

STUFF & What To Do With It

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We all have varying degrees of attachment to our STUFF. Some of these attachments are healthy and make us feel connected, efficient, uplifted and generally add value in our lives. Other attachments are, or have become, unhealthy in our lives. These burden us, make us feel overwhelmed, disorganized and stuck. As a culture, we have acquired more stuff. The society as a whole is more affluent. There is an overall emphasis on accumulating material goods. Credit is easy to come by; debt is a largely accepted fact of life. Purchases can be made 24 hours a day, in person, by phone and on-line.

For many of us, de-cluttering our homes, offices and lives is a very appealing concept. Several popular T.V. shows have emerged based on the premise of “outside experts” coming into an “out-of-control” space and bringing order and organization to it. Folks react with awe, appreciation and new found inner peace. An entire profession of organizational consultants has emerged to help folks regain control of chaotic environments.

Carole Fogarty of *Healthy Living* writes about the emotional cost of clutter categorizing types of clutter that can bog us down.

- Emotional guilt clutter - gifts or inheritance that we keep because we feel guilty giving them away.
- Fear of ‘Lack’ clutter - the stuff you don’t use but keep *just in case...*
- Attachment to the past clutter - things we acquired from old relationships or places we’ve been.
- Depression clutter - stuff that we keep only because it’s too overwhelming to decide what to do with it.
- Addiction clutter - things that come from addictive buying that takes place to try to fill inner voids.
- Need to impress clutter - stuff we acquire to create an image of ourselves in the eyes of others.
- Can’t decide clutter - clutter that accumulates in random places because there is no identified space where it belongs.

Understanding the motivations that lead us to clutter

Understanding the motivations that lead us to clutter, can help us change our patterns. Experts suggest we start with a plan and tackle one thing at a time, and in small doses.

Resolving to conquer the entire house or office can be completely overwhelming and easily leads to a feeling of defeat when it doesn't happen. Perfectionism can also get in the way of progress when we try to organize everything in the most complete way. The goal is improvement, not the ideal set up. You can always refine the system.

Start somewhere. Pick a manageable task. Allocate a reasonable amount of time (perhaps ½ hour) to “make a dent”. No need to finish the project in a day. Create a place for things that is accessible and easy to remember. Put similar things in that same place so you can find them when you need them. “It” can't be useful if you can't find it. Get rid of (donate, sell, give away, throw out) stuff that you haven't used or don't actively enjoy having.

The best systems are those that are easy to maintain. New STUFF will always be coming into the system. Handle things once. When possible, decide what to do with it and put it in its place right away.

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