

### Avoiding clutter

*Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.* – William Morris

For some of you, you may have grown up in a cluttered home. A place where cupboards would not close, closets and dressers were overflowing with clothing, and stuff was shoved under the beds and into nooks and crannies. When guests came over it was a huge chore to clean the house and everyone had to help because it was such a big job. Does that sound all too familiar?

Most people don't even notice that they have too much stuff. It is something that is overlooked. But day after day they are spending hours trying to get ahead of housecleaning and organizing. They are constantly making an excuse as to why their home is in disarray. The answer is very simple of what they need to do to help those issues....they need to declutter!

To understand the definition of declutter, we need to define what "clutter" is:

*to fill up or possibly cover with dispersed or disordered items that obstruct movement as well as minimize effectiveness.*

Therefore, declutter is the opposite action. It really is to sort items and get tidy. It means to order items, to put things in place where they belong.

Most peoples' homes are full of things. We live in a land of "stuff." Stuff that makes us feel good, stuff that we don't want to get rid of, and stuff that takes over our lives.

It begins when we own too many things. When we have fewer items the easier it will be to keep clutter at a minimum.

The first and easiest ways to start decluttering is to remove the excessive possessions that are stealing our lives, times, and energy.

In your process of removing the excess, it can be helpful to define what it is that is causing your clutter. Usually it is defined in 3 ways:

1. Too much stuff in too small of a space
2. Anything that you no longer use or like
3. Anything that leads to a feeling of disorganization

It is not good to have too many things in your room. A few well arranged items on top of your dresser make it much easier to keep order and will help you save time in caring for your room.

## Questions to consider:

- How is your desk looking?
- Is it cluttered and untidy looking?
- Are there books that you don't regularly use that are left out?
- Are there things on the top of the table that should be kept in drawers or boxes?
- What other places in your room may be in disorder and full of unnecessary things?

## Putting things away

Having a convenient place for everything is important for time management. But it is only part of the solution, the other part is to actually put things in their places.

It is much easier and saves time if you do not drop things just anywhere you feel like dropping them in your room. If you put things away and hang up your clothes at night, there will be no picking up to do in the morning.

### **The habit of putting things away instead of putting things down is your new goal.**

You need to emphasize doing the tasks that will take you less than two minutes to put away, right away. Otherwise that small job will turn into an *"add it to my to do list later"* item. The more that we can get done in the moment, the less we will have to remember to do them again later.

This principle can be adapted to be even more powerful when you get into the habit of using it beyond physical items in your room or home, but also with digital information and follow-up tasks.

Let's say you receive an invite for an upcoming party, if you are able to attend, RSVP now, not later. Then mark it on your calendar and throw away the invite. What about emails that comes into your box and needs information attended to? Reply right away, and then you can clear your inbox. Letting your inbox fill up with email is just like leaving items on the countertop because you don't want to put them away now.

One of my favorite sayings is,

***"Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do today."***

Use that even in the littlest of applications in life. If you can put away all your items after returning from a shopping trip now, then do it. Don't wait till a later time to put things away. Why wait? Stop procrastinating and just get it done.

**Hands on skill this week:**

You are going to take note to pay attention to immediately getting done what can be done, instead of waiting until a later time. Apply this principle when returning home from being gone all day, when you complete activities and have to put large amounts of stuff away, and as you go about your daily life. Look at each opportunity to get things done, instead of waiting for a later date.

Are you noticing that you are more apt to just dropping your items and leaving them for a later time? Are you stopping and reminding yourself that instead of putting things down, I need to put them away?

Work this week at being consistent at putting things away immediately instead of waiting for a later time. Do not put off for later which you can do right now. Take the extra two minutes and get it done.

Which tasks, that can be completely in just a few moments, do you put off “till a later time?” Write these tasks down. If you cannot think of any, just ask others in your family which ones they think you need to improve. Sometimes others can see things that we might not see.

**Tasks I need to improve upon doing immediately:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Hands on skill:**

You are going to declutter your room. Decluttering is a constant thing otherwise things will accumulate quickly. You may have already done this in the beginning, that is okay, you can do this many times throughout the year, it keeps things neat.

Here are some simple steps to declutter your room:

1. Clear a working area probably in the middle, where you can sort things. Gather a bag for trash, boxes for donate and return to other areas of the home.
2. Work in a clock pattern around your room start at 12 and move around the room in a clockwise pattern.
3. Do one drawer or shelf at a time.
4. Pull everything out of the drawer or shelf and set it in your working area. Sort the items into the appropriate places—trash, give away, or return to the drawer or shelf.
5. When deciding where each item should go you need to make an instant decision. Think about when was the last time you used this? If you haven't used it for six months or more you probably won't. Exceptions to seasonal items.
6. Continue to work on your entire room until you return back to the 12 o'clock mark.

If this is the first time that you have decluttered your room, it will probably take a few hours. Work in sections if it seems to overwhelm you. Take a break and do something else in between. The more that you do this, it will normally only take an hour or so to upkeep your room.

When setting up your dresser, think what items you absolutely need to leave out and put the rest away.

The same is true for your desks and nightstands. You can only read one book at a time. You don't listen to ALL of those CDs at one time. Nuts and bolts belong back in your garage not in your bedroom. Put away every item that is not used daily. Keep it simple.

When you stand back and notice your room, take note which areas look cluttered. Go back and redo those areas. You want a simple, not chaotic look. Leave out only the items that are used regularly and put the rest away. A clean room will give you a sense of accomplishment and peace, knowing that you have done a good job. Keep up on it.

Go through your clothing as well. If you have ripped clothing, place it in the rag pile. Give away clothing that is too small. Keep things folded neatly so you know what you have.

If you aren't able to find everything in your room, you are apt to go buy more of it and then usually you find the missing item. Keep it neat!

### **Decluttering other areas of our home**

Now that you have decluttered your room and have learned how to be more effective, is there another area of your home that you can help your mom or dad out by decluttering? She might have too many books on the bookshelf, or your dad might have a messy toolbox.

Look around your home and see where there is "too much" of something. Brainstorm and even internet search ways of improving that area. I am sure your family will be blessed by your eagerness to help out in ways that they might not be able to get to because of her season of life.

Areas that I can help improve upon in our home:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_