

NEW



HOME
LIFE
CAREER
FRIENDS
& YOU

ORGANISE • PLAN • REFINE • FOCUS

Learn how to

DECLUTTER *your* LIFE

BEGIN YOUR
JOURNEY
TO LIVING A
SIMPLE LIFE





Welcome

This interactive decluttering guide is here to help you on a path to organising your life and creating order where there was previously chaos. Clutter comes in many forms: physical clutter, mental clutter and general life clutter. Are you feeling overwhelmed by certain aspects of your life? Are you struggling to get on top of this? Or do you just fancy a fresh start? This book is here to help you take control and get rid of the unnecessary. Discover how to begin decluttering your home with room by room advice, from sorting out your wardrobe to getting your kitchen spick and span. Once you have your living environment in order it's time to take a look at your day-to-day life. Are you committing too much time to unworthy people? Or is your calendar in a jumble? We provide advice on creating a routine and organising your time. Finally let's take a look at your mind. Learn to let go of stress and emotional baggage, and stop worrying about the unnecessary. Open your mind, embrace change and allow this interactive guide to organise your day-to-day and help you live a better, more refined life.



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DECLUTTER *your* LIFE

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Editorial

Editor **Rebecca Greig**
Designer **Laurie Newman**
Compiled by **Jessica Leggett & Lora Barnes**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**
Editorial Director **Jon White**

Contributors

Rebecca Lewry-Gray, Zara Gaspar, Laurie Newman,
Sara Niven, Natalie Denton, Phil Martin, Adam Markiewicz

Images

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Photography

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Advertising

Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International

Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**
licensing@futurenet.com
www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production

Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**
Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

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Chief Executive **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244



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MAKE
DECLUTTERING
A WAY OF LIFE

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The amount of both physical and mental clutter that we can accumulate in a short period of time is actually quite frightening. One minute we can be ambling along quite happily, not realising that our load is getting heavier and heavier and that we're beginning to move slower under the weight of it all – until suddenly we can't move. We've been enveloped in so much clutter that we can't quite clamber all of the way out.

Five years ago I made the move from Edinburgh to Bournemouth to start a new life with just one (admittedly large) bag of clothes. Then a few months ago I moved flat – and even after a big clear out and charity shop runs, I had a full van of stuff. *Stuff* is the only way that I can describe it. Less than around 20 per cent of the things in that van could be classed as being life essentials. So how and why did I gather what feels like a lifetime of stuff in just five years?

It was this move that made me realise that something has to change in my thinking, and it encouraged me to really start to consider the idea of decluttering. It made me realise how materialistic our lives can become when we don't take a moment to sense check ourselves.

Do I really need three pineapple ornaments, ten champagne flutes and 21 cocktail glasses (having only ever entertained four people at one time)? How about the 20 cheap handbags, 50 pairs of battered shoes that I'm only keeping 'just in case', eight suitcases full of



clothes and the giant box packed with bedding and towels? It is actually quite embarrassing to think about.

We are inundated with images of the things we supposedly need through social media adverts and at every turn on our local high street, so it's no wonder that we end up with so many pointless possessions. Too often I see something I like and think "I don't have that, I want it" instead of "I like that, but do I really need it? Will it really improve my life?" Changing this way of thinking is actually quite a big step, but it is of course doable with time and dedication as you'll hopefully discover as you progress through this book. It's all about making conscious, mindful decisions.

I sometimes wonder why it has taken me so long to address the material stuff in my life. For many, this is the first step they take on the decluttering journey, but for me it's the last. Everyone is different of course, and you might have picked up this book at a different stage of your journey to mindfulness and being clutter-free.

Two years ago, I began decluttering my mind. It wasn't an entirely conscious decision, but I started keeping a personal journal where I write about my day, my thoughts, feelings and aspirations. I try to keep it in the moment, and in general only reflect about the very recent past and ponder about the imminent future.

I've always had the ability to retain a lot of information – both long and short term – so my mind can get a little overrun. I used to be the waitress that takes a table of ten's order without noting it down, and still gets every drink, main course, dessert and side absolutely bang on, while remembering who ordered what. I was that kid that would remember every promise my parents made and held them to it...



and actually that continued into adulthood with relationships and friends, until I realised – quite recently – that not everyone has the same kind of recall ability. Nobody else remembers the clothes they wore, where they sat, what they talked about and what they ate on some random, inconsequential meal out three years ago, never mind the promises that they might have made. But I do, and that is why it is so important that I free my brain of some of this pointless clutter and pour it into my journal.

We can't necessarily choose what information our brains retain, but we can choose not to dwell on certain emotions and we can train ourselves to let go.

Obviously the majority of people that will read this book won't have the same kind of freaky memory as I do, but it is still so important to process your thoughts and reflect on your feelings in order to rid yourself of unnecessary mind clutter and allow yourself to feel more mindful. Even in the most decluttered of homes you won't feel truly free until you address what's on your mind.

Clutter isn't just about physical things and mental jumble – we also have life clutter: work, commitments, obligations, family and friends. Work is something that the majority of us need to contend with on a daily basis, but there are ways to make it a positive part of your life. I've found that keeping an organised calendar has transformed my work life. I feel on top of my work, and a small 30-minute change to when I start and finish my work day has meant I can easily fit gyming and other social activities into my evenings without feeling overwhelmed.

Over the years I have learnt to be quite brutal with friendships and relationships. I will no longer give time to those who don't add to my

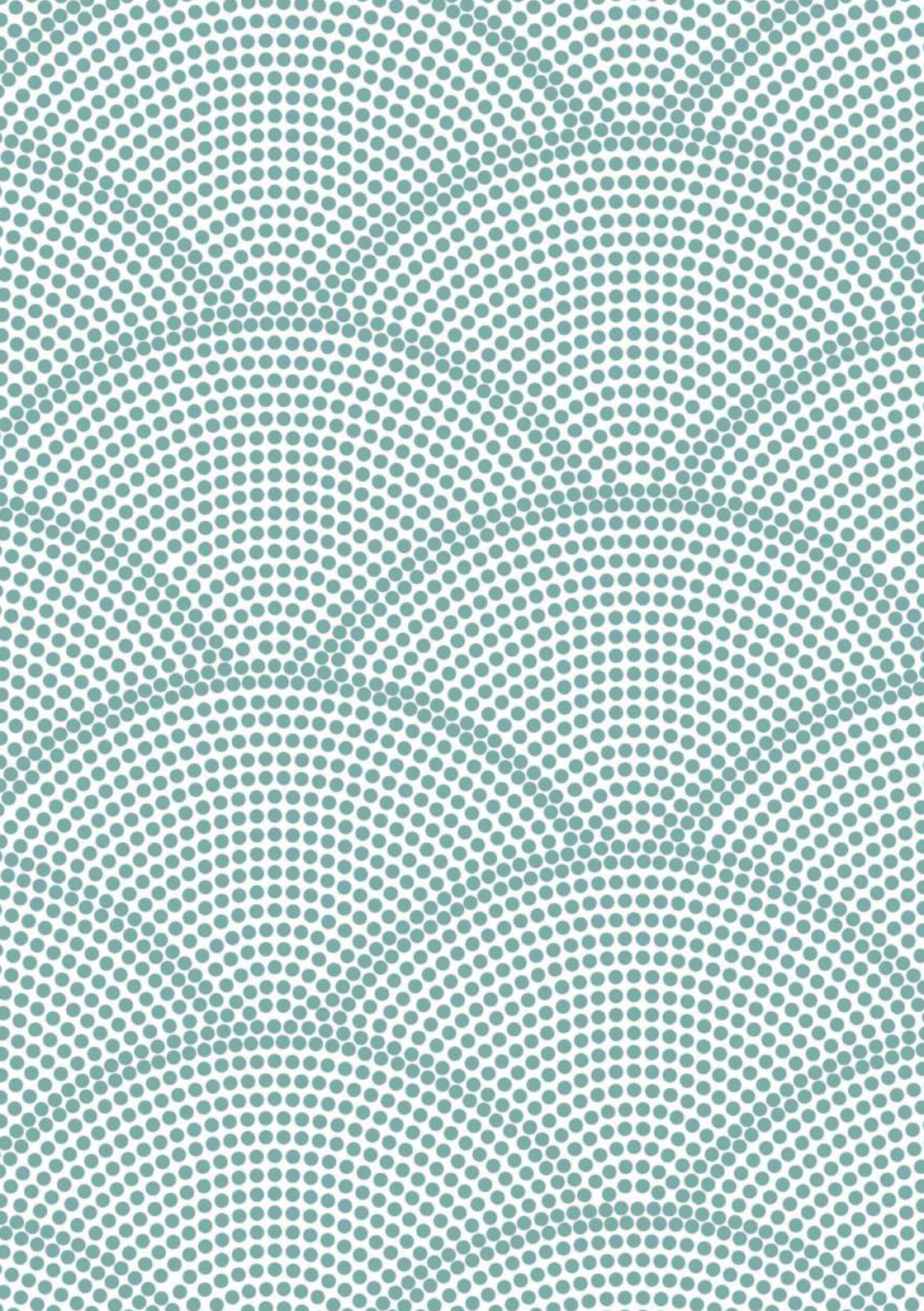
life or make an effort with me. I moved hundreds of miles away from home, and I lost touch with almost all of my friends – not because I didn't try, but because it was only ever me that did. I stopped when I realised that I don't need them. So now if I go home to visit I have time to focus on my family without trying to keep up appearances with people that don't care about me. They were just an unfortunate jumble of people clutter.

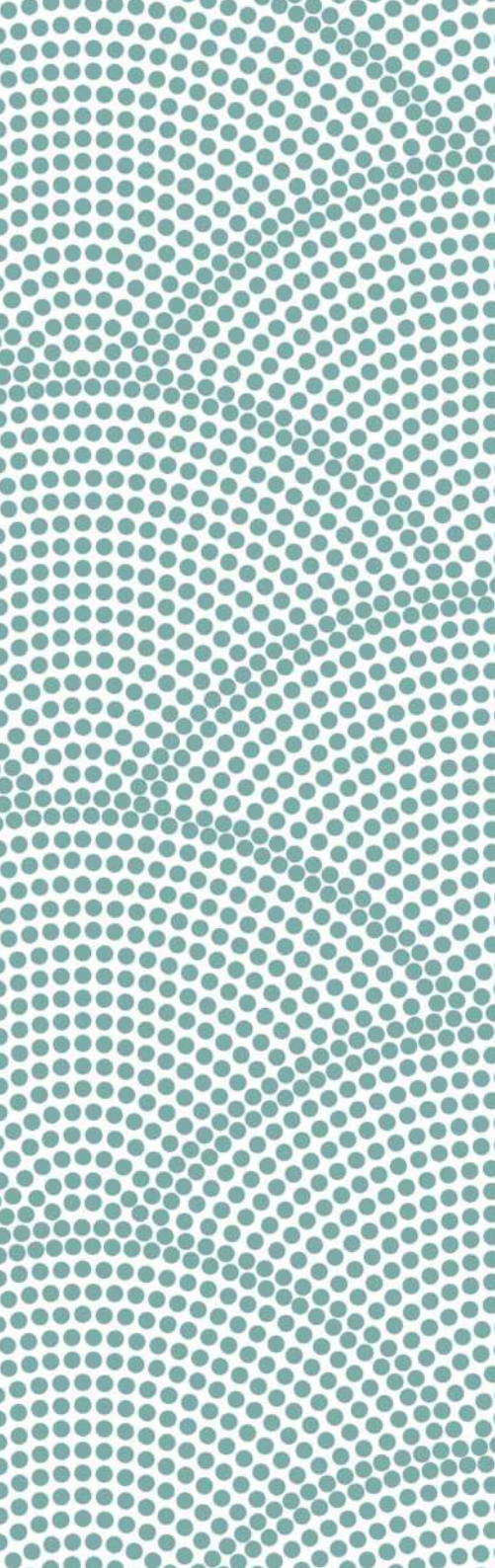
When I date I no longer 'make do' with anyone that likes me, but instead I ask myself "Will this person add to my life? Will they stop me being me?" and if they don't make the cut then I make the decision to leave them behind very quickly. It has perhaps grown from a form of self-preservation, but really, why waste your forever on something that doesn't *quite* work? You should never have to compromise your true self and mould yourself just to make a relationship of any kind work.

This all might sound very extreme, but think about your own day-to-day life. Do you struggle to get everything into your week? Do you feel guilty because you can't make time for your loved ones? Do you feel obligated to keep up appearances with certain friends? For me, a person's time is the most precious gift that they can give. So find and seek out the people that are worth giving it to, and don't waste it on people clutter.

Hopefully by the end of this book you'll be well on your way to ridding your life of unnecessary clutter and on a solid path to mindfulness and a stress-free life.

Rebecca Greig





START YOUR JOURNEY

Understand why decluttering is an essential part of living your best life and consider why it is particularly important for you



WHAT IS CLUTTER?

Clutter can cause no end of stress whether it is physical or mental; it makes the place look untidy, swallows up space, and clouds your judgement, but there is a wonderfully simple antidote: decluttering

Be it broken, unwanted, not needed, outgrown or unloved, there are probably many items in your house you could do without. Or things playing on your mind, a hectic calendar or unworthy friends. Simply put, clutter is mess; an untidy collection of things that haven't been put away, aren't needed, or don't belong in the space they are currently occupying. Whether it's dirty clothes piled on a chair, old toys crammed into an overfilled cupboard, or unopened mail strewn about a countertop, clutter can amass all over your home like a plague of unwelcome pests.

People lead busy lives and unless there's a reason to have a good clear out, for example moving house or trying to drum up some extra cash, there's no urgency or motivation to declutter, which is why you end up with too much stuff, a lot of which you no longer need or want.

The key to beating clutter is to make decisions – decisions about whether the item should be kept or not, and if it is to be saved, where it should live, or as Benjamin Franklin once said, “a place for everything and everything in its place”. Then moving forward, it's essential the items you choose to keep are returned immediately to their allotted space when finished with. This sounds simple enough, but for many people decluttering can feel hugely overwhelming, especially if you have a lot of clutter to sort through. Many people fail to tackle the problem simply because they don't know how or where to start, and that's where this book comes in.



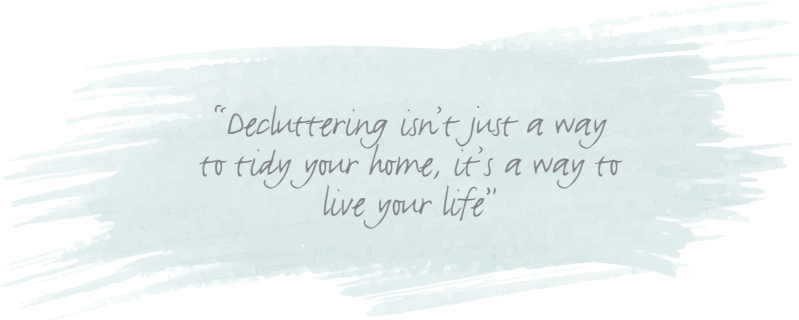
HOW DO WE ACCUMULATE SO MUCH STUFF?

