

5 Steps From Clutter To Control

By Karin S. Syren

If you sometimes feel overwhelmed, as though you are drowning in clutter and you find yourself avoiding certain areas of your home or business because you've lost control of them, don't give up. There is an answer - and it's not difficult! We're going to look at five practically painless steps to de-clutter for people of all ages and at all stages.

1. Begin by identifying the areas which are most impacting your ability to function effectively. Then place 2 cartons at each offending "station," labeled TOSS & SAVE.
2. Each time you walk by, place one item in each - no excuses, one item in each carton.
3. When you can no longer place one item in each box, the remainder either gets disposed of all at once or saved and rearranged.
4. Now take a look at the TOSS carton and divide what should be given away from what is trash. Make the call right away.
5. Your final task is to organize what's left, but that shouldn't take long now - right? Proceed in the same manner which each area of concern.

Depending on the size of the area, the degree of clutter and the amount of time you spend in that environment, i.e., office, garage, bedroom, any one of these project can be accomplished easily using the same process. Don't try tackling an entire room at one time - break it down, dresser, desk, night stand, silverware drawer, etc. After all, the only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time...

Get the whole family involved, but no tossing items that belong to another family member or co-worker, and no scrounging through the TOSS carton to retrieve items. That's how you accumulated so much in the first place! A good rule of thumb is, if you haven't used it in 6 months, and it's not a seasonal item, toss it.

If you seem to be continually fighting clutter in your environment, chances are you are fighting life clutter as well. The external environment we create for ourselves is often a fair reflection of our internal environment.

If that's the case, begin to apply the same process to those areas of your life that seem to be cluttered.

1. Begin by listing each offending area at the top of a separate page of a notebook or journal small enough to carry with you. Leaving the first side blank, divide the reverse side into two columns, TOSS and SAVE. Whenever you have a few minutes, on a break, on the train, waiting for the kids to get into the car, list the elements involved in this particular area. These may be tasks/chores, major responsibilities, or attitudes and behaviors.
2. Once you've completed the first side, begin the process of tossing and saving each one, listing them in the appropriate column on the reverse, once again, placing one item in each column each time you visit the list. It is beneficial to enlist the aid of an accountability partner when this portion of the exercise is completed, providing them with a copy of your TOSS/SAVE list. If you're truly dedicated to simplifying, you won't hesitate to ask. Offer to return the favor!
3. When you can no longer place one item in each column, either toss or save all the remaining items.

4. Now look at your lists and decide which of your TOSS items requires further attention or which elements you may be carrying around that don't belong to you at all. If you are carrying the weight of emotions like unforgiveness, anger, bitterness, or resentment, deal with the issue face to face with the person involved. If you have wronged someone, take a bold step and make it right. Whatever it takes to get rid of the item - do it. And don't turn back! Employ your accountability partner for support in these areas.
5. Your final task is to organize what remains. Prioritize your list - it should be much easier to do with all the clutter out of the way.

Repeat this process with each area of your life that is suffering from internal clutter. Begin today, the results will be amazingly liberating and you just might arrive at a clutter free environment and a clutter free life at the same time!

Please note, if your clutter problem is pronounced, it may be necessary to seek professional assistance.

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