

Lakeview Beacon

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INCREASING YOUR CALM

The Inner Benefits of a Decluttered Life

by Laura Slaughter, LMSW, ACSW

Books, websites and classes abound to help us declutter and organize our lives. The physical consequences of consumerism and the tendency to think that new “stuff” can make us feel fulfilled, or help us become the kind of people we strive to be have taken their toll only to trap us in inertia. While we may have bought something or started a project that felt good to us at one time, the accumulation of those things can eventually “clog” our energy and create a sense of shame and failure. That garden project that once held potential to make us happy may begin to make us feel guilty when years later it still lays uncompleted. “When all your available space is filled with clutter, there is no room for anything new to come into your life” writes Karen Kingston, author of [Clear Your Clutter With Feng Shui](#). “Your thoughts tend to dwell in the past, and you feel bogged down with problems that have dogged you for some time. You tend to look back rather than forward in your life, blaming the past for your situation rather than taking responsibility for creating a better tomorrow.” When we can mindfully let go of things that no longer serve us we have energy to live in the moment and focus on what is truly fulfilling for us now. Our priorities change with time and the phases of our lives, allowing us to let go of what no longer fits for us, thus opening the way for new and more fulfilling choices.

Sometimes clutter accumulates because there are sentimental objects that we have difficulty letting go of. Clinging to our children’s preschool projects, or boxes of letters and cards from people we can barely remember, or piles of clothes and mementos that belonged to loved ones who are long deceased keep us stuck in the past. We are then unable to incorporate our vital history with what is important to us in the present. In order to not be weighed down by our past, we must be discriminating and hang on only to those objects which bring us the most joy, and that best represent the past we have loved.

Just as a cluttered environment can be a reflection of a cluttered or unclear mind, organizing our physical environments can lead to great shifts in our energy and focus. If living life to the fullest is our goal, we must willingly make room in our life to allow that to happen. Hopefully, remembering that to “let go” is also to “invite in” can make the process less painful, and keep us focused on who and where we are now, and where we want our future to take us.

“Decluttering is a deep spiritual practice that can bring you closer to your true self, the people you love, and your Divine Source.....

Whether the clutter is in your home, heart, mind, life, or spirit; if it is weighing you down, crowding you out, blocking your light, cramping your style; it has become an obstacle you keep stumbling over, and stops you from peace and finding the things you really love, then it is time to let it go.” Dr. Melva Green

Maybe it is a person not bringing you joy and weighing you down and you need to let them go.

Let's Do Something Different. Let's Do More with Less!

by Darcy Britten, MA, LPC

When we do something different, we begin to think something different. Why not “**do something different**” by taking action to simplify our lives in order to make room for more joy and peace of mind? What would be different for us this holiday season if we had a more balanced, clear, and joyful mind set? Here is a list of five things we can do to simplify our lives and increase our sense of balance and calm.

1. Simplify our Possessions

Too many possessions complicate our lives. They drain our finances, our energy and our time. Why not “**do something different**” by removing the nonessential possessions from our lives? We will think something different as we notice we are living a life based on our true values.

2. Reduce our Screen Time

Focusing attention on television, video games, social media and technology affects us more than we like to think. Media rearranges our values. Why not “**do something different**” by turning it off? We will begin to think something different as we recognize and understand technology's influence on our lives.

3. Clear out our Negative Thoughts

Why not simplify by taking responsibility of negative thoughts that drain us? Let's simplify by getting rid of resentment, bitterness and jealousy and replace those thoughts with forgiving past moments and concentrating on positive thoughts. This sounds “simple”, but it is not easy! Suppose we “**do something different**”, by making a commitment to change our own self talk? Let's begin by “cutting” ourselves some “slack” and treating ourselves in a forgiving manner. Kindness toward self, will translate to gentle thoughts towards others, which will result in precious peace of mind.

4. Reduce our Tasks

Let's simplify the the number of tasks that we are striving to accomplish. Simplicity recognizes important things, while ignoring trivial things. Let's “**do something different**” by handling one task at a time, doing it well, and moving to the next. We will notice improved focus, efficiency and effectiveness. For more information please read, *The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results*, by Gary Keller.

5. Use Effective Organizational Tools

We feel a sense of peace and ease when we have control over our “to do” lists. Many of us have become fed up with online calendars and list making apps. Why not “**do something different**” by adopting the use of The Bullet Journal (a way of organizing and writing lists in a simple notebook). The Bullet Journal system helps organize everything from household chores to children's activities in a notebook. It is not fancy, and it is not technological, and that is the point! The act of writing something down, as opposed to relying on a screen, helps us stay and feel organized. For more information, look up *The Bullet Journal*, in your search engine.

Create a Manageable Personal Environment

Carol Murray, LMSW

It will come as no surprise that a cluttered environment affects mood. For some people it means feeling over-stimulated and anxious. For others, it means feeling overwhelmed and depressed. Clutter can also affect your ability to focus and process information. We tend to “collect” things for a number of reasons: we think we need it, it has sentimental value, it was on sale. The more committed emotionally or financially we are to an item, the harder it is to get rid of it.

The thought of getting started on tidying up can add to the stress. Here are some ways you can get going:

1. Start by thinking about breaking down a big job into small steps.
2. Pick a task that will maximize your sense of progress.
3. Take the cardboard tube from the paper towel roll. Put it up to your eye and scan the area. Zoom in on one area and work on that area only.
4. Set a timer for 20-30 minutes. When it goes off, you may be “on a roll” and will continue working.
5. Put on some music that will get you moving.
6. With any item, ask yourself: Do I love it? Do I need it? Do I use it? If you’ve answered “yes” to any of these questions, keep the item but put it away.
7. Try the “touch it once” rule. Pick up an item and decide to do one of the following: put it away, sell it (eBay and craigslist are reliable sources), give it away (try giving away one item a day) or throw it away(fill one trash bag).
8. Ask a friend or family member to help.
9. If it is within your budget, hire a professional organizer.

And...to avoid filling the decluttered space back up:

1. Remind yourself of how good it felt (that is, your improved mood) to have accomplished something.
2. Have easy to reach, well marked areas/containers for items.
3. Schedule a monthly review of your environment.

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary, so the necessary may speak”

Hans Hofmann

Some people worry that they may be a “hoarder”. A true Hoarding Disorder is a pattern of acquiring things to excess and being unable or unwilling to get rid of things. With Hoarding Disorder, the possessions take over living space to the point that navigating the home is difficult or impossible. Also, hoarding causes health risks, economic hardship and has an adverse effect on family and friends. If you think you have a Hoarding Disorder, consult with a professional to discuss this further.

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Resources

1. Breathing Room: Open Your Heart by Decluttering your Home by Dr. Melva Green, Lauren Rosenfeld
2. A Cluttered Life: Searching for God, Serenity, and My Missing Keys by Pesi Dinnerstein
3. Simplify: Ten Practices to Unclutter Your Soul by Bill Hybel
4. The Life-changing magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing by Marie Kondo
5. Feng Shui Your Life: The Quick and Easy Guide to Decluttering Your Home and Renewing Your Life by Trisa Morris
6. Clutter Free by Kathi Lipp
7. Organize Yourself by Nick Bell
8. ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life by Judith Kolberg

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