Like hermit crabs, humans fill to the space around them, not physically of course, but with their belongings

Sentimentality is one of the biggest reasons we hold on to things we might not need or even want. Whether it's a gift from a loved one or a souvenir of your past, getting rid of possessions that hold significant emotional value can be difficult and painful. But you shouldn't feel burdened to keep hold of all these things forever, and there are plenty of techniques for helping you to deal with shedding the ones you no longer want, as you'll discover inside this book.

Stockpiling is another common cause of clutter. With shops riddled with offers and multibuys, and advertisers pushing those 'just in case' purchases, it's easy to end up with more than you bargained for. Stocking up on things you use regularly is all well and good, but certain food, cosmetics, clothing and furnishings don't always stand the test of time.

Then there are the things we buy because we believe that they'll make us happy, often in the belief that they will 'better' us in some way. Known as 'aspirational clutter', these items can lay dormant for years; exercise machines, intellectual coffee table books, sports equipment, camping gear... the list of potential dust gatherers is endless, but questioning who you really are and what you really want to achieve will help you to bin or begin.



*"Decluttering isn't just a way
to tidy your home, it's a way to
live your life"*

WHY SHOULD WE DECLUTTER?

Clearing out junk won't only make your environment more appealing and manageable, it can have the same effect on your life too

Think of decluttering like stripping away weeds that are blocking the light from flowers in your garden. With the weeds gone, the flowers have room and energy to grow, likewise freeing yourself of unwanted possessions can be quite liberating. It reduces stress and anxiety, causing the brain to release endorphins that create an intoxicating rush of positivity that floods your body, urging you to do more. The wave of good vibes doesn't end there, as one person's trash is another's treasure. The warm and fuzzy feeling you get from donating your unwanted to charity can be quite exhilarating, or if you choose to sell your stuff you can put the money you make towards something that you actually want, another win-win.

What's more, clutter isn't just a physical issue. Clutter is the consequence of putting off dealing with things, and so emotional clutter can accumulate just as quickly as worldly possessions. One of the main reasons people have clutter is because they find it hard to make a decision: keep or bin? Donate or sell it? Where is the best place to keep it? Sometimes it's easier to just do nothing. The inability to make decisions can stem from self doubt and insecurity. Forcing yourself to make decisions, even small ones like these, will help you get better at making more important choices, building self confidence and self worth, which will ultimately help to improve your mental wellbeing. This can prompt you to clean other areas of clutter in your life, especially useful if you have a tendency to pile a lot on your plate. Through decluttering you'll begin to appreciate what actually matters and come to see the benefit of quality over quantity, not just in terms of 'stuff', but also people and how you spend your time. Decluttering isn't just a way to tidy your home, it's a way to live your life.





FINDING THE MOTIVATION

Getting started can be one of the biggest hurdles when decluttering, so it's important to find the motivation to take that important first step. Search apps like Pinterest for images of how you wish your home looked, or cut pictures from a home magazine and make a vision board. Use these to see you through to the end.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Once your place is looking shipshape it can be hard to remember what all the fuss was about, so why not take some 'before' shots before you start to later remind yourself of just how far you've come? These can act as motivational tools to keep things tidy, plus they can be uploaded with the 'after' shots to an online decluttering support group to inspire others.

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Everyone knows a 'Monica', so why not invite them and some other friends and family over for a decluttering party? Stick on some pumping tunes, provide a few refreshments, and let the good times roll. Your house will be spick and span in no time. You may even find new homes for some of your unwanted belongings; much better than giving your helpers a goody bag.



THINK ABOUT YOUR VALUES

One of the main reasons you may want to declutter is to have a tidy home, obviously, but it can usher in a wealth of other benefits too

Less clutter equals less chaos, which equates to less stress, greater calmness, clarity and perspective. Not only will this do wonders for your mental wellbeing and help reduce risk of serious illnesses, it can also improve your relationships and enhance your self-esteem. However, the only way this can truly work is if everyone you share your living environment with, no matter how old or young they are, is on the same page.

We all have limited space in which to live, and often that space is shared with others. In order to live harmoniously you need to respect one another, and part of that is respecting the things people own.

While it might feel tempting to chuck away your spouse's, children's or flat mate's belongings for them, it is important that you involve them in the decluttering process and allow them to choose for themselves what possessions make them happy. Not only is this ethically right, but if you want to keep the home in a tidy status quo moving forward, then everyone who shares that space needs to believe in the same values as you, ie only keep things that make you feel happy, learn to appreciate what you have, and every item you choose to cherish deserves its own spot where it now belongs.

By aligning your values, mentality and drive, the onus won't just be on you to sort things. You'll be a team you'll achieve more than a tidy home – you'll forge a life built on love, compassion, forgiveness, compromise, friendship, and more.



VISUAL REMINDER

Make a list of all the values that are most important to you and your family then display them in whatever creative fashion takes your fancy. Alongside respect, consider: dedication, patience, courtesy, gratitude, commitment, belief in others, forgiveness, appreciation, and togetherness.

LEARN IT YOUNG

Sit down with your children one at a time and ask them to place all their clothes in one pile. Tell them to hold an item and explain how it makes them feel. They'll soon learn, as you did, how to instinctively recognise what to keep and what to let go. Remember that you're there simply as an observer, you must respect their choices. It's important to be patient too; this is a new experience for them and could take some time. By encouraging your child to do this it will help to increase their, confidence, decision-making and independence.

LET THE BAD FEELINGS GO

Just as it's important to let go of physical things you don't need, the same is true emotionally. Emotions such as anger, resentment, guilt and self-loathing take away from your happiness, so learn to let them go. Just saying 'I forgive you', can really help.

EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT YOUR VALUES. WHAT OTHER VALUES ARE IMPORTANT TO LIVE BY? DO YOU LIVE BY THEM NOW?

BEING IS BELIEVING

What kind of person do you think you are? If your answers are self-deprecating ones such as, 'I'm bad at organising', or 'I'm useless', you must change how you view yourself. To attain success you need to believe you're worthy of success. Now, what kind of person do you want to be? Then be that person! The only person able to stop you is you.

"To attain success you need to believe you're worthy of success."



LEARN TO LIVE YOUR LIFE BY YOUR CHOSEN VALUES. DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE?

Even the most secure, seemingly happy individuals have room to grow, but whoever you are and however you feel, potential starts with the smallest change

Imagining how you want your life, your home, and even yourself to be is one thing, but making it happen is something else entirely. The good news is it can be done, you just have to choose to make a start. For some people that means making a change.

To truly change, you not only have to want to change, but believe that you're capable of it. Often the desire is there but the belief is not. To combat this, you need to spend some time working on improving how you see yourself and in doing so, boost your self-esteem.

As is the case with decluttering, do this in small steps and take one thing at a time. Begin by moving. Literally. Exercise, regardless of how light or little, is proven to boost your mood and motivation. The more you do, the better you feel in your mind, as well as your body. Next up, really look after yourself. This means drinking enough water (approximately two litres a day), eating right (whole rather than processed foods, especially fruit, veg and protein), and getting between seven and nine hours of sleep a night. Spend less time online and living your life virtually, and more time in the real world with people who matter to you. Put effort into the activities you enjoy, and indulge in 'me' time without feeling guilty. The more you do this, the more you'll convince yourself you're worthy of it and do deserve good things. With your self-worth buoyed you'll begin to believe that you're capable of achieving what you want, that you can cope with change, that you can declutter your home, and that you can live your life by the values you believe to be important.

WRITE DOWN HOW YOU NEED TO CHANGE THE WAY YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE AND HOW THIS WILL HELP YOU PERSONALLY ON YOUR DECLUTTERING JOURNEY.

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BELIEVE IN THE BUZZ

If you won't listen to other people that change is good, then listen to your instincts. Notice that buzz of satisfaction you have when you get rid of something you no longer need. It feels good, right? That feeling means you're doing the right thing. Enjoy it, let it feed your positivity and boost your self-esteem. You're good at this and you're changing for the better.

"Spend less time online and living your life virtually, and more time in the real world with people who matter to you"

WHAT MEANS THE MOST TO YOU IN YOUR LIFE?

The things we own can feel important, but ask yourself, are they the most important things in your life? For most people the answer is no, but for people who have a clutter problem that might not be the case

Often day to day routines take up so much of your time that it's easy to forget what's actually important, from spending time with loved ones to giving yourself some 'me' time. Accumulating possessions can mimic the feeling those things can give you, that excited buzz that makes you feel as though you've achieved something. But you haven't.

By really looking at your life, you can determine what is actually important to you, and hopefully you can begin to realise that your possessions aren't. Putting your life in context will help you to gain some perspective, which in turn encourages a more positive mindset when getting rid of things you no longer need.

Start by thinking about all the things that give your life purpose; family, friends, relationships, perhaps work or education, how about leisurely or energetic pursuits? Imagine yourself in your old age looking back on your life, what sort of experiences do you see yourself having? What are the things you think you'd wish you'd done more of, and those that might matter less. Perhaps you long to travel or accomplish something creative, like writing a book or composing a piece of music. Write all these things down and add to them when something new arises or your tastes or lifestyle change.

There's no pressure to achieve these things right now, instead set yourself some short- and long-term goals, but be realistic with how long things take. For now, though, concentrate on getting your house in order. The last thing you want to do before taking on a large mission like decluttering is to pile on more stress. The idea of the list is to use it to put your possessions into context. Once you're aware of what truly matters in your life you can begin by shedding yourself of the things that aren't. Then you're free to spend all the time you want on completing the rest of your list, with 'declutter home' checked off.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND YOUR NEEDS – WHAT THINGS DO YOU NEED TO BE HAPPY?

Friends, family, love, health and happiness are likely to be the most important parts of your life, but the things we own can have a special place too

Nineteenth century artist and designer William Morris once said, “have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful,” and the sentiment is as true today as it was then. But unlike life almost 200 years ago, mass production, the internet and moderately disposable incomes have meant you can acquire possessions much easier and at a much faster rate than your ancestors. Combine that with your instinct to rejoice at gain and grieve loss, and it’s no wonder you have a house full of clutter.

Imagine for a second that your house was on fire, what possessions would you carry out to safety? Likewise, if you were stranded on a desert island what items would you need to survive? These hypotheticals may seem silly, but they can actually offer an insight into what you deem most important to you and therefore what you really want to keep, as well as the things you consider ‘essential’ and so, need to keep. By extrapolating this thought process to the things you own will help you declutter. Hold each item and ask yourself ‘do I really want or need this?’ ‘Is this important to me and my life?’ ‘Does this item make me happy?’

Be completely honest and you should have your answer immediately. If there’s a hesitation it could be that you want to say no, but something is holding you back, perhaps guilt or reluctance for thinking about discarding an item that holds sentimental or monetary value. If this is the case, you have your answer, it has become a burden and no longer important. Your happiness is much more important than an object. What’s more, you don’t have to trash everything! Sell what you can and use the money to buy something that is important instead, or better still, spend it on a day out or holiday with the most important people in your life.

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM OBJECTS

You are not your possessions. Likewise, the things you own do not define your identity; you are still you without them. Don't hang onto things just because you feel they 'say' something about who you are or do things that make you the person you want to be. Only keep something if it makes you happy.

GET MOVING

If you're stuck for ideas for your 'most important' list, just get moving... literally. Exercise can improve positivity and creativity, two things you'll find essential when putting your life under a microscope. It doesn't have to be a 5km bike ride or an hour-long iron pumping session, even a brisk walk around the block will do the trick.

NEW LEASE OF LIFE

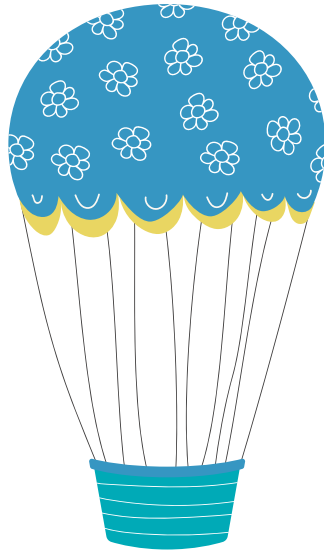
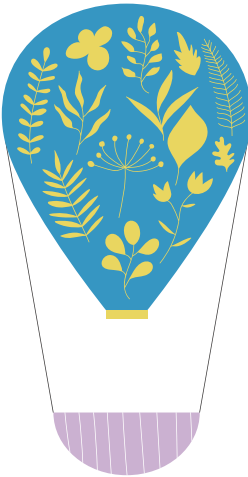
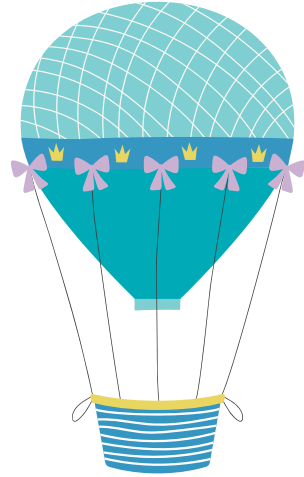
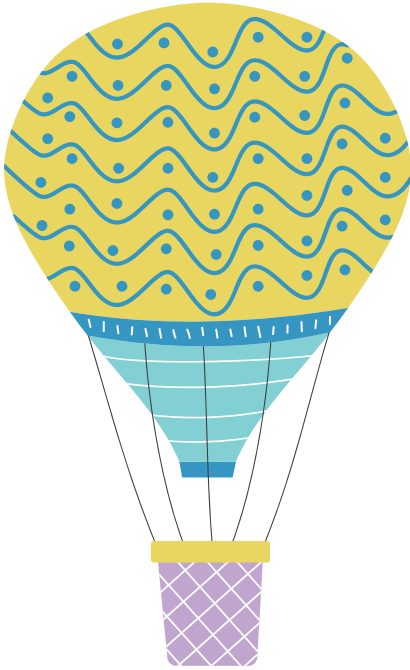
If ditching you stuff is tearing you up inside just find a positive way of letting it go. Could you give an item to a friend? Donate to charity? Repurpose or upcycle it into something you or someone else might want? Why not sell it and use the money to do something that's on your list?

WRITE DOWN THE 10 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO YOU IN YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW.

- | | | | |
|---|-------|----|-------|
| 1 | ..... | 6 | ..... |
| 2 | ..... | 7 | ..... |
| 3 | ..... | 8 | ..... |
| 4 | ..... | 9 | ..... |
| 5 | ..... | 10 | ..... |

THE THREE Cs OF GETTING STUFF DONE

American psychologist Salvatore Maddi said that the combination of three attitudes (challenge, control and commitment) can help us achieve things we might not want to, or believe that we can, do. First challenge how you view a stressful situation, such as decluttering, and choose to see it more as an opportunity than a problem. Secondly take control of the situation, don't allow yourself to be swept along without focus. Finally, commit to the task and commit to change.



WHY ARE YOU EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY TO DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE?

