

Ways to Conquer Household Clutter

What Is Clutter?

The word clutter is often used to describe an overaccumulation of items located together in a disorganized fashion. Household clutter is quite common today. Over time, this clutter can feel overwhelming and even negatively impact personal health and well-being. Besides this, natural environments can be negatively impacted when valuable natural resources are consumed during material production, only to become unused clutter or garbage in landfills.

Determine the Type of Clutter

Before deciding what to discard, determine whether you have regular household clutter or sentimental clutter. Clutter comes in many forms. Household clutter might include items like toys, mail, books, cleaning supplies, and hobby materials. On the other hand, sentimental clutter often consists of items passed down from loved ones, such as sports memorabilia, dishes, photographs, jewelry, and other heirlooms. Identifying the type of clutter that you have will help you make better decisions on how to part with it.

How Does It Happen?

Clutter can accumulate over both short and long periods, often taking over before you realize it. Household clutter builds up when we hold on to items that no longer serve a purpose. This clutter can result from various factors, including excessive spending, lack of storage, receiving gifts, buying bulk items, emotional attachment to items, and mental health conditions.

Benefits of Reducing and Preventing Household Clutter

Financial Savings

Experts have estimated that Americans now spend \$300 a month on impulse purchases. In addition, only 20 percent of items are used in the home, while the other 80 percent is potential clutter. Being mindful of your spending habits can prevent clutter in the home and greatly improve

financial well-being. In addition, selling unused items—that would otherwise only be collecting dust—can create additional income.

Less Stress

Most of us spend a large percentage of our time in and around our homes. Research has shown that clutter can reduce our ability to focus and concentrate, which can increase the stress hormone cortisol. Our homes are intended to be the places we relax and recharge after long workdays. But instead, a cluttered home will remind you of all the things that need to be done. Reducing household clutter can lessen your stress and calm your mind. Your home will then rightly serve its purpose as a place for relaxation and socialization with friends. Decluttering is also an opportunity to engage in more movement and physical activity, which supports stress management and builds healthy habits.

Improved Environmental Stewardship

Reducing clutter in your home enables you to properly recycle and donate items that you do not need. Less clutter also helps to reduce carbon emissions by factories and shippers because fewer items are having to be produced and delivered to you. In addition, landfill space is saved when you have less to throw away.

Saves Time

Whether it's moving, storing, cleaning, or looking for lost items, clutter can consume a lot of your time and energy. Decluttering a space will take some time in the beginning, but the result will free up your time over the long run.

Less Allergies and Hazards

A cluttered home is harder to vacuum and dust. This creates the perfect environment for dust mites, pollen, pet dander, and other pests to accumulate. Mold also may go undetected. All these items can cause allergic reactions and asthma symptoms. A clutter-free home is easier to clean and provides a healthier and safer living environment.

Decreased Risk of Slips and Falls

Clutter can put you at risk of slips and falls. When floors are covered with too much “stuff,” accidents can quickly happen and cause injuries. Cluttered countertops or shelves can cause injury if something falls or topples over.

Easy Ways to Conquer Household Clutter

1. Before buying something new, first remove an unused item from your home. Also, ask yourself if you truly need the item before purchasing. Work to be mindful of your purchases.
2. Be prepared when you begin the decluttering process. Have garbage bags, storage bins, markers and labels, multipurpose cleaners, towels, vacuum, and any other supplies that may be needed.
3. Reduce clutter by starting with a small area to organize so you are not overwhelmed—like an under-the-sink cabinet.
4. Set reasonable goals to declutter a specific number of spaces over the next month, such as all your kitchen cabinets.
5. Sort items into four piles: keep, sell, donate, or throw away. Selling items can generate extra cash for you, and donating to local charities helps your community.
6. Find a specific location for everything you plan to keep, such as placing all keys in one box. Group similar items together to easily find them in the future.
7. After decluttering the area, clean and wipe down the newly exposed area. This will help to get rid of dust and allergens that have been “hiding” behind or underneath the clutter.
8. Create daily habits to prevent clutter, such as opening and sorting mail daily, cleaning the kitchen after each meal, folding and putting away fresh laundry, and tidying up at the end of each day. It takes only two weeks to create a new daily habit.
9. Use the 60-second rule; if it takes 60 seconds or less to put an item away, go ahead and do it now.
10. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Reaching out to family or friends can alleviate the stress of decluttering on your own. Family and friends can offer a neutral perspective, making it easier to decide what to keep and what to let go.

References

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