

20 Ways to Bust Clutter and Shift Your Energy Fast

Pretty much everybody knows by now that clutter drains your energy and steals your motivation. What you may not know is that getting organized is easier than you think. It all starts with baby steps – a little here and a little there – done consistently over time that yields really big results.

What can you do to bust through clutter and shift your energy into high gear? Here are 20 tips to get you started.

- 1. Do one small organizational task daily – regardless of how small.** Clean out a drawer, a cabinet, go through a stack of papers, clean out your fridge. Just think, after a month you'll have over 30 tasks checked off the list!
- 2. Open the mail over the recycling bin** and get rid of the junk mail immediately. Don't even bring it into the main area of the house. This forces you to be decisive and it's a simple way to eliminate paper piles fast.
- 3. Find a place for every item.** One reason things pile up on counters, tables, and floors is that they have no home. Storing items at their point of use makes it easier to put them away when you're done, and usually it's best to store similar items together. If it's something you use frequently, make sure the storage place is easy to access. If you have to move several items just to get to something and then move them again to return it to its place, chances are it's not going to make it home very often. This is especially true when designing organization systems for children.
- 4. Stand guard.** The better you are about keeping things *out* of your home, the less likely things will pile up inside. Take a minute to opt out of mailings from credit card companies and other direct marketers. Decline the free tote bags, coffee mugs and t-shirts. Always look for ways to block unneeded items before they invade your space.
- 5. Play professional organizer.** Periodically scan your home for clutter hot spots, and spend some time figuring out *why* stuff accumulates there. Sometimes it's not what you think. One client could not get her kids to put folded towels and sheets in the linen closet. She accused them of being lazy, but the real reason was that the closet was so full it took a blueprint to figure out how to get them onto the shelves. It's easier to find a solution when you understand the problem.
- 6. Don't buy more storage containers.** Declutter first – then you'll understand your situation better, what you have, where to store it and the best containers to fit the purpose.
- 7. Dispose of dupes.** Getting rid of duplicate items is one of the easiest ways to eliminate clutter. Use the In/Out Rule: one something new comes in, something has to go out. You probably don't need a half a dozen vegetable peelers or 4 blow dryers.
- 8. Is it a treasured memory or clutter?** It's never easy to discard a child's creation, whether its pastel drawings from the second grade or that cool diorama that takes up half the basement. But if you're serious about minimizing clutter, letting go is a

must. Take a photo of your child with the creation, and make *that* your keepsake. After all, in 10 years that diorama is going to crumble, and then you'll still have the memory. Of course, if it's something really special that you and your child want to keep, by all means - display it!

- 9. What's in your closet?** The 80/20 Rule is never truer than in the clothes closet - we wear 20% of our clothes 80% of the time. Sort through your clothes, and your children's, at the end of each season. Does a particular garment no longer fit, or maybe it's uncomfortable? Toss it into a box. Then take the box to a favorite charity or a consignment store. And beware the "but" syndrome - "But I paid so much for that dress" or "But it might come back in style someday." "But I'm going to lose weight and then it will fit." One key to de-cluttering is *creating room to breathe, which represents an energy shift*. Tidying up is not the same as organizing.
- 10. Look for simple clutter control solutions.** Most of the time there's a really simple and easy way to control clutter. Use turntables for organizing pantries or laundry rooms, can risers, drawer dividers, and bins and baskets to group items in bathrooms and linen closets. Done with those CD towers? Take them out of their jewel boxes and store them in a CD binder.
- 11. Host a "give away" party.** Invite lots of friends, crank up the tunes and let everyone take what they want from what you've collected to give away - clothes, household items, books, sports stuff - have fun!
- 12. Keep your children's tests, art, and papers in a large art box or** underbed plastic storage container and then go through the boxes with your kids at the end of the school year. Choose the really special items to keep. This way you don't have to make snap decisions on things they bring home from school and other activities right away.
- 13. Store your notes, lists, and ideas all in ONE place.** Use your PDA phone or even an old fashioned 3 ring binder will suffice. This way you have one place to look for all that information. Periodically recycle outdated pages (like last week's grocery list) and keep others (the big idea for your business that came to you while you were sitting at the dentist's office).
- 14. Reduce, reduce, reduce.** How many old t-shirts do you really need for gardening or painting projects. What about the desk drawer full of pens you keep accumulating?
- 15. It's ok to regift.** Just because someone you care about gave you something you either don't like or can't use doesn't mean you have to hold onto it for the rest of your life. Pass it on to someone who will appreciate it and USE it.
- 16. Store frozen foods and meats** in easily accessible, labeled plastic bins. They really work great and maximize the room in your freezer.
- 17. Keep two cardboard boxes or canvas laundry bags** in your laundry room or hall closet marked "Repair" and "Donate". They'll be handy to catch the items that either need to be fixed or given away as they come out of the wash.

- 18. Create a system to organize your recipes.** The Recipe Nest (www.reciperelish.com) is a binder with six tabbed dividers that you can customize with your own categories. Or make your own with a 2-3" 3-ring binder and tabbed dividers. Store the recipes in plastic sheet protectors to protect them.
- 19. Get a friend to help.** In general everyone is a better "editor" with someone else's stuff. Or hire a professional organizer if you really struggle with clutter issues.
- 20. Take baby steps and commit to just do it!** Treat getting organized the same way you would a diet or exercise plan: it's a lifestyle change! Maintenance is 80% of success. To keep your motivation going you need to do a little bit each day.