## *Decluttering Frees Up Mental and Physical Space*

*Do you wonder why some people are able to control clutter while others repeatedly struggle to discard old possessions, delete unwanted files and photos, or simply keep better track of stuff?*

In a survey of a cross-section of Americans, 72 percent of respondents agreed they would gain more physical and mental space by purging unused items, but 41 percent hadn't done anything to declutter in the past year.

There are lots of ways to justify keeping things around. To name a few: too busy or too tired to deal with it, sentimental attachment, guilt, finding something on the street or in a shop that is "truly unique," saving keepsakes for offspring, and thinking something may be needed or increase in monetary value…one of these days.

According to studies, the presence of disorganized or unneeded items can be either a cause of procrastination or vice versa. Whatever the case, clutter diminishes your sense of well-being and having a secure, safe psychological home. Other related detrimental effects include:

• Inefficient use of living or work space
• Buying items to replace things you have but can't find
• Feeling overwhelmed, depressed and worried
• Impaired social interactions and feeling ashamed

### Decluttering

Getting rid of clutter helps reduce anxiety. That's why you may experience a feeling of relief after sorting out a junk drawer, emptying the car trunk, shredding or deleting files, or deep cleaning your home.

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to reduce clutter and get better organized in 2020, here are 10 suggestions:



*Decide what to throw away, recycle, give away or keep. Create easy-to-access, organized spaces for items you keep.*

1. Define what clutter means to you. Safely discard or pass along things that:

   • Don't elicit feelings of happiness or love
   • Are never or only rarely used
   • Are worn out, no longer fit or not in style
   • Are untidy or disorganized
   • Take up too much space
   • Are unfinished (and unlikely to be finished)
   • Exceed expiration dates or may be toxic
   • Could benefit someone who has less than you


WorkCare™ WORK MATTERS. HEALTH COUNTS.

# Resolve to Reduce Clutter in 2020

2. **While sorting things out, decide which items to throw away, recycle, give away or keep.** Reduce your carbon footprint by donating reusable items and recycling electronic devices, batteries, old paint and chemical products, paper and aluminum products.

3. **Try not to let things pile up.** For instance, set aside time daily to delete unwanted email and pick up around the house. Bad weather? Stay home and go through the kitchen cupboards. Schedule a weekend for a major cleanup and disposal project.

4. **To discourage tactile sympathy bonding with an object, look at it and objectively assess its purpose**; don't touch or hold it. Ask a friend without attachment to help you let go. If you feel overwhelmed, consider hiring a professional space organizer to assist you.

5. **To reduce paper, use secure, web-based platforms for routine transactions such as banking, paying bills and signing contracts.** Scan documents and photos and save them in the cloud or on a thumb drive, then delete them from your computer and smart phone files. Put print photos you can't part with in picture frames or albums.

6. **Help others in your household or workplace manage clutter.** For example, when giving gifts, find out what the person wants/needs. Consider giving them an experience to remember rather than an object they may not use. Do not over-order supplies that will quickly become obsolete.

7. **Apply the ancient Chinese practice of feng shui to direct the flow of energy (qi) and promote harmony where you live and work.** Feng shui practitioners say clutter blocks qi and lowers quality of life. Start by clearing out "zones" that irritate you the most.

8. **View your workstation with a critical eye.** Take steps to eliminate messiness, visual distractions, trip hazards or poor lighting. Re-organize your virtual desktop from time to time. If there is a shared break room at work, take turns to keep it clean and empty the refrigerator of leftovers once a week.

9. **Create easy-to-access, organized spaces for items you frequently use or want to keep.** Have containers for dirty laundry and put labeled bins in cupboards. Install shelves in closets to hold shoes or folded garments. Provide places to make it fun for children to sort and put away their toys. Have a designated spot for mail, keys and eye glasses. Store seasonal decorations and gear in a basement, garage, attic or outdoor storage area if you have access to one. For sentimental items, display the best of the bunch, not every piece.

10. **Acknowledge your accomplishments.** Maybe you didn't get to the most intimidating closet like you planned, but you finally filed your insurance and tax records and took a couple of bags of stuff to the thrift store. Reward yourself by doing something simple that you enjoy.
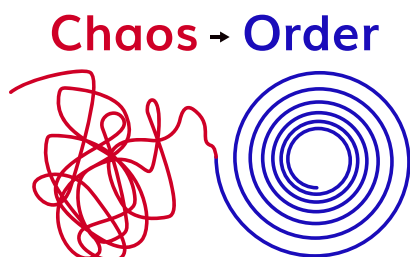
## Related Resources

*Essential: Essays by The Minimalists*

*LifeStorage Blog*

*Living Well Spending Less* *Clutter Free Cheat Sheet*

*National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals, "bringing order and efficiency to people's lives"*

*The Spruce: decluttering*

**Chaos → Order**

## Did You Know?

**Having a messy house or a large collection of items – such as dolls or sports memorabilia – isn't the same as hoarding. Hoarding is a mental health disorder characterized by random, excessive acquisition and retention of things regardless of their value. Severe hoarding is a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder that can create unsafe living conditions and significantly impair the ability to function in a healthy way. Treatment typically involves cognitive behavioral therapy.**