Everyone has times when they feel like the clutter is too much to handle. So be clear about why you want to declutter and you'll be back on track in no time

You've chosen to declutter your house not simply because you want a tidy, organised home – that's just a bonus. The actual prize is so much more than that.

You'll learn who you really are and who you want to be. You'll discover what you love and what you can live without. You'll become a stronger version of yourself with a sense of purpose, higher self-esteem and greater confidence, especially in making tough decisions and reacting to change. You'll reduce your stress and anxiety, which in turn will improve your mental and physical health, not to mention boost your creative and energy levels too. By taking this journey you'll achieve something you didn't think you could do before, something that was in control of you, and now you'll be in control of it.

This journey will teach you to recognise what clutter is. Yes, there are the obvious clutter culprits; broken items, things that don't fit and stuff that you've kept 'just in case' or because you feel as though you 'have' to. But there's so much more you can shed. For example: anything that doesn't bring you joy, anything you don't want, and anything you no longer need. Decluttering is just as much learning to cherish what you keep, as it is about thanking and letting go of what you don't.

So what triggered your change in direction, why do you want to declutter and why now? Maybe you've reached breaking point mentally in terms of the stress caused by clutter, and/or physically have no space left to live. Perhaps your children, spouse or someone else who lived with you has moved on and you're ready to let their things go. It could be you're moving, downsizing, or making space for someone else to move in. Or you just feel that decluttering will give you back control. Whatever the reason, decluttering is never a negative experience. As long as you tune into your instincts and act on the impulse of cherishing or letting go, you'll achieve what you set out to do, and finish the job.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS PERFECT

No one is perfect. That's a fact. So accept that you're not perfect and move on. You don't have to get rid of everything, nor does your home need to be immaculate. You just have to do the best you can do, and aim to meet your standards, not live up to someone else's. Life doesn't have to be black or white, tidy or messy... just find peace in the grey.

TIME MANAGEMENT

As with any journey, you can only move one step at a time. Set aside an hour or so every evening, or a particular weekend. Be realistic with how long your decluttering plans will take and don't give up if it ends up taking longer than you initially predicted. The important thing is to keep going. If you're doing a bit each day rather than at the weekend, make sure you keep to it, just keep that momentum going.

WHY DID YOU PICK UP THIS BOOK? SIT DOWN FOR A MOMENT AND CONSIDER WHAT MADE YOU BUY A BOOK ON DECLUTTERING.

WHAT IS YOUR LONG-TERM
DECLUTTERING GOAL?

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WRITE DOWN 5 EXPECTATIONS THAT YOU HAVE
FOR YOUR DECLUTTERING JOURNEY.

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DECLUTTER YOUR HOME

Begin this journey with your material possessions and learn to discard everything that doesn't add to your life and make you happy



REFLECT ON YOUR HOME

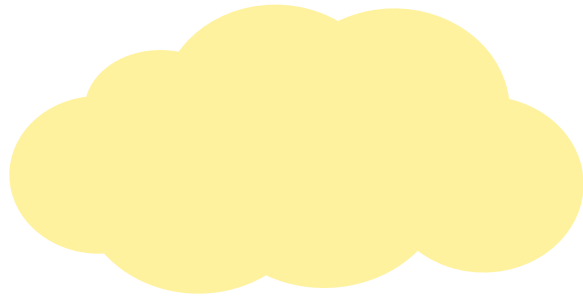
Take a moment to yourself now and wander slowly through your home. Turn everything off. Don't be distracted by your television, music or radio, and leave your mobile phone behind

Take a deep breath and focus on what you see and your emotions. Observe everything. Carefully consider each room and how you feel as you enter them. You might be the tidiest person in the world, but you most certainly have clutter lurking somewhere – something you'd like to change, move, reorganise or get rid of.

The next few exercises are essential. They will help you to understand why you have begun this decluttering journey. Make sure that you refer back to these pages as you progress and remind yourself of the why.

WHICH ROOM IN YOUR HOME DO YOU DISLIKE THE MOST? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE?

WHAT KIND OF CLUTTER DO YOU HAVE THE MOST OF?



DEALING WITH GUILT

We need to retrain our brains when decluttering; our primary emotion may be one of guilt, and guilt isn't always the most helpful of emotions

Our belongings, regardless of how long we've owned them, have emotions and memories attached to them. We may feel a mix of guilt, relief and worry when decluttering.

WHY DO WE FEEL GUILT?

Guilt comes in many ways and forms. It is primarily an emotion but it isn't a good motivator. Annoyingly there isn't one root cause for guilt, as with so many other emotions. Guilt often occurs when we believe, whether correctly or not, that we have caused harm to another. Guilt can be internally focused as well as external. We feel guilt that we have wasted money, time and space on clutter that we should not have bought in the first place, especially if we now view it as a non-essential. Be kind to yourself and remember that the items we have in our home have had a purpose at one time or another, and we may have simply outgrown their usefulness.

When decluttering, you may feel that ridding yourself of something is an affront to the person who gave it to you, that they will find out and judge you.



UNUSED GIFTS:

Remember that the things you get rid of are just things; they aren't the people you love or the memories attached to them. Donating, selling or gifting an item that you have been gifted is not a rejection of the person who gave it to you. Your memories may be triggered by an item of clutter but they are not attached by an unbreakable bond; you won't lose these memories when you lose the item.

As a counterpoint to your sensitivities consider whether the gift giver may have forgotten they gave it to you. Take a moment to try to remember the last few gifts you gave them. The gift giver, most certainly, wouldn't want their gift to cause you worry. So try to release these guilty feelings when decluttering; they may be causing you more stress than the actual thing!

'SOMEDAY' ITEMS:

Do you find that you have held onto clutter because it may come in useful 'someday', or because you may fit into a piece of clothing one day? You very well may. This isn't a set thing, but that doesn't mean it's worth holding onto for the rest of your life. This is as true for small things like pens and pencils as it is for larger items that can be hired or borrowed, such as specialist sporting equipment.

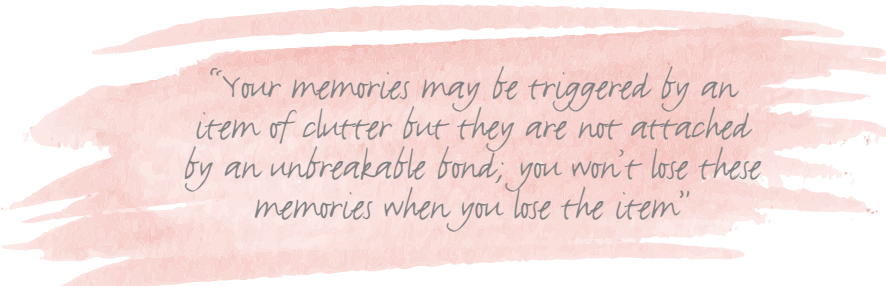
If you find yourself worrying about changing your mind once you have thrown something out, have a think about when you last used the item, or wore the piece of clothing. It may sound harsh but if you haven't used it recently you're unlikely to in the future. Instead, pass the item directly onto someone who will use it, or donate it and let the new owner find it. If this seems unthinkable, give yourself a timed grace period. Box up the items and store them out of sight, set a reminder to decide on the fate of the clutter within six months to a year. If you haven't gone searching for them or can't remember what they were, you don't need them. Absolve the guilt.

BENEFITS OF DECLUTTERING

By selling items you can recoup some cash, which is more than you had when the item was cluttering up your space. Try to imagine that you are paying a fee every month to store your junk; you'd want to stop paying for this as soon as possible, especially as you aren't using the items.

Regular decluttering makes cleaning your house easier, simply because there are less things to move around. Decluttering also makes you physically aware of your belongings. You have to handle them to know whether to keep or dump them. If you assess what you own you are less likely to buy multiples or replacements because you know exactly what you have and also where to find it.

Decluttering isn't an all or nothing task, it is a process that you may have to restart more than once. This isn't a reason to beat yourself up or feel guilty. You've made a start... keep at it!



"Your memories may be triggered by an item of clutter but they are not attached by an unbreakable bond; you won't lose these memories when you lose the item"



SUNK COST

It's difficult when decluttering to get past the feeling that you don't want to waste the money that you spent on an item. Remember the money has already been spent. Sunk cost is what you've already spent on the item and you don't recoup when donating, dumping or gifting it. Either use this as an incentive to start using the item or get rid of it; you aren't going to get your money's worth by not using it.

DON'T TURN OFF YOUR EMOTIONS

There is nothing wrong with the sting of saying goodbye to an item but don't keep it from allowing you to let go of clutter. Often things that were perfect for you, even not so long ago, may no longer work for you. Ask yourself whether you would buy it again today precisely for this reason.



HOW TO START DECLUTTERING YOUR HOME

If your wardrobe won't shut, you've got enough spices in the kitchen to set up a curry house, and your paperwork resembles Mount Kilimanjaro, it's time to take action.

Stuff. In an age of conspicuous consumption, although we may always want it, we generally already have too much of it.

Clutter is simply having more stuff than we use, need or have space for. For someone who regularly wears and loves high heels, 15 pairs may not be clutter, for someone who never does, even one pair is. It isn't the same as untidiness, although when a home is cluttered, it is virtually impossible to keep tidy. And often it accumulates over a period, so you may not notice just how bad it's got until a transitional time such as moving house or redecorating.

WHY DECLUTTER

Besides being difficult to live in physically, dealing with clutter on a daily basis can affect other areas of your life and be very draining on a personal level. If you'd rather die than offer anyone a lift because the car is a mobile rubbish bin, simple admin tasks mean long hunts for relevant documents, and you end up missing a gym class because you failed to locate both trainers, you get the picture. Cluttered surroundings can have an impact on how we feel about ourselves and result in a cluttered mindset.

On the other hand, decluttering frees up valuable time, space and emotional energy. When your surroundings are lighter and brighter, your mind and spirits get an instant boost.



GET TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

When the realisation you need to declutter hits, it is worth asking yourself a few questions. When did the clutter start building, what kind of clutter is it and how is it affecting you? What has stopped you tackling it before? What difference will getting rid of it make? Truthful answers can help you declutter more effectively as well as help avoid it building up again.

As an example, one writer realised they had managed to accumulate every publication they had ever had a feature published in – for the best part of 20 years. For them this represented their career and achievements but it was also taking up most of a spare room. Their solution was to edit this down to what would fit on one row of a bookshelf. This one small decision immediately freed up considerable space in an area previously piled high with boxes.

Similarly, people may hang onto wardrobes full of clothes that haven't fit for years 'just in case', or have a special egg-boiling gadget and more than half a dozen eggcups littering up a cupboard when they live on their own and prefer scrambled.

There's usually a reason for knowingly hanging onto things we don't need or use and often that involves an attachment to another time, place or person. Working out what this is, be it an ideal weight, or memories of a big family breakfasting together, can help you realise what you are really holding onto and conversely, help you let it go.

BACK TO BASICS

There's no getting away from the fact that if your home has got into a very cluttered state over a number of years, it will likely take some weeks (even months), plenty of motivation and a definite plan of action to reverse the trend. Decide on an amount of time you can realistically spend, be that six hours at a weekend or even just half an hour a day, put it in your diary and stick to it. Create an atmosphere you find personally motivating, be that rock music or classical piano and gather together the things you need, such as bin bags, a paper shredder or boxes to organise items.

Enlist a friend if you feel you'd benefit from objectivity (handy in the case of a wardrobe declutter) or some physical help with moving heavy items and offer to take them out to lunch as a thank you (or perhaps they would like some of the things you're getting rid of – win win!)

MEMORY LANE, NOT DRAIN

Where clutter is a result of holding onto things for sentimental reasons, it can be incredibly difficult to give them up. A widow or widower who sees every item as symbolising a previous partner and their life together can easily end up with several rooms full of stuff they no longer need. If a downsize is called for it can then feel quite traumatic to deal with.

If you have lost someone special or are cherishing a whole crateload of artwork from numerous grandchildren, buy an attractive (but not ludicrously large) box for memories of that person or people and prioritise the most important things to go into it. You should be able to fit several of these boxes, along with wedding and special photo albums, into an ottoman or storage chest that becomes your designated nostalgia zone. Just don't fill it up and be tempted to buy another two!

SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

If every room in the house is heaving with clutter it can be hard knowing where to start. Target an area where you'll see a difference quickly, such as a hallway or bookshelf, to provide an instant sense of achievement and spur you on. This is preferable to starting on a larger mission where you risk ending up feeling overwhelmed and give up.



GET THE GEAR

Have the following to hand when decluttering:

- Strong bin bags for obvious rubbish and recycling
- At least four different boxes marked 'Charity', 'Friends', 'Sell', and 'Keep.' (When you've filled them, be sure to action these boxes promptly rather than leaving them sitting there for weeks. Anything you keep also needs to be put away properly)
- A shredder for personal paperwork that you no longer need
- A file with different sections (car, home insurance etc) so important documents can be filed immediately rather than shifted around.
- A suitcase, clothes protector bags and scented sachets for seasonal wardrobe decluttering.

TURN CLUTTER INTO CASH

Give yourself an extra incentive by turning unwanted items into cash. Do a car boot sale (providing you can trust yourself not to end up buying)! What doesn't sell can go straight into bags and be taken to a charity shop. Or for more valuable or specialist items, set aside a few hours to list them on eBay or Gumtree.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HOARDER AND COLLECTOR? WHICH ARE YOU?

When the things you own start to feel as though they own you, it could be time to make a change

If you're someone who can't help but buy – often in excess of what you truly need – and find it near impossible to part with things, it's likely you are a bit of a hoarder. A collector, on the other hand, is someone who seeks specific items they have an interest in, for example antiques, books or stamps. Some collectors take great pride in their acquisitions, which are often accumulated at great expense, and so tend to be more fussy in what they acquire and vigilant when dealing with clutter, to ensure nothing detracts from the presentation of their collection. Not always, however, as some people who 'collect' become addicted to the feeling acquiring brings. Hoarders often accumulate so much that items no longer have a designated spot, and instead end up anywhere in the home, which results in piles of all kinds of clutter, eating into space and potentially hindering activities like eating and sleeping, not to mention cleaning and personal hygiene.

One of the reasons a person becomes a hoarder is because they live by the mantra 'just in case' and hang onto things because they believe there may come a time in their life when they need to use the item. In reality this is less likely than they may think, what's more, because hoarders don't usually organise their possessions, it may be impossible to locate the required item when the opportunity to use it arises. In fact, the 'just in case' mentality is a sign of anxiety. Learning to trust that you'll be able to cope without the items in your home is the first step in combating hoarding behaviour.

