

Making Room for Life

7 simple steps to clutter freedom

By Jo Lueck

So you have a pile of stuff that won't go away. How do you ever get rid of it?

Not many people look forward to organizing. The trick is to minimize the dread and non-productive thoughts, and maximize the forward momentum. So, let's get started.

1. Schedule time to organize. New energy can come into your life because there is room for it. Spare time, coupled with the drive to organize, almost never happens spontaneously. Honor this time as you would a business appointment. Don't let interruptions (phone, children, etc.) sidetrack you.

2. Clear off the space. Completely! Put it on the floor, bed, couch, card table, boxes or other work area.

3. Cull the items. Determine what will be kept, trashed and given to charity. Be very generous with getting rid of things – you will be far more grateful to have gotten rid of the nagging pile than you will ever feel regret for having gotten rid of too much. Ask yourself if the item is still serving you. Are you just storing it or actually using it? Is it a necessity or luxury? Can you replace it if you ever need it again? How long has it been since you used it? Might it be a pleasure to replace an outdated, worn item with something new in the future? When you allow empty spaces in your life, new energy will show up.

4. Organize the remaining items. Sort like with like. Once you have an idea of how much of a single item you own, you will know how to store it.

Bins and shelves can contain collections of belongings. Get an idea of the size of the area needed for storage. Do you need additional storage structures (shelves, bins) or simply need to own less stuff?

There, you did it. You may find that you anticipated, dreaded, planned, and worried about cleaning up this pile longer than it actually took to clear the space.

5. Reward yourself. This is important! You have just done a dreaded task that you have put off for weeks or months. This doesn't have to be expensive or even monetary. A few hours of book time, a refreshing bubble bath, a scrumptious dessert, or nurturing visit with a good friend are all great reinforcers for a job well done.

6. Maintain your space. Avoid letting the pile build back up. Make an honest effort to put things where they belong when you are done using them. Take the time to do this throughout the day to avoid the piles from accumulating. Use the do-it-now philosophy.

Shop consciously! Purchase only what you need. Resist impulse buying. If you didn't go to the store with the intent of buying an item, you don't need it. Marketing departments for ALL stores are masters at creating desire.

Only buy in bulk if you have adequate storage space. Good deals serve you if you

need them & have ample room to store these excess supplies.

Keep your possession count as low as possible. Try to make do with what you own. Do you really require the latest gadget or trendy item? Recycle/repurpose old items when you buy something new.

Quit saving things! People think they can't part with something that has served them for decades or 'is perfectly good'. Think about it – you will never have the space to save everything. You must let go of things that are no longer serving you. If you haven't used something in a year, you should consider getting rid of it.

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It's easier to get rid of things when you are in a 'throwing away' mood. Take a picture of it if it makes you feel better. Unloading is a learned skill. You will improve every time you practice. You might even find you don't miss the things you thought you'd never be able to get rid of!

7. Choose to improve your outlook on life

Clutter robs you of energy - get rid of it! Seeing a home without clutter makes you feel proud, and encourages you to maintain it. You can be more creative and focused on the task at hand without the distractions and negative thoughts that piles generate.

Being organized is a skill that needs to be exercised regularly. Being organized also saves time, which is a huge motivator! Changing old, detrimental habits is much easier when you truly want to do it. Challenge yourself! The results will be well worth it. ✨

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She is a member of the Kenosha Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Professional Organizers and NAPO-Wisconsin.

