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27 Ways to Get Organized

The path to a clutter-free home is all in your head

by Chrystle Fiedler

Dishes piling up in the sink? Can't find your keys? Lost an important bill? The outside world is crazy enough; your home should be a sanctuary. But with chronic disorganization and clutter, it's easy to feel stressed. "Clutter takes the joy out of living. It creates negative energy in your home," says Donna Smallin, author of *Organizing Plain & Simple*. "Change your surroundings by getting organized and you can change your life."

Sound good? Try these ideas and tips.

Start Smart

Stop putting it off. You have to make time, says Smallin, whose web site is www.noclutter.com. "Watch a little less TV. Get in the habit of putting clothes away at night before going to bed or tidying up your office before leaving for the day. Even if you spend just five minutes every day it adds up."

Dejunk in the a.m. "The worst time to declutter is in the evening when you are subjective and tired," says Don Aslett, author of *Clutter's Last Stand*. "In the morning you are more objective about things and fresher." Try setting aside an hour each Saturday morning. You'll be amazed at how much you get done.

Vary your routine. "Organizing can be exhausting because weeding through belongings often brings up emotions and memories," Aslett adds. "If you've done two hours of one task and can't take any more, spend the last few minutes on something less emotionally charged, such as downsizing garage junk." Alternating the types of projects you're doing—indoor/outdoor, mostly mental/mostly physical—will help keep you going.

Get a declutter buddy. Sometimes it's hard to get started on your own, so ask a friend to help. "You need someone who can give you a gentle but firm push forward when you get bogged down," says Judith Kolberg, author of *Conquering Chronic Disorganization*. "They don't have an emotional attachment to your things, so it's easier for them to be objective."

Get Quick Results

Don't get overwhelmed by a big project. You'll just put it off again. Tackle something small and limited. "Clean out your nightstand drawer, for example," says Meryl Starr, author of *The Home Organizing Workbook*. "This way you'll have such a sense of accomplishment you'll want to continue."

Or start any place that will give you a fast payoff. "In some parts of the house, such as the shed, cellar or garage, you can clear away jumbo garbage cans of junk in no time, without a backward glance," says Aslett. "The older a stash, the more quickly it can be cleared."

Go for the area that drives you the most crazy. It could be the kitchen pantry, where you couldn't find a can of soup if

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tip

Keep a "to-do" notebook and check it daily.