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Self Zone



How Much Is Clutter Costing You?

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Clutter takes up valuable resources—time, space, money and energy.

The **time** it takes you to find what you are looking for because of the clutter.

The **space** you could create for what is truly important to you if it weren't for all the clutter.

The **money** you spend paying for duplicate items because you can't find what you are looking for—or—didn't remember you already own.

The **energy** you expend investing in taking care of all your clutter.

What are the benefits of eliminating clutter?

You will regain what your clutter is costing you—time, space, money and energy.

You will find what you need when you need it.

Your self confidence will increase as you become more organized.

You will want people to visit your home again.

You will be able to focus on what is important to you instead of on your clutter.

What is Clutter and How Does it Happen?

Clutter is—simply—deferred decisions. Clutter and procrastination go hand-in-hand. Look around at your clutter. Most of it occurs because you haven't taken the time to **decide** where it belongs.

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Next Month

General

- Stop saving everything just because you might need it “someday”. The calendar has Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday on it...but no *Someday*.
- Stop allowing stuff to enter your home that you don't need or want. Reflect on how you acquire stuff. Did you inherit it and feel guilty about letting go of it? Do you go to the mall when you feel depressed? Are you addicted to catalogs or online shopping? Make it a goal to eliminate one area at a time.
- Stop setting things down thinking you will “put them away later”. Put them away now. When something new enters your home, immediately decide where it belongs—give it a home.
- Recruit a friend or hire a professional organizer to help you make decisions about stuff that you have difficulty letting go of. Sometimes an impartial perspective can give you a fresh way of looking at your stuff and move you towards a decision.
- Keeping everything makes everything unimportant. Decide what is truly important in your life and that will help you focus on what to keep and honor.
- One in one out rule. Every time something enters your space, something else must leave.
- When you remove something from its home—immediately return it to its home when you are finished using it.
- Set a limit on how many of something you are going to keep. For example, magazines. Decide to keep one year's worth of each subscription that you will refer to.

Paper and Information Clutter

- You can't read everything! Until you accept the fact that you can't read every piece of snail mail, e-mail, newspaper, magazine, and catalog that comes into your life, you'll be buried in paper clutter. The secret is learning how to filter through and toss what you do not need and focusing on what is important.
- Set up a paper management system that includes an “in” basket, “out” basket, trash receptacle, shredder, recycling receptacle, file cabinet, reference filing system, and action file system.
- At a minimum, once a week go through your “in” basket” and open and sort your mail into discard (shred, recycle), “out” (refer it to someone else), action, and file.
- Don't wait to contain your paper. Decide whether or not you need to keep your paper information and either discard or file.
- Ask yourself, “Can I get this information somewhere else, such as the internet or the library?” If you can easily access

the information somewhere else, you don't need to keep it—toss it!

- Only 20% of what you file for reference you will actually refer to. File wisely!

Computer Clutter

- At least once a week delete junk mail and old e-mails that you don't need any more, cookies (text files stored on your computer from website visits), and the contents of your recycle bin (PC) or trash file (MAC).
- E-mails
 - § **Daily** peruse your e-mails. Once in the morning and once in the evening is sufficient. If you can't read all of your e-mails right away do the following:
 - § Delete all spam messages.
 - § Create a **Read Folder** in your *Inbox* and move all e-mails you want to read in this folder.
 - § Create an **Action Folder** in your *Inbox* and move all e-mails related to an action you need to take. Once the action is completed delete the e-mail or file in an appropriate sub-folder in your *Saved Mail* (see below).
 - § Create a **Reply Folder** in your *Inbox* and move all e-mails you have read and want to reply to in this folder if you cannot reply right away.
 - § Create **sub-folders** in your *Saved Mail* folder and move all e-mails you want to keep into your specific categories of saved mail sub-folders.
 - § **Weekly or more frequently**, open your **Reply Folder** and reply to these e-mails. Then delete or save appropriately.
 - § **Monthly** go through your **Saved Mail sub-folders** and delete those e-mails you no longer want or need.

Mementos and Keepsakes and Gifts

- Stop keeping every memento from every event in your life and every gift you receive. Keep the memento or gift if it gives you happiness or is purposeful in your life *today*—discard it if you don't have a *real* reason to keep it.
- Letting go of a gift or memento doesn't mean you don't care about the person associated with it or vice versa.

Clothes

- Decide how many garments can hang in your closet. Have only that number of hangers in your closet. If you add something, something must leave because you don't have a hanger for it.
- 20% of what you own you will wear 80% of the time. The other 80% is worn only 20% of the time.
- Have a clothes swapping party. It's a great way to get rid of clothes you are not wearing any more and replacing with something you will, at no expense.

Kid Clutter

- Every three months go through clothes, toys, and books. Discard what doesn't fit, what is broken, what is no longer

age appropriate. Keep only what is being used.

- Take a photo of your child with her artwork or school project and keep it with your child's memory book.
- Children work well with boundaries. Set limits with your child on how many of each item he or she can collect and keep.
- When your child receives a gift, help him or her select an old one to donate to charity. Children love helping others. Have a donation container in your home that your child [and you] can regularly contribute to.

How to Keep Clutter from Returning

- Keep a basket in each room to collect items that need to be returned to their home. Once a week, at a minimum, empty the baskets. Better idea—never leave a room empty handed. If you spot clutter take it with you to its home.
 - Once something new enters your home, immediately decide where it belongs and put it there.
 - Spend 15 minutes each day decluttering. Or, toss out or put away three items that are out of place.
 - Remember the one in one out rule.
 - Sort through and make decisions about your paper once a week.
 - Place a “donation” container where everyone in your family can regularly contribute. Take it to the donation center once a month.
 - Go through your pantry at the beginning of each season. Anything you haven't consumed or won't consume, consider donating to your local food bank—before it won't be of use to anyone.
 - Every three months go through your clothes, your child's clothing, toys, books, etc. and keep only what you are wearing, using, or is important to you.
 - Place decorative objects on horizontal surfaces to make it difficult to pile clutter upon.
 - After your decluttering project is completed, or at major milestones, celebrate your newly organized life and reward yourself with an activity (movie or massage) or something consumable (nice dinner out). The last thing you want after decluttering is to add more stuff to your life!
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