

Conquering Clutter

Enhance Your Life Through Organization

By Ginny Underwood

January is National "Get Organized Month" and will likely top many New Year's resolution lists. The advantages of living an organized life go beyond saving time and money. Being on time and prepared for the day ahead is a sure sign of being in control, which creates self-confidence and reduces stress.

Five Key Mistakes

that lead to a space being cluttered and unorganized

- 1) Items do not have a designated, permanent home. When an item has a home it's much easier to return it to its rightful place and prevent clutter.
- 2) Other family members or coworkers do not know where items belong. Continuously returning an item to its home reinforces and teaches household members and coworkers where an item belongs.
- 3) Items are not stored close to where they are used, which leads to them not being put away promptly. Consider storage space as prime real estate. Commonly used items should be stored within arms reach, while items that are not used as often can be stored higher up or lower down.
- 4) Appropriate storage solutions are not in place. Disorganization starts when an item is stored in a space too small to accommodate it. With a variety of appropriate storage options, it is much easier to assign a permanent home for each item.
- 5) Seasonal items are not stored separately. Pack seasonal items away in plastic totes, freeing up prime cupboard space for everyday use. Avoid cluttering the countertops and tabletops by temporarily removing regular decorative items to effectively display your seasonal items.

Five Favorite Organizing Tips

- 1) Reduce paper clutter by sorting your mail into categories on your walk back from the mailbox. Recycle unwanted items straight away. Place mail into an expanding file that is sorted into five categories: Pay, File, Read, Call/Write, Coupons/Offers.
- 2) Whenever you remove an item from a hanger in your closet, put empty hangers together on the rail. When doing your laundry, bring the hangers to the laundry area for easy "dryer-to-hanger" action, eliminating folding laundry and ironing.
- 3) Learn how long it really takes to do routine tasks and chores, such as getting ready to leave the house in the morning. This will help you manage your time and stay on schedule. If you assume it takes you ten minutes to get ready, but in reality it takes you 30, you will always be running late.
- 4) Reduce the time spent planning meals and grocery shopping by building your weekly menu around your grocery stores weekly specials. Check your fridge/freezer to see what needs to be used and create a precise grocery list; this will save you time and money in the store.
- 5) Never go up or down the stairs empty handed. Using two baskets, place items that need to be returned upstairs into a basket at the bottom of the stairs, while items that need to be returned downstairs get placed in the basket at the top. Whenever you go up or down the stairs take a basket and return items to their rightful homes.

Why hire professional organizing help?

When people find themselves living a disorganized life it is rarely by choice. Most have a real desire to be organized, but they simply do not know where to start, or feel overwhelmed by the scope of what needs doing. Although there are many books and blogs that offer tips on organization and time management, most people simply do not have the time to filter out the information that doesn't apply to them. This is when hiring a professional organizer can make a meaningful difference. Being emotionally detached from the problems that face their clients, a professional organizer can be a calming influence, supportive when making decisions about what to keep and what to gift, and keep the project on task. During a consultation your organizer will assess your problems, learn what

your vision is for your space, create a plan of action, suggest storage solutions, offer tips and techniques, and finally, work alongside you to implement the plan. Reaching out to a professional is the first step, and underlines your commitment to a more organized life. By working with a professional you can be sure that the changes suit your needs, and also learn the techniques that will enable you to maintain order long after the organizer has gone.

In essence, an organized life provides peace of mind and quality of life by promoting harmony, reducing stress and increasing productivity. What is required is an investment of time and effort to make your vision for your home or office a reality. With positive energy you will be delighted by how smoothly your life comes together.

Following ten years as a director of administration in the financial services industry, Ginny Underwood started working part-time as an organizer for friends and family. With 26 years experience organizing homes, spaces and people, she started Virginia's Easy Living Solutions, a professional organizing and consulting service for the home and business located on Hilton Head Island, SC. Contact Ginny Underwood by phone: 843-732-2606 Online: www.virginiaseasylivingsolutions.com