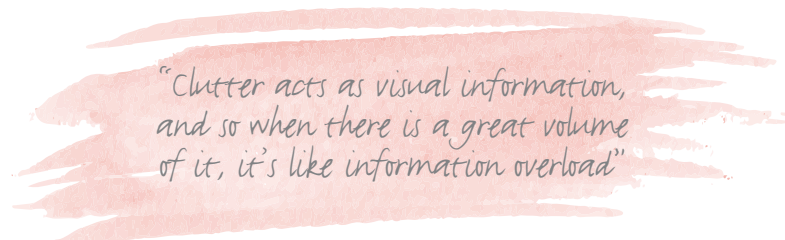
The problem many hoarders and excessive collectors face when they decide to declutter is that there is just so much to get through. Clutter acts as visual information, and so when there is a great volume of it, it's like information overload and you feel stressed, overwhelmed and beaten before you've even begun. The way to tackle the bulk of the items is to take each object at a time.

A FRIEND IN NEED

If you're a hoarder, decluttering may be harder for you than most, but it can work as long as you're honest with yourself about what you really need. Don't be afraid to ask a friend for assistance. They can help you to see the reality of the situation when your emotion or fear gets in the way of making rational choices.

JUST SAY NO

Moving forward, aim to be more conscious of the items you bring into your home. Learn to view 'maybe one day', as a no and only add something to a collection if it truly excites you and you have the room. How about a one in, one out method to maintain balance? Only buy things when you actually need them. If you're still unsure, think about what you want to achieve – a tidy house and less stress. Is this item worth compromising on that? The more you practice this, the stronger your will, will become.



"Clutter acts as visual information, and so when there is a great volume of it, it's like information overload"





MOVING ROOM BY ROOM

Decluttering a house is a massive undertaking. Make the process easier by breaking it down into rooms, then into areas and specific functions of those rooms

Clearing the clutter we have learnt to live with can initially seem like an insurmountable task. So start small. By breaking the house down into manageable chunks, the jobs will become easier.

Before you begin, reflect on how you got to a cluttered state. For instance, are you getting rid of clothes because they no longer fit or because you bought poorly? Clutter is a modern problem.

If you think to your grandparents' generation, they bought once and well or went without. Wastage is also a very modern problem; we waste food, clothes and books if we don't use them. This is not good news for the planet as we continue to consume mindlessly.

Being aware of how and why you clutter means you can change your habits. If not, you'll have to declutter once you are snowed under again. What are the underlying problems you need to tackle to prevent clutter? Are you overwhelmed with laundry to put away or children's drawings? Proper homes for items can help. 'Homeless' items are the biggest component of clutter. These are things that have no true place, either due to a lack of necessity or lack of storage. You need to be ruthless when categorising clutter. Many decluttering experts feel you should not hold onto something for a 'someday' situation. We all have items that are aspirational, such as crockery we save for 'best'. By not using it you're saying you're not worthy of it. Use the good stuff, even if you're worried about its monetary value, it has no value hidden away. Value can also be a barrier to removing items you don't use anymore. The sunk cost fallacy makes us feel we are wasting the money we spent on an item if we get rid of it. Remember the money has already been spent, and you're actually wasting that money by not using it or passing it along to someone who will use it.

Decluttering is not a one and done job, it will require constant maintenance. But by blitzing through the house, room by room, you set yourself up for success.

WELCOME IN

Entryways, porches and hallways are often the first impression we give of our homes, and a cluttered space is usually not the impression we want to give

Clutter as a first impression may be an embarrassing or stressful thing to arrive home to. The last thing we want after a long day is to return to a room or space that is heaving with clutter; not to mention a tripping hazard!

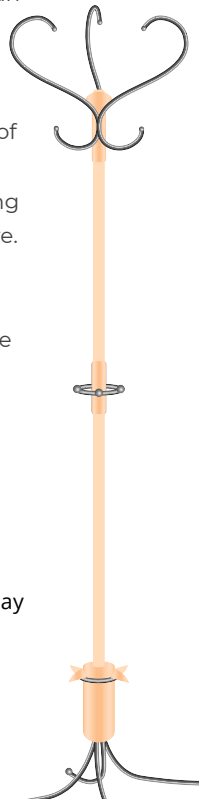
Entryways can easily become cluttered; guests bring their own items, family members tend to dump shoes and coats in the rush to get into the house, and things on the way out of the house can often end up getting left in the entryway.

Before you start pulling coats, scarves and shoes out of the space, take a moment to look at what is getting left there. Are these items truly homeless or are they just being put there out of laziness? Time to work with the rest of the family to 'train out' these bad habits. As with all decluttering work this is an on-going task; a quick collection of owned items can become a daily chore.

Also ask yourself if the storage you have is doing its job. If you cannot find something you're looking for, multiples may be bought; wasting your money and taking up more space! Storage for your entryway, as a public space, should be both useful and attractive.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF FOR A WEEK

Only hang one coat per person in your entryway. What do you find yourself searching for, or what are you not wearing? This may make you reconsider what is actually needed.



GETTING UNDER YOUR FEET

An entry space can quickly get cluttered with footwear – here are some tips to avoid this...

- Pull all the footwear out of the space, clean the area and then sort.
- Check the condition of the footwear, get good pieces repaired or cleaned. It is also a good time to check the sizes on children's shoes.
- Take a look at the seasonality of the footwear. Is there an alternative space that off-season footwear can be stored until it's needed?
- Time to sort out, be ruthless, and ask why are these shoes here? As with so much decluttering, it isn't always about getting rid of things, but finding the right home for the items.
- Think about storage, is your current solution not working or are there just too many shoes? There is a massive variety of footwear storage available; take a look at the space you have and decide on the primary function that you need addressing.

CAN I TAKE YOUR COAT?

Coat racks can become a dumping ground in the rush to get in

As with shoes, take a look at the condition and fit of the coats that are on the rack. How many coats do you need (not want) in the vicinity of the front door? Be a little ruthless here, you're not getting rid of anything just yet, just streamlining your space. When you can start culling, make up some piles and categorise; store, donate, recycle. If any garments are worn out or broken, don't donate them. If you can't remember when you wore it, it's time for it to go.

Also when culling, try to take into account the seasonality of the coats that are hung up. Of course this is difficult if you live in a place with unpredictable weather patterns! Can you be creative with storage for winter or summer coats in the off season? Also consider whether you need to leave some space for guest coats.



SPACE TO LIVE

Living rooms have a variety of uses; playroom, cinema and reception space

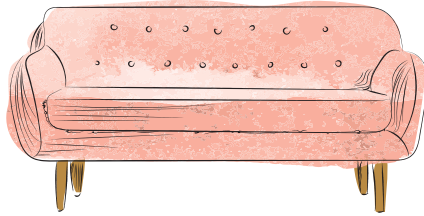
Take into account your use of the room, our homes are personal and the way we use rooms is too. Your living room may be the heart of the house, where you relax and spend family time, or you may centre your social time around the kitchen, meaning that the living room is a more formal space or just used in the evening.

When you begin your decluttering journey in the living room, take a moment to observe where the pinch points are, where does clutter accumulate and what does this clutter consist of? Depending on how you best work, get some music on and start the hard work. Begin by removing items that do not belong in the living room.

When you are faced with a tricky item, ask yourself, 'where would I look for this item?' and 'would I know I already have one?'. This will help guide you where to place something and even if you need to hold onto it.

Clear surfaces; get those sorted, cleaning as you go, and away to where they belong and then dig deeper into shelves, drawers and units. Be honest with yourself and ruthless with the clutter; do you really need all those books, magazines, DVDs or video games?

You will need to be firm with the purpose with your living room to ensure you aren't drowning in clutter the next time you look around.



Another strategy that may help you declutter, if you have the room for storage, is a time capsule of sorts. If you cannot bear to part from something, put it in a box, seal it up and keep it for six months to a year. If you haven't needed or missed it in that time, donate it without opening up the box.

Banish toys and games to children's rooms or a playroom if you have it. Each child can take ownership of a caddy with a handle; so they make it a habit to take their things back to their rooms once they're done or before bed. Realistically some children's toys may remain, but work on some clever storage so you can reclaim the living room once they are in bed. Baskets can work for quick tidying, however you do need to walk that fine line between useful storage and more clutter. You may also need to ask why you're holding onto clutter. If the answer is 'I don't know', get ready to let it go.

Large bulky furniture pieces can feel cluttered, as well as attracting clutter. If you're feeling brave, consider removing bulky coffee tables or look for streamlined alternatives, built-in storage is a big plus! If you are feeling pushed for space could you downsize on the seating? Many charities will happily collect donated furniture, although be aware that soft furnishings should only be donated if they still retain their fire label.

The living room will be one of the most challenging rooms to keep tidy, simply because we use it on a daily basis! You will need to declutter here regularly, constantly assessing what is being used. Clutter creep is real, so try to commit to only bringing in high-quality items that serve a needed purpose. That way you probably won't find that you are throwing it away in six months!

NO ROOM FOR COFFEE

Try to clear the coffee table every day, as you would make your bed

Flat surfaces have a way of attracting clutter; it still appears easier to dump the things than put them back where they (should) belong. Pull everything off the coffee table and take a hard look at what is cluttering it. What issue are you needing to handle after taking the items back to where they belong? If you find that books clutter up the surfaces in the living room, take a look at your storage needs and whether you can make room for these books by culling unnecessary books. If toys are the main culprit of clutter it may be time to take a look at the storage solutions you use already and also time to talk with the children in your house!

If old glasses or crockery are cluttering up the coffee table, make a new rule that used kitchen things need to be removed from the room whenever the person using it leaves the room.

PHYSICAL MEDIA

Tackle those shelves of CDs, DVDs and video games you no longer use

- It's easy to want to hold onto CDs and DVDs after investing time and money. Take a hard and honest look at them, start by asking if you have an easy way to play them. If not, download the CDs to your computer and donate the hard copy.
- Sort the media into piles, keep your favourites and be ruthless; if you own it on another platform/format then don't keep another copy.
- If organising video games, ask when it was last used and whether you will replay the game. There are specialist charities that receive donated consoles for hospital wards.
- If you want to hold onto a movie, try removing it from the plastic case and keep it in a 'movie' sleeve to save space. Each sleeve has space for two DVDs or CDS. These sleeves can then be tidied into a box.

CUSHIONS, BLANKETS AND THROWS

While cushions and throws can make a room look cosy, too many just becomes clutter

- Strip the sofa of all cushions and blankets. Clean the sofa and underneath if you can.
- Check over the cushions and blankets for damage and dirt – do any cushions need to be cleaned, repaired or restuffed?
- Generally three-seater sofas can be overwhelmed by cushion arrangements of more than five. Are cushions getting in the way?
- Take a look at the blankets you have, how many do you use or need? Try to find some storage for during the summer.
- To reduce visual clutter on the sofa, try to stick to a 2:2:1 rule; two large cushions on the outside, two smaller ones nestled into the previous and a centrepiece in the middle.

BRIC-A-BRAC

How to ensure that decorative items such as ornaments don't become clutter

By starting with a fresh slate we can identify what we value around our living room, and what has just become background noise. Clear the surfaces of ornaments, give the shelves a clean, and clean the ornaments too. Ask yourself why are you holding onto it? Personal collections and heirlooms are obviously important, so give these items pride of place to demonstrate the value you've ascribed to them. That way special ornaments don't get 'lost in the mix'. Anything you feel ambivalent about should be donated or gifted. You can set up a group chat or text with friends or members of your family to offer items that you think they'd appreciate. Anything that has been earmarked for donation should be out of your house as soon as you are able.

THE HEART OF THE HOME

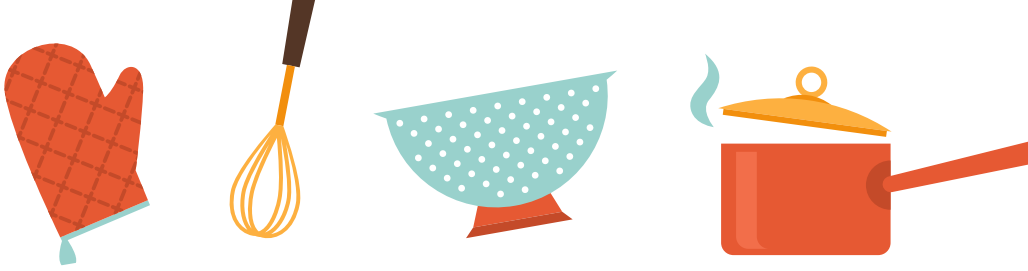
If you are a keen cook you will spend more time here than someone who grabs food and goes, yet clutter helps no-one achieve what they need to in a kitchen

Your kitchen should work for you. Ask yourself, what do you use it for? Do your children do homework here, or do you entertain in the kitchen (kitchens at parties are always the most interesting spot). Keeping the kitchen decluttered, clean and tidy is a challenge because so many activities can take place there.

Take a look at your kitchen, are the countertops full of gadgets that you rarely use or are you struggling under mountains of washing up? This may seem overwhelming but start with one area at a time; one drawer, one cupboard, and give yourself time to sort properly. Organise like with like and ask yourself: is this a duplicate? A cluttered kitchen means you cannot find that one thing you need to make dinner and you may find yourself picking up another one when at the shop. Kitchen gadgets are enormous space invaders, especially when you consider how much time you spend using them. Is the value of the counter space worth more than a machine you don't use every day? If you find yourself struggling to remember when you last used the gadget, donate, gift, dump or sell! We all struggle to get rid of things that could prove to be useful. It sounds harsh but if it hasn't been useful in the past, the chances are that it won't be in the future. We can ask ourselves 'would I buy this today?' when decluttering in the kitchen. Does it make your kitchen life easier? Again, your home is personal to you and what is useful to you may not seem useful to others. That being said, if an appliance does a job that something else you already own can do, donate or dump it.

To help cut down on multiples of crockery and glasses, get your family in the habit of immediately washing up and you won't need so many multiples. This will also cut down on the clutter of dirty dishes piling up in the sink!

Another barrier to getting rid of things is a sunk-cost fallacy. Remember that if you aren't using the thing you bought, it has no value



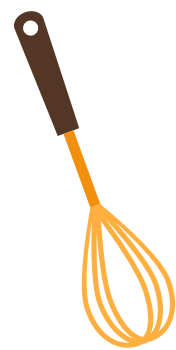
now. Pause before impulse buying a fashionable gadget; is there something already in your kitchen that can do this job?

By going through your kitchen regularly and handling your belongings you get a better sense of what you already own. This is true for food as well as tools and gadgets. Food waste is a thing we should all be aware of, around a third of food produced is wasted and an untidy fridge and larder directly contributes to this; we don't know what we have so we buy more, not using the items we have already, which eventually have to be thrown out.

Kitchen decor should be kept to a minimum; we've all experienced that weird sticky film that can build up in kitchens. Having a kitchen full of fiddly little objects is not only annoying when it comes to cleaning, but can actually be a little unhygienic.

TACKLING THE FRIDGE

Instead of handling the clutter in your fridge by stripping out the whole fridge, which can be costly in terms of spoilt food, try organising shelf by shelf. Remove a shelf and everything on it. Start at the top, cleaning the body of the fridge as well as the shelf supports. Clean the removable shelves and take a look at the items on them, are they all in date/within 'used by' recommendations? Once everything is clean and old food has been binned, it's time to organise. Plastic baskets, or even food storage containers without lids can be used to hold cheeses or loose fruit, etc. Try to organise your fridge by food type; upper shelves should be reserved for things that do not need cooking, middle shelves for dairy, bottom shelf for meat and fish and the drawers for fruit and vegetables. The door is the warmest area of the fridge, so products with natural preservatives can be kept here.



