

JUMP START TO GETTING ORGANIZED

Taking Control of Your Things

When you are in control of your things it means that your environment supports you. It has nothing to do with how it looks, it is about how it functions. You generally can find what you need when you need it. Your things have “homes” and you can easily put things away when you are through with them. It also means that your surroundings are not overwhelming and that the things in your environment are not distracting.

Not being in control of your things has far reaching effects. You spend a lot of time searching through piles for things you have. You waste money buying things you already have or buying things you don't need. You may be embarrassed to have someone see your office or home. Your self-esteem suffers, you may be losing or wasting money, you feel stressed or anxious, and it may harm your reputation and relationships.

The two biggest organizing mistakes I see being made every day are that people tend to put away their clutter and they try to create systems first.

In order to avoid overwhelm pick one place to start and focus your attention there. Decide where will have the biggest effect on you and your life. I suggest starting in a place that you use often and is visible so that you can experience and see the benefit of your efforts. Imagine you had a magic wand and could only change one place...where would it be?

Decluttering is about making decisions. You do not owe anything to your things. Your things do not deserve anything from you and you do not owe them a “good home.” It is all about you and what adds value to you and your life and what does not.

To help you decide what to keep and what to let go of ask yourself a series of questions including:

- When will I really use it?
- Is there something else I could or would prefer to use instead?
- Why am I really keeping this?
- If I didn't have it would I miss it?
- Did I remember that I owned it?

Know what the cost of keeping sometime is in terms of your time, space, and energy.

Everything you keep has a cost associated with it...does the value that you get in return for keeping it justify the cost?

Set rules or guidelines to help make decision making easier. These guidelines will enable you to make decisions on groups of things at a time instead of having to consider each thing individually.

In order for the decluttering to happen you need to do it and not just think about it. That doesn't mean that you have to set aside weeks on end to work on it or try to do it all at one time; in fact 10 minutes every day is more effective than setting aside an entire weekend.

Decluttering isn't a oneshot deal. In order to keep things put away and in control you need to schedule “maintenance” time on a regular basis. Just like you support yourself by eating and sleeping every day you need to make sure that the things that you are bringing into your life continually support you.