consulted a Dr Mataix-Cols, who told her hoarding was considered a form of OCD but did not get the attention and research grants it deserved because it wasn't yet recognised as a condition in its own right. The author of another book about hoarding had even more dispiriting news for Jasmine. 'Give up,' she was told, 'because hoarders never stop hoarding'.

Unperturbed by these gloomy prognoses, Jasmine helped Vasoulla sift through the flotsam and jetsam. It was impossible not to share Jasmine's frustration with her mother's attachment to even her most ephemeral possessions ('Can I throw away a copy of the Financial Times from 2010?'). Yet by the end, you also shared Jasmine's triumph as the carpets of three of her mother's rooms were reintroduced to the light of day for the first time in years. It would be an overstatement to say that Vasoulla had conquered her obsession. But she was touchingly appreciative of what Jasmine had done for her and vowed to continue their house-clearing project. 'It feels good to see the table again,' she said.

After hearing Vasoulla's extraordinary story, I realised that my father isn't a hoarder at all. It isn't objects he prizes. It's their usefulness. Like many of his generation, who grew up in post-war austerity, my father likes to squeeze every drop of value from everything he owns, even if it means storing it for decades to do so. The windsurfing magazines will come in handy if he gets back into windsurfing; the carpet could do for a third garage. He even had a brilliant scheme for his collection of used deodorants. Incensed that you could never reach the final ten percent of the deodorant because of its plastic casing, he decided to heat and transfer the residue from each into an empty casing, thereby creating one new, reconstituted deodorant. At the time, my brother and I thought he was potty. But now I see that my father was actually decades ahead of the curve. He wasn't hoarding our family's discarded possessions; he was recycling them.

31 When he was younger, the writer believed his father's collection of strange old things
- a) was amusing to look at
- b) should not be taken seriously
- c) was understandable at his age
- d) bordered on the obsessive

32 After watching the documentary, the writer was
- a) certain his father had a severe health problem
- b) confused by his father's symptoms
- c) aware his father's situation wasn't as bad as some
- d) worried his father was in a dangerous environment

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33 The writer mentions Jasmine's new job to
a) indicate possible psychological effects of her upbringing
b) show she survived childhood difficulties and became successful
c) compare types of environment people live in today
d) emphasise that Jasmine's priorities are not influenced by her mother

34 When helping Vasoulla, Jasmine had to
a) remove some of Vasoulla's possessions secretly
b) make Vasoulla see the funny side of the situation
c) ask an expert to diagnose Vasoulla's condition
d) find ways to persuade Vasoulla to part with some possessions

35 During the documentary, Vasoulla
a) managed to recover from her obsession
b) overcame her frustration with her messy house
c) recognised the value of Jasmine's help
d) found important things she had long forgotten

36 What has the writer learned about his father?
a) He wanted to preserve things to remember the past
b) He was concerned about wastage
c) He hoped to make money from his possessions
d) He was determined to make life easier for his family

LIVEWORKSHEETS