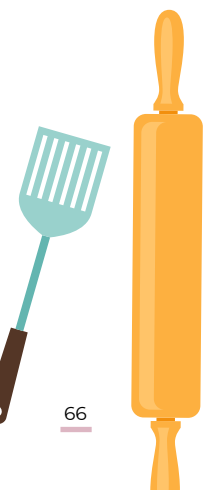
RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

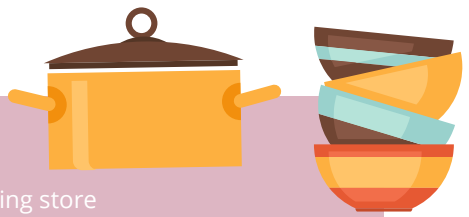
Give yourself some time to rifle through your cookbooks and ask yourself when you last used it. Are you holding onto a book just for one or two recipes? If you are, take a picture of the relevant pages or copy the recipe out and then donate the book. Cooking magazines can also clutter up a kitchen really easily. Tear out the recipes you use or will be trying, store them in a folder or accordion file and then recycle the magazine.

If you're holding onto recipe books in the hope of using them, give yourself a deadline and experiment, if you don't hit the deadline, donate the book!

ORGANISE UTENSILS

- Pull out all your utensils and group them on the countertops by type. How many of each do you really need?
- Take a look at the condition of the utensils; anything that is broken should be thrown out. You can always replace it with a better quality version.
- If you find yourself overwhelmed with multiples, make a pledge to yourself to make your things last; instead of buying more knives, get them sharpened and keep them sharp.
- Many small items perform more than one job; keep this in mind when you're tempted at the store by a new wonder gadget.
- Consider a one in one out rule. If you've been dealing with multiples in a kitchen, ask yourself whether you have a reason to have 25 forks. The same is relevant for plates, if you don't entertain large dinner parties regularly you have no need to keep so many plates.





WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Wasted food is an epidemic. Stockpiling store cupboard food doesn't help

- It's easy to miss used-by dates if you cannot see the food that you have in your cupboards. This means the food (and your money) is wasted.
- Take out all of your cupboard foodstuffs and group by type. Take a look at the items you have stockpiled; are these your frequently eaten items or are you stocking up on things you don't actually use? Be aware of 'aspirational' items; do you have good intentions to try new things but resort to your regular meals? Bring these items to the fore of the cupboard; if you can see them, you're more likely to use them.
- Treat your food cupboards and larders as a shop. How can you make it easier for you to 'shop' your own cupboard?
- If you have found that you are in the habit of stockpiling, use up food that is languishing on the shelf before you buy a replacement.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH PANS

Unless you're a professional chef handling multiple sauces at once, you may have too many pans

- Pull your pots and pans out, are you dealing with multiples? Ask yourself how often you use more than one frying pan.
- Dump any non-stick pan that is losing its coating. While the jury is out as to whether this is dangerous to your health, the last thing you want in your food is black flakes.
- Stack like with like and stick to it. It is easy to just throw clean pots and pans in the cupboard, yet you will curse your past self for being lazy when all the pans fall out regularly.
- Lids can be sorted into organisers mounted on the door of a cupboard or upright in a rack.
- Small tension rods installed vertically in a cupboard can organise cutting mats and baking trays as well as frying pans and lids.

CREATE AN IDEAL BEDROOM

Bedrooms should be an oasis of calm. The last thing we need when getting ready for the day or for a good night's sleep is clutter, hiding the essentials

Bedrooms can become a dumping ground for clutter as they are usually a space that guests rarely see. If you share your bedroom try to tackle the decluttering together – you have shared ownership of the room so you should share the responsibility.

Take a look at your bedroom, what kinds of clutter are you dealing with? Dirty or clean laundry can be sign that you need to work on your chore routines, it also shows you need space to put away clothes.

Junk on bedside tables needs to be addressed, do you really need these things immediately on waking, or can they have more efficient storage solutions?

Pull out categories of clutter – shoes, clothes, underwear, books etc; it will be less overwhelming and you get a better sense of progress. Use a three box method here; get rid of, move somewhere cleverer, and keep. The keep box can be a challenge to empty, but you should have a lot more space once you've cleared the clutter.

As with the living room, take a look at the furniture you have in the bedroom. Ask yourself if it is working for you and your needs. A bedside table with multiple drawers may appear helpful in eating up junk, but it can be a crutch for holding onto things you don't really need. Freeing up floorspace is a great way to make a room feel and look bigger. Wall shelving and floating cupboards can also give the illusion of a much larger space.

After you have cleared the clutter and before you put your necessities back, give the space a thorough clean. Before putting everything back, look at your available storage from another viewpoint. There are no hard and fast rules with clothes storage, who says jumpers and woollens need to be folded in the top of your wardrobe? Try a few variations and see what works for you.

Remember it can be next to impossible to relax before bed with visions of clutter dancing in your head. Get your room tidy and peaceful and soon your head will follow.

BESIDE THE BEDSIDE

Keeping a bedside table clutter free can lead to a less stressful wake-up time; you won't be groping around for your glasses, phone or a fresh glass of water if that's all that is present. Clutter can also trigger stress hormones and these in turn can affect our sleep patterns.

Remove everything from the table and then only put back the items that you use first thing in the morning or the last thing at night. You can use organising containers for essentials on the top and inside any drawers, but make sure they are fit for purpose; large containers can so easily become dumping grounds. Smaller tubs are ideal inside a bedside drawer to corral those difficult pieces like hair ties and cufflinks; make sure you can see what is inside the tubs; we tend to use the things we see.

BACK TO BASICS

When we style bedrooms we often use a lot of cushions and throws. This can be an extra layer of clutter you don't need, especially if you are spending time taking the cushions off at night and then putting them back on again in the morning.

However, if you enjoy dressing your bed, don't stop. Decluttering is a personal journey. Just try to ensure that you keep the decorative cushions you are actually using and actively enjoying. You may find that you need to change the styling of your bed, thanks to the decluttered streamlined look you achieve with the rest of the room.

Any blankets you no longer need can be donated or gifted, usually cushions can only be donated if a fire label is still attached; always check ahead.

BEDROOMS ARE RECHARGE SPACES

Bedrooms should be spaces for sleeping and getting away from the stresses of the day

- We use our bedrooms as a place to recharge and relax. There are a number of things you should not be storing, or even using, in the bedroom as they affect sleep and the way we feel about our bedrooms.
- The use of electronics should be kept to a minimum or even banished completely! The blue light that electronics emit can affect our sleeping patterns artificially, making it harder to fall asleep.
- Food should be kept out of the bedroom; crumbs are uncomfortable to sleep on and attract pests.
- If at all possible you should not have a desk in your bedroom. Working in your bedroom creates an association of alertness, not relaxation.
- Finally, dirty laundry should not be kept in the bedroom. You don't want to be tripping over old laundry or thinking about unfinished jobs.

So many of us have 'that' chair in the bedroom. The one where a pile of clean laundry hangs out waiting to be put away. While decluttering, take a moment to recognise the root cause of this; are you lacking space? Do you really need the chair if it just ends up being a clutter magnet?

"There are a number of things you should not be storing, or even using, in the bedroom as they affect sleep"

WARDROBE AND CLOTHES

An overstuffed wardrobe means your favourite pieces are hidden with things you no longer wear

Do you find that despite a full wardrobe it's still hard work choosing something to wear in the morning? So many of us have decision fatigue when it comes to clothes, and it should be no surprise that we wear 20 per cent of our clothes 80 per cent of the time. When clothing storage is cluttered and too full, we can't see our favourite pieces or even the pieces that make us feel the best. Start your decluttering process by pulling sections of your clothes storage; wardrobe, drawers and anywhere else clothes accumulate. Give the furniture a clean and rehome anything that shouldn't be in there.

Immediately dump the clothes that are worn out, stained or broken; use these as rags or recycle in some other way. Make a pile for anything that is too big or too small; are you really going to wear these pieces again? Try to purge your clothes ruthlessly; if you haven't worn a piece in a year what are you waiting for? If there is an item you get 'stuck' on, put it to one side and come back, this will keep your purging moving steadily.

Try things on if you haven't worn them in a while, if at all; is there a reason you aren't wearing them? If pieces don't fit right or there was something you didn't love about the piece, donate or sell! Generally it's only worth your time selling items that are unique, vintage or of a label; waiting to sell high street clothing online will leave you with clutter still taking up space inside your house.

Take a moment to consider your approach to clothes; if you enjoy fashion you do not have to get rid of everything but instead work towards a capsule wardrobe. Decluttering goes hand-in-hand with having the correct storage solutions and using everything you have.





WARDROBE TIDY

Each day we look inside our wardrobes, choose what to wear and then close the doors. This kind of 'out of sight, out of mind' action is dangerous when it comes to clutter. We can easily ignore the problem of an overstuffed wardrobe as we can shut it away. No more!

If trying to organise everything at once feels overwhelming, start in themes: office wear, shirts, dresses, etc. Take a proper look at the condition and fit. Do you still love the piece, or is it still useful to you? Be honest here. If it's in good condition you can donate the clothes or organise a clothes swap with friends.

If you wish to do slow and steady in decluttering your hanging clothes, try putting hangers backwards on the rail in order to give yourself a visual reminder of what you aren't wearing.

GET FOLDING

- When we're overwhelmed with clothing clutter we can get stuck in a loop of only wearing the things that are at the front or top of a drawer. Time to pull everything out.
- Recycle clothes that are worn out, stained or damaged. T-shirts can be used as cleaning rags.
- Look at the type of clothes you have in your drawer. Are you looking at multiple grey tops? Often multiples are an excuse not to stay on top of washing. Be honest, is this a crutch for you?
- Refold your clothes, using whatever technique works for you. Leggings and jeans can be rolled to save space. Sell, donate or gift items that you no longer love or no longer suit you. Remember the job is not complete until the clutter is out of your house.

WHAT'S UNDER THE BED?

Under the bed is a great place to utilise storage, so make sure it's working

Time to get under the bed and investigate what is being stashed under there! It's so easy to throw things under the bed as it's a convenient place for storage. But as with so many areas, out of sight often means out of mind and we're not getting the full use of a handy space if we're just using it for a dumping ground! Anything under your bed that you haven't used in six months or so should probably be donated, dumped or gifted.

After pulling everything out, give the space a clean, which can be hard to do with clutter! Decide what you want the purpose of the space to be. Should under the bed be the space to keep seasonal clothes? Keep this purpose in mind when culling the clutter and rehoming items. Maximise your space by using rolling storage bins, make sure to regularly go through these to ensure you aren't just moving the clutter around.

"It's so easy to throw things under the bed as it's a convenient place for storage. But out of sight often means out of mind"

CHILDREN'S ROOMS

Children are collectors and sometimes these collections get out of control. Teach your kids how to make their things work for them, not the other way around

A child's room is their safe space and the things children surround themselves with are often attached with high emotional significance, even if we can't see it.

Thanks to generous relatives, both ourselves and the children can get overwhelmed with the sheer amount of stuff. Playtime in a room can be spent looking for one thing hidden among clutter and things they truly don't care about.

You undoubtedly will encounter a certain level of reluctance when decluttering with children. There are a number of ways to combat this, children under three can usually be decluttered for. You know their favourites and can hide or hold onto items for a while to ensure they won't be missed. Older children should be included in decluttering their spaces. They may want to take pictures of the things they aren't keeping – offer to help them write a story to go with the toy and to remember the good memories they associate with the item.

If your child is a highly empathetic one, explain how their stuff can be donated to help someone else. Of course, you know your child best, but generally don't push too hard on decluttering. It is best to work in small chunks with children as their attention spans are shorter than that of adults, and really decluttering and tidying isn't the most fun way to spend an afternoon.



READING IS FUNDAMENTAL!

Books should be an essential part of any child's life, so ensure they are nice and organised

- Pull all books out and take a look at the condition; board books that are falling apart should be recycled. If a sentimental book is broken, cut out some pages to create art.
- Take a look at the age appropriateness; it's best to keep board books for young ones or those just beginning to read. If they have outgrown them, donate or gift.
- When putting books back, use baskets or a bookshelf. Teach your children how to put them back, rather than just dumping on the floor. This keeps books in good condition and teaches respect for things.
- A label maker can come in handy to help your child learn where things go. This is especially helpful when they are at school age; school libraries are organised in a similar way.

DROWNING IN STUFFED ANIMALS

This can be a tough job, so just take things slow and don't force the issue

Cuddly toys are sentimental items and can be some of the hardest things for a child to let go. Start easy with the broken, outgrown, and baby toys. If your child is old enough, try to include them in the process – no-one would like their things removed from their room without their knowledge. As a way to deal with toy clutter in the future, institute a one in one out rule. Talk to your child about prioritising their most favourite toys and go with the angle of 'what to keep' rather than 'what to get rid of'. If your child can understand the concept, emphasise the importance of donation and sharing.

Remember that the more accessible a child's room is the more capacity there is for creative play. Children, like us, can be overwhelmed by too many things and almost lock up when it's time to play.

LINEN CUPBOARD

Airing cupboards can be a place where things go to be forgotten. We may also store items for 'someday' here; this future-based storage doesn't work for us today

There is a reason that airing cupboards have doors on them, most of us tend to use them to keep those items that don't seem to have a true home in the house; spare towels and extra bedding, for instance. These items, as they aren't being looked at can accumulate, as out of sight means out of mind. Airing cupboards and linen cupboards can also be a spot where we squirrel away items for 'best'; whether this is guest towels or bedding for visitors. Take a hard look at what you have in the cupboard; do you entertain so frequently that you need to keep a set ready for guests? Don't save items for best anymore, use and enjoy them!

If the bedding you find in the cupboard isn't the correct size, is mismatched or isn't your style anymore, make the decision to gift, dump or donate. Generally, you require one set for your bed while the other is in the wash and drying.

If you realise that you don't really need 20 towels, remember that many animal shelters will take donated towels, although always check ahead before making the journey.

Garages, attics and airing cupboards can also be a dumping ground for sentimental items that can be hard to let go. If you do decide to let go of the things, remind yourself how you've been getting along fine without them already. Take a photo if you feel you need a record.

Store matching bedding inside the set's pillowcase. Fold one duvet cover, a fitted sheet and the matching pillowcases in a small rectangle, use the remaining pillowcase to keep the sets together. When it's time to change the bedsheets you have a set ready to go.

ORGANISING THE AIRING CUPBOARD

After letting go of linens you don't use, reorganise so you can see what you own

After decluttering an airing cupboard, the fun of organising the cupboard can begin. Towels can be rolled, bedsheets refolded. Remember to bring items you will need more frequently to the front. Stack bedding per room, and leave space for the items to 'breathe'; this is the whole purpose of an airing cupboard. Mesh bags allow the flow of air to your linens and prevent a musty smell. Posies of lavender can repel moths and some other insects as well as making your bedding smell fresh.

