Decluttering and Organizing 101

Choose a small area or room that has been bugging you the most—but won't take forever to declutter. The goal right now is to start small to give you an idea of what it will take to tackle those bigger areas.

Also, keep in mind that this is my system for getting an area or room organized. Other Organizers may use different steps to get the same results. What matters is what works best for you.

What you need to get started:

- Large Black 33 Gallon Trash Bags (Do not purchase clear trash bags so that you won't be tempted to take a second look at what you will be getting rid of). For those odd shaped items that won't go in a trash bag use an appropriate sized box or large plastic bin.

- Labels or tags you can stick on or attach to the bags. Label one bag each with the following:

  ●**Toss** ●**Keep** ●**Give Away** ●**Yard Sale** ●**Storage**

The "**Toss**" bag will be those items that you know are junk and need to get rid of—that you'll put in the trash after your decluttering project.

Your **"Keep"** bag of course will be those items you will keep, "because you know that you will be using them." These are the things that you will return back to the space you are organizing.

"Give Away" items are items that you should give to a Thrift Store, or Shelter. Try to avoid giving items to friends or relatives unless they have an absolute need for them. Just to make sure that they're not just cluttering up their homes with your unwanted items.

The "**Yard Sale"** bag is only necessary if you are actually planning an upcoming Yard or Garage Sale. Once you declutter your area you'll want to make sure that what you have saved for a Yard Sale does not end up being a permanent guest in your garage or storage area.

"**Storage"** items will be those things that you absolutely cannot part with. Many of us have those keepsakes that we want to keep. The plan is to not make everything a keepsake. One good rule of thought to keep in mind while you are decluttering is to ask yourself if you would want your loved ones to have to go through all of your belongings in the event of your death. Not trying to sound morbid, but that should be a time for grieving not stress. I speak from experience. When my Dad died he had a houseful of "stuff' in his house and garage that I had to sift through and discard in one way or another. I was not a happy camper.

Let's say that you are decluttering a "**closet"**. The same steps can be used for just about every other area. Remember, your first decluttering project should be a manageable one so that you won't get discouraged. Decluttering can sometimes end up being a very tedious job which is one of the reasons why many people do not like doing it.

1) – Start by using your "**Toss**" bag by going through your closet and placing everything in there that you know you should have thrown away long ago. Throughout the whole process you may want to tell yourself not to get emotional about getting rid of things and that this is something that you have been putting off long enough. Once you've done this, just set the bag nearby for other items you'll come across that will need to go in there.

2) – Now, remove all of your items from your closet so that it is totally empty. Place the items in a pile nearby if you have to. Next, take a look at your closet—totally empty. Just think for a moment how it feels just to see your closet walls, floor, and rods. If you are really serious about what you are doing, and really ready to make a change to declutter your life you should have a true glimpse of what it is going to feel like to have less "things" controlling your life.

3) – Get started tackling your pile by separating those things into your bags that you *will*—

a. – **"Keep"**or go back into your closet (since we're using a closet as an example, instead of placing your clothing, shoes, etc. in a bag, you should just place them neatly back into your closet. Hang pants together, hang tops together, etc).

b. – **"Give Away"** to a Thrift store, or Shelter in your community.

c. – Sell at a **"Yard or Garage Sale."** For tips and ideas on throwing a successful Yard Sale, visit TheOrganizationIndex.com at http://theorganizationindex.com/index1garage.html

d. – Place in your garage or storage area, **"Storage"** items that you cannot and will not part with. Organizers are not out to insist you get rid of everything that "they" may feel you do not need. There are sentimental items that I have that will be with me until the day I die. The key is to not hold onto a room full of things that mean nothing or that you will never use. For those things that you want to place in storage, just limit yourself by placing those things in a clear plastic bin with a lid, list everything that is in the bin and tape or stick the list on that bin so that you will know what is in there.

So there you have it, Decluttering 101 in a nutshell. These are the basics, and basically all you need to get started. If you are already feeling overwhelmed just from reading this short-list, you may want to consider hiring a Professional Organizer. The National Association of Professional Organizers or NAPO, will allow you to search for Organizers in your area at napo.net.

Judi—The Organizer of Information

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