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Clutter 1: Declutter Your House and Yourself

By Brooke Loening

It seems like all my friends and clients have a family member who is a “pack rat,” or someone who accumulates and hangs on to too much “stuff.” This could mean anything from unused clothes or old magazines to excess knick-knacks and furniture.

As a Life Coach, I am interested in helping people take the difficult steps that they know would be healthy, but feel caught in a holding pattern. Clearing clutter is worth talking about because, in terms of personal growth, it is always a good step to clear out the unneeded “stuff” from one’s life. A cluttered home can easily translate into a cluttered mind because all those possessions take up space- physically, mentally and emotionally.

Clearing clutter is a great way to clear the head, and to make room for things that are really important in our lives. That means less stuff to look at, think about, take care of, and clean. That is why people feel so good when they get rid of things. One client of mine who used to hang onto everything could not get over how great it felt to let go of just a few pieces of clothing. Once she gave away a few pairs of shoes, it became easier to give away other things because she had the experience that it was healthy and safe to “let go.”

Selfish?

Is holding on to unnecessary things selfish as well? The fact is that someone out there could get good use out of the same item that is collecting dust in your house. Giving these questionable things away is a statement of confidence- that you will always have what you need. It is a declaration to the world that you trust that you will have the things you need when you need them, and you don’t need to hang on to everything to survive.

Bag it Method

A lot of my clients have struggled with getting rid of stuff. One technique I like, which works well for many of them, is the “bag it” method. When clearing clutter, anything you think you don’t need goes in a bag or a box and gets stored somewhere. You date the bag with the give away/throw away time- one year away. That way if you find you need it before that date, you know it is still in the house. When the expiration date comes up, it’s time to give it away or throw it out. No need to even look inside. Several of my clients admit they don’t even remember what they have; probably the best proof there was never a reason to hang onto it.

20 Minutes

Another strategy is the “20 minute clean up”, something I used with one client who really felt stuck. I had him focus on one specific cluttered place, like a drawer or his closet. I had him set a timer for 20 minutes and he “bagged” or got rid of anything he did

not really use that was in that specific area. The time limit made the job manageable, nonthreatening and gave him an easy ending point. My advice is to start with one of those clean ups this week and see how it feels. You may find that you can keep going beyond the 20 minutes once you feel how liberating it is.

Just Do It!

My experience with friends and clients has been that when they give or throw away excess stuff, they never look back. They never miss it or wish they had not done it; in fact it is quite the opposite. They have a sense of relief that they finally got rid of all of it.

Circulating material things is a good way to keep your energy flowing; it makes you more alive and connected to everyone else. By keeping “stuff” moving out, you will insure that things will always come back to you in other ways.

A good affirmation is “I give away a few clothes and belongings once a month, and that makes me feel lighter physically and emotionally.”

I will be talking more about the subconscious reasons why people hang on to clutter in near future article.

Brooke Loening is a life coach in Sharon who works with individuals, and runs weekly coaching groups on achieving growth in career, health and relationships. To make column suggestions please email him at bloening@snet.net. For previous columns visit theloeningplan.com. Columns can also be found at tcextra.com