If your airing cupboard is deep you may find it easy to lose items at the back. Consider investing in rolling drawers or large clear tubs that you can then label. If your boiler is in the airing cupboard, tubs may also make it much easier to remove the items when work needs to be done, also in case of any emergencies.

FOLDING A FITTED SHEET

Clean bedding stays feeling clean and looking good when folded properly

- Learning to fold your sheets properly can help them last longer, meaning you buy fewer replacements that can end up becoming clutter or 'someday' items.
- Start by spreading the sheet on a flat surface with the fitted corners facing up.
- Fold the sheet in half, tucking the top corners into the bottom ones. Tuck the sides in too (this keeps the edges tidy).
- Now fold the sheet in half again, sliding the remaining top corner into the bottom.
- Fold into thirds longwise, hiding the elastic in the middle fold. And you're done. Fitted sheets can be stored in tubs or containers to prevent your good work from becoming undone.



BATHROOMS

Many of us want to get in and out of the bathroom as quickly as possible; onto a busy morning or rushing to get to bed. In this rush, tidiness can be forgotten

The main priority of a bathroom is cleanliness; this is true for both yourself and the space. It is next to impossible to keep a space clean while you're battling clutter. Take a look at the main areas of clutter you're facing. If you keep medicines in your bathroom, check the use-by dates and bin expired medicine. Are you facing a mountain of duplicates? You need to identify why you're hoarding products; is it that you don't know what you already have, or are you a toiletry junkie?

Ask yourself five questions while going through your bathroom products; 'Do I use this?' This is not 'will I use it someday?', we're talking about the here and now. 'Is this item extra?' It isn't always prudent to stock up on your favourites too far in advance, as you can end up wasting money. 'Would I buy this today?' Decide if something is still your style, or works for your skin. 'Does this make my life easier?' These are items that you don't need per se but give you pleasure. 'Can the space that this item takes up be reduced?' Maybe you can decant items into clever storage – try to be creative here.

Prioritise those products that you have to keep or that you love. The pile that you're ambivalent about may surprise you. If you find you have a lot of sealed products still within the expiry date, check if a local shelter or food bank could use them; many people don't often think to donate them.

Every so often, clear your bathroom counter tops, removing all decorative items. Start afresh and try to dress the space in a more minimal way. Donate, sell or gift those pieces of decoration that you do not need.

BATHROOM CABINETS

Don't let these become a hiding place for expired medicines or unwanted cosmetics

- If you use a medicine or bathroom cabinet you may find the amount of items that can fit inside them is astounding. While this is good news for storage, it's bad news for staying decluttered.
- An untidy and overly full medicine cabinet means you're spending a lot of time looking for what you want.
- Look for expired products. Most toiletries will have details of an expiry date after opening.
- Throw out the old stuff. If you can't remember when you bought it, donate it, or when you last used it, dump it! The same goes for old make-up items. Sealed makeup can sometimes be donated to shelters.
- Once you're down to the absolute necessities, reorganise the space; keeping like with like.

TOO MANY PRODUCTS = CLUTTER

Clutter in shower and bath areas can make these spaces more difficult to clean

When decluttering the bath and shower areas, take a moment to remind yourself of your goals; are you wanting to feel less overwhelmed with products when you step into the shower, or are you looking to streamline the space to make it easier to keep clean and tidy?

Pull out all the products in the shower and bath spaces, check the 'fullness' levels and don't hold onto bottles that are almost empty. All that's really needed are the products used every time you wash. Consult with the other people that live in your home; can you use the same products to avoid duplication?

Once you have done your first pass you can then work on tidying up the look of the shower/bath area. If mismatching bottles look untidy, decant into matching bottles for a cohesive look.

WORK SPACES

Whether you work from home, or just have a desk area to deal with home administration, clutter accumulates if it has nowhere to be stored. Own your space

A cluttered desk is full of potential distractions; sticky notes remind us of jobs that have been left half completed, business cards remind us that we need to get in touch with X and Y and Z and before you know it, the work flow you seek has been disrupted. To improve focus keep your working area as clear as possible; this is true for physical spaces as well as digital ones!

Take a look at the clutter that is attracted to your desk and work spaces. Loose cables need rehoming. Bills and other paperwork should be attended to as soon as they come into the house; don't allow the papers to build up. Recycle those no longer needed and scan those that may be important; don't underestimate digital organisation.

Offices can benefit from a ruthless purge. Test everything before you donate or dump. This is also the case with ancient tech. Be honest here, will you ever use those old laptops and phones again? Many charity organisations can repurpose them, but just make sure you clear all your data before you donate.

Office desks often come with drawers, which can attract clutter. Look for useful storage solutions, clear tubs and pots to ensure that what you really need is within reach. As with every other room, your job is done once the useless clutter is out of the house, useful items have lasting homes and you stay committed to a clutter-free space.

Cable tidying and organising can be a way of taking stock of what you need and what can be dumped. Take an evening to check through your home for loose and homeless cables. Use velcro ties and labels to ensure you know what you have to hand.

CLEAN SPACE, CLEAN MIND

If you're beginning to see a trend in decluttering you'd be right; flat surfaces attract clutter

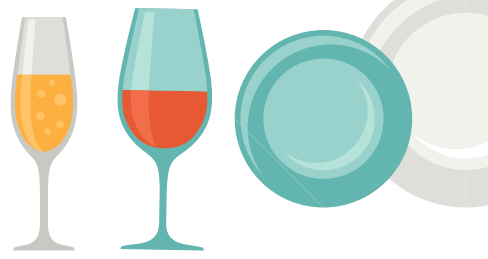
- It's hard to focus on a task at a desk with the visual noise of clutter around you. Take stock of what accumulates on your desk and come up with solutions once these things have been sorted into categories. If you're finding a lot of paperwork; make a dedicated area for it, work to clear in-trays or magazine files to keep on top of these papers.
- If mugs, glasses and general rubbish accumulate, make a new rule for yourself; get rid of them by the end of the day or whenever you leave the desk space.
- If pens and pencils litter your desk, throw those that do not work. Sort an accessible spot for writing things and keep the pens there.
- Desktop organisers can work for many, as long as they don't become a dumping ground for 'homeless' items.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Be honest with yourself, are you really going to read all those books?

How do you declutter books? Within the various decluttering methods, how we deal with books has been a hot button issue. And really it should be a personal decision. Do you hold onto books that you may never read again? Only keeping as many books that will fit on your shelf may seem harsh to some but reasonable to others. Take a look at the books that you own, try to be ruthless – will you really read the book again, or have you read it at all? We tend to hold onto books as a 'someday' item; someday I'll read this. The harsh reality is that you probably won't.

Ask yourself honestly, do you need it? Take a look whether the book is out of date, usually applicable to reference books and some history books. Books are meant to be read and looked at, when you don't do this you're doing a disservice to the book.



DINING ROOMS

The dining room can be a seldom used room, or a multipurpose space. Homework and projects could be tackled here, games nights and dinner too

In a modern home, dining rooms are multifunction rooms that are no longer reserved for 'best' with the finest china on display.

Unfortunately this does mean that the dining room can become a dumping ground for clutter that has no other home.

Take a look at how you use your dining table; identifying the reality in your home will help you reach sustainable solutions to the clutter that piles up. Functional storage is one of the best tools in your arsenal for keeping on top of clutter. Inexpensive bookshelves and benches with storage are useful, but be careful that these items don't become dumping grounds themselves; give them a purpose and stick to it!

We should try our hardest to ensure that a dining table remains clear of clutter. Eating as a family is incredibly important and many experts believe that it can be instrumental in childhood development.

Start by rehoming those items that have got lost in the dining room. Get rid of broken or useless items; if you find yourself working around a thing it's not working for you or your home.

Develop the habits to keep clutter moving to where it needs to be; whether this is somewhere else in your house or out the front door. While you're decluttering you find things that point to a problem in your house, by decluttering we can identify and solve these problems; allowing you to live an easier life not surrounded by surplus things.

Candles are often an impulse purchase or frequent gift. Gather your candles together. Dump any that are down to the wick or gift anything not to your taste anymore. Make a commitment to use the ones that are left; especially before buying more!





FLAT SURFACES ATTRACT CLUTTER

Dining tables are not only for eating and multipurpose spaces attract clutter

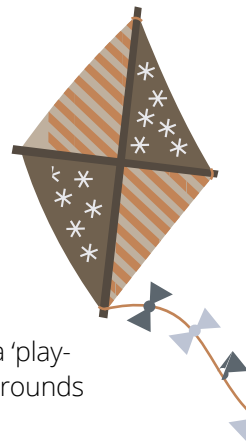
We allow clutter to accumulate on our dining tables because we don't use the dining table as much as we should, so often clutter just gets put to one side when we are using the table. See what things arrive and stay on your dining table. As a first step find the proper homes for the items. If the item is 'homeless', identify where it should go. By fixing the root cause of homeless items, you're less likely to come up against clutter. If the item has no purpose, donate, gift or dump it. Try to make this a daily habit as it is a daily issue for many of us.

Many people find that leaving their table 'set' with placemats and crockery for the next meal prevents clutter from crowding the table. Of course, this can speed up mealtime routines but may not be to your taste as it can translate as 'useful' clutter.

DINING ROOM STORAGE

Sideboards can be hugely helpful in a dining room, as long as they're working for you

- Sideboards can be a surface that accumulates clutter just as the dining table does. Drawers can also be a hotspot for clutter. If your kitchen doesn't hold your 'junk' drawer, take a look in your dining room.
- Pull everything out of your sideboard and dump anything that is broken beyond repair. If there is a chance of repair, get started on this project as soon as the sideboard is reorganised.
- We can find ourselves holding onto tablecloths and linen napkins for best. Give yourself a challenge and actually use these items. If you find you're not using them, donate, sell or gift!
- The same advice applies for special occasion glassware and flatware. If you don't use it, lose it. There is no point in holding onto items for 'someday.' Use the storage for items that you do use.



PLAYTIME

If you're lucky enough to have a room that you class a 'playroom' you know how these spaces can be dumping grounds for things that have no other home

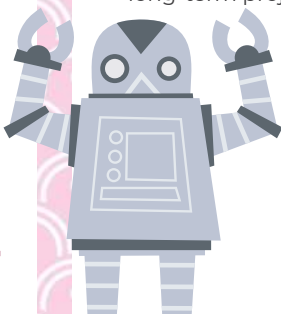
Playrooms are not a formal living space and so they can be a forgotten space in terms of storage and decoration. Children play roughly and many playrooms can be left as a 'second best' space. Clutter can build up fast in a playroom; toys are dumped here regardless of quality, condition or value. Decide first on the purpose for the playroom; if the room is large you may need to divide it into 'zones'. The goal here is for children to have easy access to the things they want, and to be able to tidy up quickly. Start with the terrifying prospect of pulling everything out. Throw away broken toys, used sticker sheets; anything that is no longer serving a purpose and is just using space.

Donate any toys that your children have outgrown. This can be a group decision or something you decide yourself; you know what will work for your family. This 'donate' pile should be removed from your house as soon as you are able, which prevents anyone from dipping back in to find a 'loved' item.

Take a look at the storage you are using in the playroom, is it fit for purpose? Shelves with cubbies are especially useful; boxes that fit in the cubbies can be bought for easy tidying. These cubbies also camouflage the 'messy' look of so many children's toys.

Now it's time to put it all away; organise like with like. This is the long-term project, keep it together.

Many techniques used for a playroom can be applied to adult hobbies. Spill everything out, interrogate whether you've used something in the last year, look for duplicates, donate, dump or gift, find a storage solution and commit to living an uncluttered life.





MAKE TIDYING FUN

Get the kids involved with organising toys from a young age by turning it into a game

- Tip all the toys out – this is undoubtedly the most fun part for children – and start picking through the piles, swiftly removing broken or dirty toys for fixing, dumping or cleaning. This is your first pass.
- Assign types of toys for each child and yourself and race to see who will clear their category first. Once all toys are categorised, take a look as to what is really being played with and what has been grown out of.
- If you have a cubby system for toys, boxes are the most efficient way to organise everything. Many fabric or plastic boxes can be bought in shops or online.
- You can label boxes if your child is of a reading age. This will also help them get into the practice of putting things back where they belong. This is a skill they need when they arrive at school.

YOUNG PICASSOS

Anyone with children of school age knows how quickly artwork gathers

Children are voracious scribbles, colour-inners and little writers and the paper evidence of this builds up quickly. While including children in decluttering and tidying is important, this may result in a few stalemates with all the ‘best’ drawings being kept and the pile of paper needing to be organised remaining the same size.

One solution is to take photos! Copies of this hard work can be kept digitally or printed out (much) smaller than the original. Children could be included in curating and organising a scrapbook of their works of art.

It's tough but try to keep only the best in hard copy, or the most sentimental. Personal connections are important in deciding what to hold onto; original thoughts and concepts are more valuable than a generic drawing of a princess or story about a superhero.



HOW TO DECLUTTER MEANINGFUL ITEMS AND SORT PHOTOS

Sentimental items should be like gifts that keep on giving, however, if you have meaningful things that take from you instead, isn't it time to say goodbye?

When decluttering your home, the best way to decide whether you want to keep something is to use your senses. Touch it, look at it, smell it, perhaps even listen to the sounds it makes as you move it in your hands. Really get a feeling of whether it makes you happy having it in your life. Do you feel that desire inside to keep it moving forward? If the answer is yes and you truly appreciate it, it stays. Likewise if you feel nothing, it's time to let it go. Simple. The difficulty arises when you approach items that remind you of your past or that hold sentimental value, as these items can stir up other emotions that hinder your ability to judge whether you want to keep it because it brings you joy, or because you fear that you may feel sad if you give it away.

WORK YOUR WAY UP TO IT

Decluttering isn't a sprint, it's a marathon, and just as a runner would prepare for big events by practising beforehand, you should work your way up to harder objects, such as those that hold sentimental value, by practising with 'easier' items, such as clothes, kitchen utensils, books, etc, anything that is relatively void of sentiment and allows you to get into the rhythm of decluttering. With each thing you let go, you'll feel a positive surge that comes from freeing yourself of unwanted possessions. This is your body's way of telling you that you're doing the right thing, ultimately reducing stress and anxiety. By repeating the process, you'll get better and quicker at making decisions, so that when the time comes to tackle the more meaningful things, you'll know you can trust your instincts.

WHY DO WE CARE SO MUCH?

When someone gives you something or you have an item that once belonged to someone else, you attach emotion and sentiment to it. It becomes 'tied' to that person or that time in your life. When you contemplate letting the item go, it can feel as though you are letting go of the person or relationship you had, which becomes all the harder if that person has grown up, changed, or is no longer

with you. Realising that isn't the case, that it is just an inanimate object and you will still have the memories after the item is gone, will free you of the guilt that may be holding you back from parting with things. Remind yourself that you don't need the object to reinforce how you feel about someone or to remember them in a certain way. Clinging to the past or worrying about the future can negatively impact your mental wellbeing. By making the effort to live in the present, you live for the moment, and you'll make more productive choices about the best way to live your life.

GETTING CLOSURE

Start with something that's less significant. Hold it. How does it make you feel? Warm and positive? Then keep it. Is there a hesitation? That could be your subconscious telling you that you don't actually need it in your life anymore and that it's okay to let it go. Thank the item for the memories, thank it for being there when you needed it, thank the person for giving it to you, then say goodbye. This process allows you to gain closure, so that you aren't left with any residual negative feelings like guilt or anxiety. Tell yourself you are doing the right thing for you, and remind yourself why you started this in the first place. Avoid making the process harder or more emotionally disturbing than it needs to be. There's no pressure to get rid of everything; there is no reason for you not to keep the sentimental things that spark a positive reaction. The aim is simply to get rid of the ones that don't.

DIGITAL FAILSAFE

Rather than forcing yourself to feel positive about a sentimental item that no longer brings joy, cherish the memory of the person who gave it to you and then let it go. If parting is still too hard, take a digital image of it. That way you can be reminded of it and the person whenever you need, without having to actually keep it.


LIST YOUR MOST SENTIMENTAL ITEMS.

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if you don't think to list something, doesn't that tell you how you really feel about it?

THINK OUT OF THE BOX

Decluttering is making your life more manageable, not empty. If there are things you need to keep, then keep them – the process is also learning to appreciate what you hold on to. For example, if you have sentimental items tucked away in a box, would you really miss them if they were gone? Yes? Then why aren't you using or celebrating them? Display or upcycle your precious items.

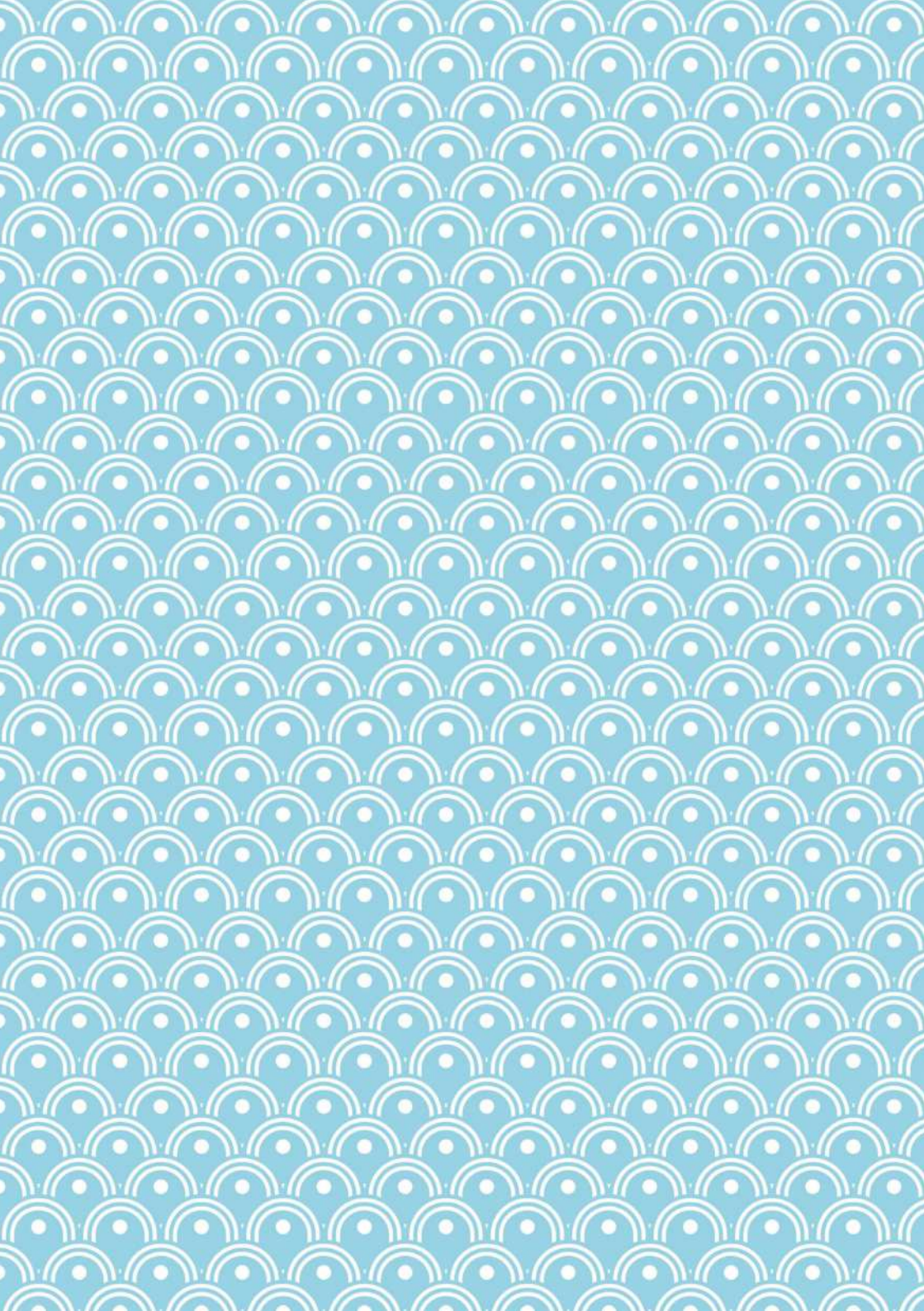


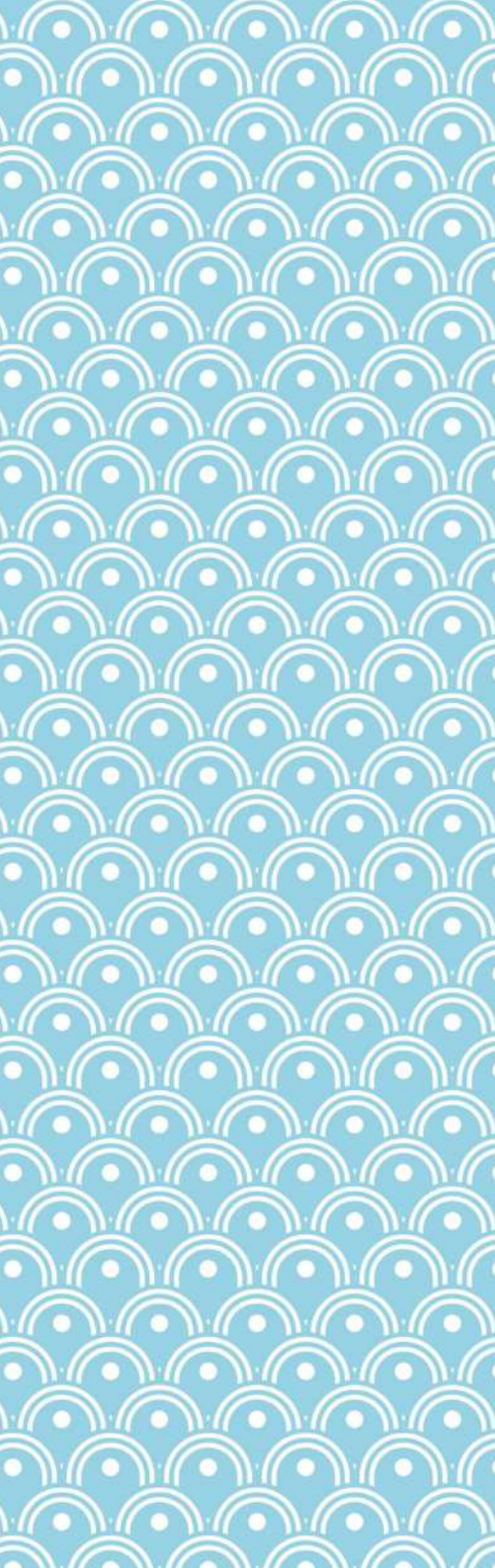
*“Have nothing in
your house that you
do not know to be
useful, or believe to
be beautiful”*

William Morris

**HOW HAS DECLUTTERING YOUR HOME
CHANGED YOU? HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW?**


**WRITE DOWN HOW YOU WILL ENSURE THAT YOUR
HOME STAYS CLUTTER FREE.**





DECLUTTER YOUR LIFE

Discover how to organise your day with a routine, plan your meals and discard unnecessary people in order to live more simply

A circular wreath of blue flowers and green leaves surrounds a teal background. The text is written in a white, cursive font in the center of the teal circle.

*"Clear your
stuff. Clear
your mind!"*

Eric M. Riddle

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFE

Take a moment now to reflect on your day, your week, month and year ahead. How do you feel? Are you battling to stay on top of work and neglecting yourself? Are there people in your life that you need to cut out?

An erratic and busy schedule can leave you feeling like you are constantly fighting to keep up. Commitments and obligations quickly build up leaving you with no time to yourself. This can affect your health and general wellbeing. It can prevent you from eating well, exercising and taking care of yourself. It can be truly overwhelming.

The next few exercises are essential. They will help you to understand why you have begun this decluttering journey. Make sure that you refer back to these pages as you progress and remind yourself of the why.



BENEFITS OF HAVING A ROUTINE

In today's world we live fast-paced, busy lives, but having a routine can help in more ways than one. It can help restore order to our cluttered schedules

Have you ever woken up late, rushed to get ready for work, grabbed an unhealthy breakfast and arrived feeling completely overwhelmed? Life can be hectic, but if we don't organise the chaos, clutter builds and makes the situation even worse. If you're feeling stressed or burnt out, a routine can help you gain back some control and improve your mental wellbeing.

Clutter makes you less effective; with so much going on you're not able to focus. But, create a calm, organised environment and you'll procrastinate less and be much more productive.

Routine can also reduce stress and help you cope with changes in your life. Trying to remember everything we have to do can be stressful and uncertainty can be hard to manage, but having structure can make things easier. Everyday tasks like brushing our teeth become second nature so we don't have to think about them, which frees the mind for other things. This way you can ensure you have time to relax and have fun when times are hard.

If you're struggling at work, a predictable routine can save you time and energy when you get home. For example, if you've prepped lunches for the week it's one less thing you have to think about and you can enjoy a quiet evening.

Having a routine can also create healthy habits. By making daily and weekly plans, you can ensure you're getting regular sleep, eating a healthy diet and exercising. By putting aside time to plan and prepare, your routines will turn into rituals and the more you practise, the better you'll get at it. It can be hard trying to fit everything in, but setting aside 20 minutes for life admin every day means it won't build up, avoiding a mountain of admin to do on the weekend.

You may think routines are boring and rigid, but they're important. You need to declutter your day so there's time to deal with what's worrying you. Schedule time for yourself, whether it's meditating or writing a journal, to find peace and let go of the things causing you stress. If you look at your priorities, there are always things you can drop on your schedule to make more time for you.

HOW TO START A ROUTINE

The hardest thing about creating a routine is getting started, but the effort will reap rewards

It can be difficult to get yourself into a routine – it takes discipline. But it's important for your health and wellbeing and to live a fuller, happier life, so get started today! Begin by sitting down and listing everything that you do in a day and throughout the week. Then look at what you've written down and decide what you can cut or reduce. Don't say nothing! How much time are you spending watching television or surfing the web? Are you making use of the time during TV commercial breaks or your time spent commuting to work? There are ways to add hours to your day if you think about it.

Then you need to think about what works best for you. Are you a morning person or an evening person? Think about what time of day or week works best for different tasks. You might want to try exercising in the morning when you have more energy or do tasks that don't require brainpower at night, but it has to be right for you. Don't be afraid of changing your routine if it doesn't work. Group tasks by time of day. What do you need to do to get out the house in the morning? Perhaps you want to get things done that you don't want to have to think about all day. Use lunchtime for boring tasks like emails and errands and the evenings to plan for the next day.

Make sure your schedule is specific and know what you want to achieve with your routine. Is your aim to get healthier or reduce stress? Don't forget to include mindful routines like eating mindfully, taking breaks and focusing on your breathing at work.

It might be easier to break up tasks into smaller chores, so instead of saying you'll clean the house on Sundays, perhaps vacuum on Sundays and spread some of the other housework out throughout the week. Don't forget to schedule in time for flexibility. Life isn't predictable and you have to be prepared for unforeseen events or tasks.

Finally, test your new routine for 30 days, track your progress and then change anything that doesn't work.



FORGIVE YOURSELF WHEN YOU SLIP UP

Routine isn't always easy. When you're tired after a hard day at work, you probably won't want to meal prep, but try think about the end goal. Once done you can relax and you'll feel better because you accomplished that one small thing. Plus, your lunch will be healthier than if you ate out so you'll feel less sluggish and have a better next day.

MAKE IT FUN

Routine can be tedious, but if you make it fun it'll seem less like a chore and as you practise it, it'll become more of a ritual. If you want to exercise in the mornings, but you're worried you won't want to get out of bed, buddy up with a friend so you can't make excuses and join a dance class for something more fun that you can enjoy together. Instead of watching TV in the evenings, why not practise a passion like playing music or drawing – you may not think it but it'll lift your spirit.

DECIDE ON FIVE DECLUTTERING HABITS YOU CAN APPLY TO THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE AND WRITE THESE DOWN.

START THE DAY OFF RIGHT

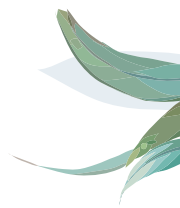
Creating a mindful routine in the morning is the perfect way to set you up for a positive and productive day

Do you start your mornings by hitting the snooze button, skipping breakfast and then rush to work, leaving yourself feeling exhausted before the day's even started? Creating a mindful morning routine is one of the most effective ways of improving your overall wellbeing and setting yourself up for a positive day ahead. Try waking up 30 minutes earlier and declutter your mind. Find a quiet moment to start the day off right. If you create a calm environment, you'll feel more at peace and organised for the rest of the day. Drink a soothing cup of tea or hydrate with some water. Make your bed and open the blinds to let in the light.

You might want to exercise to boost your endorphins or just relax and do some yoga or meditation. If you don't like exercising in the morning, you could spend the time doing some arts and crafts – something that you enjoy so you feel good and start the day on a positive note. This is also a good time for writing in your journal. Some people start the day with positive affirmations about themselves. Write down what you want to be such as 'I am strong' or 'I can make good decisions'. If you write these down and repeat them out loud, you'll start believing them and it'll build your self-confidence so that you can achieve your goals that day. Whatever you want to do, do it with mindfulness – try to be fully present in the moment.

Don't forget you're most productive in the morning so make sure to have a wholesome, healthy breakfast full of protein so you're full of energy and can take on anything. Now you're ready to have a great day.

"Creating a mindful morning routine is one of the most effective ways of improving your overall wellbeing"



MAKE IT HAPPEN

Visualisation is an excellent way to start the day. Close your eyes and visualise the day ahead. Think positive thoughts. Visualise what you want to achieve and how you're going to achieve it. You'll be surprised at the effect this has on the brain. It'll make you want to go out and make it happen.

MAKE A CHECKLIST

Mornings can be the busiest time of day as you're in a hurry to get ready and get out the door. Save time and energy by making a checklist of things you need to remember before leaving the house, such as make breakfast, prep lunch, coat, keys, gym bag. This way you won't forget anything and it'll help you run through what you have to do before leaving.

WRITE DOWN A LIST OF AFFIRMATIONS TO REPEAT OUT LOUD. START THE SENTENCES WITH 'I AM' IN THE PRESENT TENSE.

Keep them brief, but specific. For example, 'I am confident I can do this job'. If you're struggling, write down a list of negative qualities and then say the opposite of these, so if you've written 'I'm unworthy,' state out loud 'I'm cherished'.

- I am
- I am
- I am
- I am
- I am

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

The end of the day is just as important as the beginning. It may be more difficult to follow a routine, especially if you've had a bad day, but this is your chance to get ready for the next day, to recharge and make tomorrow better.

Setting a bedtime routine is an important endeavour for a number of reasons. Sleep is one of the most important elements of a healthy lifestyle. We all know that getting a good night's sleep is beneficial to your health. Poor sleep can increase the risk of slowed reaction times, irritability, anxiety, obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

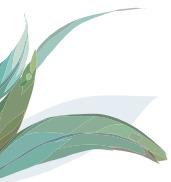
We actually need five cycles of uninterrupted sleep. For this reason it's important to create a calm environment before bedtime. Make sure your room is tidy and your clothes for the next day are laid out. You don't want everything in disarray when you wake up, as you want to start the day feeling positive. Plants and candles can create a peaceful, relaxing space. Don't drink before going to bed, as you don't want to be waking up during the night. Make sure the room is dark and that it's the right temperature. For optimum sleep the temperature should be 15-18°C (60-65°F).

Before bed try planning an evening routine to clear your mind. Start unwinding 30 minutes before you go to sleep. You could meditate or do some light reading. Use your journal to brain dump the day's events on to a page or have a bath. Minimise your screen time. It's been proven that looking at screens like a television, computer or phone before bed can affect our sleep. Take this time instead to reflect on the day's achievements and set goals for the next day.

Finally, make sure you're going to bed and waking up at the same time every day for the best possible sleep. This way you'll wake up feeling ready for whatever life throws at you.

BEDS ARE FOR SLEEPING

There's a reason people say you shouldn't have a television in your room. Beds are for sleeping, not for activities like watching TV. Try not to spend more than 20 minutes in bed before going to sleep, so if you like to read in bed, limit this. You should go to bed when you're tired for optimum sleep and not lie there awake.



WIND DOWN

Sometimes if we've had a bad day it can be tempting to just go to bed fed up, but it's important to wind down before you go to bed even if that means going for an evening stroll. If you go to bed in a bad mood, you probably won't have a good night's sleep and you'll wake up feeling grumpy. Try doing something relaxing that will cheer you up instead.

WRITE DOWN THREE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU DURING YOUR DAY.

If this is too difficult, try writing down what good you did. A gratitude journal can help you see the positives in a bad day and encourage you to do good deeds.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

OPTIMISE YOUR WORKDAY

Are you struggling at work? Do you find there aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done? Having a routine can not only help reduce your stress, but increase your production levels.

If you've got a demanding career you may be tempted to check your emails the moment you wake up, but it's important to start the day off right with your morning routine. Make sure you've had enough sleep, that you eat a proper breakfast and exercise if you can to set you up for the day ahead.

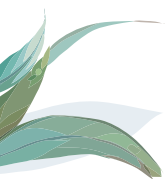
Once you're at work, make a list of what you have to do, whether that's emails, paperwork, writing a report, or having a meeting with your boss. Next decide what your priorities are for the day and for the week. Try to get three big tasks done each day. Set a time during the day or week to complete routine tasks, so for example, spend an hour at 9am answering emails. Often admin tasks are better handled at the start or the end of the day, but it's important to do the hardest work first, as the morning is when you're most productive. Keep a checklist to keep you going when you tick something off the list.

If you've got a lot on and you're feeling anxious, break up your work into smaller tasks. So instead of planning to do a full report, get the first section done. Then if you manage to do more, you'll feel a sense of accomplishment. You can also delegate to reduce your workload and try to avoid distractions by planning how to tell your colleagues you don't want to be disturbed.

Ensuring you have a positive work environment is also an important part of your routine. Plan in time to tidy your desk, make sure you're getting enough natural light and keep a plant near your workspace. Check to see if you're sitting correctly and remember to drink enough water, keep healthy snacks on hand and take regular breaks.

PLAN IN BREAKS

You may think you're too busy and don't have time to stop, but taking breaks at work is crucial for your productivity. A study found that the highest performers work for periods of 52 minutes with a 17-minute break in between. Read a book or go for a walk at lunch, drink water so you have to get up and move to go to the toilet.



DON'T PANIC

If you're sticking to your routine but it's not working and you still feel overwhelmed, the worst thing you can do is panic. You'll get yourself rattled and will achieve even less because you can't focus. Take a step back and breathe. Panicking will only make matters worse. You can adapt your routine. The important thing is to break your work down into bite-sized chunks, start with one thing and go from there. Try to think of the task at hand and nothing else. Take it one step at a time.

MAKE A LIST OF THE GOALS YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AT WORK.

Leave a space below each one so you can also write out how it is you plan to use your new routine to help you achieve these. It'll help you stay motivated.

GOAL:

GOAL:

GOAL:

GOAL:

FAMILY ROUTINE

Children do well with routines. It not only helps them develop by teaching them about life, but it can help them during difficult times.

Common routines for children include getting ready, bathtime, mealtime, bedtime and chores. As they develop and learn, routine helps them gain confidence and independence so that they depend on you less. As they grow older, routines can help develop their work skills and time management, for example with setting a time for chores.

It can also teach them healthy habits such as brushing their teeth, exercising, washing their hands after they use the bathroom and getting enough sleep.

Life as a parent can be hectic, but having a plan can help bring organisation to the chaos and make you feel like you're doing a good job.

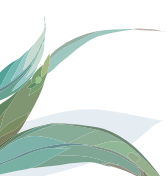
The familiarity of regular routines can also be comforting as your children grow up and have to deal with changes. Kids fear the unknown so predictability can help them feel safe and secure. Having structure makes it easier for your children to deal with stressful situations like the birth of a sibling, divorce, illness, or moving home.

It is important, however, to make sure you're not too rigid with your routines. Giving your kids some choice can make the process more fun so, for example, when they don't want to go to bed, let them choose a bedtime story and make sure you do all the voices.

As a family, routine can also strengthen relationships. When you make a day plan, you'll free up time to spend more time together, whether that's reading together, eating dinner as a family or enjoying a game night.

KEEP IT POSITIVE

The most difficult thing about setting routines for children is that they're kids and often they don't want to do what they're told, like go to bed or eat their broccoli. Make sure you are patient and reward them when they keep to the routine. If you make it a positive experience, their routines will become rituals so when it's time to have a bath, get out the bath toys and make it fun!



WRITE DOWN A LIST OF TASKS YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO COMPLETE IN A DAY PLAN, E.G. 7AM BRUSH YOUR TEETH.

Then write down ways to make the tasks more fun, e.g. a colourful animal-themed toothbrush.

TASK:

TASK:

TASK:

TASK:

TASK:

TASK:

TASK:



PLAN MEALS AND ORGANISE EATING

Take away that three times daily dose of stress by being organised with what you eat, giving you more time, money and control over your life

Planning what you want to eat for the week ahead may seem a bit of an effort, but your future self will thank you for it when you don't have to waste time staring at the contents of your fridge willing yourself to think up something for dinner. Not only will planning meals save you time, but you'll probably find you actually save money. This is because the meal plan you create will instruct you what ingredients you need to buy, so by sticking to this list you are less likely to purchase random things you don't need and as you'll be aware of the quantity you require, you can cut down on overall waste for each meal too.

PLAN TO SUCCEED

So here's how it's done. Sit down with a piece of paper, chalkboard or even with an appropriate app. Draw lines or boxes to create seven sections and label each with a day of the week, starting from tomorrow. On another piece of paper write down all the meals you feel you are capable of cooking, or want to try – let's call this your 'wish list'. Use cookbooks, magazines and online recipes to help you discover new culinary creations you might like to have a go at. Begin adding meals to each day of the planner, and pop a tick by the dish on the wish list for any that you choose, so you know what's left.

You can either just plan for dinner meals, or if you're feeling super organised, go all in and write out three meals and a snack for each day. Next, use the planner to create a list of ingredients and stick to this when shopping. Online shopping will make this more attainable; just pop an ingredient into the search bar and avoid tabs such as 'Offers' or 'Favourites'.

NEXT-LEVEL SKILLS

There are some things you can do when planning out your meals to take your organisation skills to the next level. First, check the calendar. It sounds simple enough but many people can overlook the things they have planned for the week ahead when working out their meals, and how this might affect them. For



example, there's no point planning an elaborate dinner dish that takes several hours to prepare, if you or your family have somewhere else to be for part of the evening. So when you sit down to write out your weekly meal planner, grab the calendar and decide what to cook based on how much time you'll have.

Alternatively, make meals ahead of time. A great way to do this is to buy and make extra, then fridge or freeze it accordingly, so when a busy day or evening looms, you have a healthy, homemade meal ready to go. In order to do this effectively, be sure to educate yourself on how to store and reheat food safely.

Another trick is to prepare elements of the dish the night before, such as chopping veg or marinating meat. Those with a slow cooker at their disposal can pop everything into it in the morning, set it up properly, and have the meal ready and waiting when they come home.

When it comes to breakfast and lunch you may think the choices are less varied, but planning out what to have in advance can help to shake things up. For example, porridge is a fantastic food to start the day with, it's full of nutritious vitamins and minerals and will keep you feeling full for longer. The downside is it can get rather dull, so use your planner to add a different topping for each day of the week; fruit, chia seeds, honey, nuts, how about a small dollop of chocolate spread on the weekend? The same goes for lunch. Spice up that sandwich with a festival of flavours, or how about swapping bread for pitta, a wrap, or zingy salad? The more you plan, the more adventurous you'll realise you can be, which can do wonders for your spirit and feelings of positivity.

EAT WELL, LIVE WELL

It's a no brainer; the better the fuel you give your body, the better it will run. Eating badly, too much, or too little increases your risk of cancer and diseases. But it's not only your body that suffers. By not eating right, your mind is hugely impacted too. Consuming a healthy and balanced diet improves your mood, gives you more energy, and helps you to think more rationally and clearly.

It's not difficult to know what's right; we all know what's good for us and what isn't, but it can be hard to stick to it, especially when your blood sugar runs low and you start to feel hungry, or when you're feeling blue or overwhelmed. But succeeding takes willpower, which requires energy, which means eating the right things: lean protein, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and good fats, plus cutting down on (or avoiding) alcohol, processed and sugary foods. It's okay to have a little treat once in a while, but it's important to view it as a rare indulgence, and not as part of your diet. You can eat healthy, it's not that hard, the key is to just be organised.

AVOID TEMPTATION

Only buy what you need and resist having tempting junk food in the cupboards. The more you practice living like this, the more it will become your way of life; ultimately a healthier and happier life.

EAT BEFORE YOU SHOP

It's a well-known fact that you're more likely to make rash decisions and buy unhealthy food if you go food shopping when you're hungry. So ensure you only go to the shops after a hearty, healthy meal and stick to the shopping list. Not only will you save money, but you won't fill your home with tempting treats that'll take you off course mentally and physically.

DRINK WATER

Often we're not actually hungry, just in need of water. It's recommended you drink two litres a day. Staying hydrated helps improve brain function and digestion, prevents premature aging, regulates your temperature, and even helps with weight loss. So the next time you feel your tummy growl between meals, have a glass of water instead of a snack.

MAKE A MEAL PLAN FOR
THE NEXT WEEK.

MONDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

TUESDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

WEDNESDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

THURSDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

FRIDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

SATURDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

SUNDAY

breakfast

lunch

dinner

SOME TASTY MEALS TO TRY

Breakfast 1: Porridge with blueberries and honey

Lunch 1: Salad with flaked tuna and boiled egg

Dinner 1: Pan fried salmon with oven roasted veg and quinoa

Breakfast 2: Fruit salad with natural yoghurt and a sprinkling of granola

Lunch 2: Wholemeal pitta with hummus, grated carrot, spinach and red pepper

Dinner 2: Turkey burgers with sweet potato wedges

Breakfast 3: Poached egg, avocado on granary toast

Lunch 3: Carrot and coriander soup

Dinner 3: Lamb tagine with apricots and brown rice

"The more you plan, the more adventurous you'll realise you can be, which can do wonders for your spirit and feelings of positivity"



MAKING COMMITMENTS

It's challenging working out what you need and what you don't when organising the house, and even more so when it comes to decluttering your life

Just as your home can become cluttered, so can your life. Stocked to the brim with day-to-day demands, life commitments and other miscellaneous obligations, it can pull you in this direction and that, so much so you don't know which way to go or what to do first.

For some people, family, love, and friendship should get the lion's share of how we spend our life, but for others it may be work, education or hobbies. There are no right or wrong answers; it's all relative to the individual. For most people, though, happiness will be achieved by finding and maintaining a healthy balance of all these things. This sounds great in theory, but in reality attaining this balance can be a huge source of stress. However, there are things we can do to cope.

PRIORITISE

You have to work to survive, and for most of us this will be one of our main commitments, as generally speaking your hours are dictated by the employer. Outside of work are the obligations you live (and work) for, such as a family or spouse. Then there are the things you want to do, such as pursuits and activities, which you enjoy and help to make you you. Finally there are all the things you don't want to do, but that need to be done all the same, such as chores. Prioritising the commitments in your life can alleviate some of the guilt that comes with juggling your demands. It's out of your control and so you have no choice but to accept this is the way things are. You just have to spend your 'free' time as wisely and creatively as possible.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Make the most of the time you spend as a family. Sit at a table for dinner and switch off the TV in favour of having conversations. Consider moderating the use of technology, such as having a mobile phone ban for an hour in the evenings to play a game together instead. Encourage your children to try the activities you enjoy, so your weekends aren't filled with the things they like to do.

GET SOME HELP

When you have to compromise on the things you want to do for the things you have to do, life can feel overwhelming and stressful. The key to managing it is getting support; whether it's great or small, it can make a difference. Share tasks with your family, so that everyone has a role in keeping the house ticking over, which will breed a greater respect for keeping it tidy. Alternatively, if you have the means, consider paying for help, whether it's popping into the car wash or hiring a cleaner or a gardener. Yes it costs money, but then you'll have more time to spend on the things you actually want to, with the people you want to spend it with. Likewise look for signs when someone else is struggling. Just being a sounding board for one another can help to solve issues, as can raising concerns as and when they arise, rather than allowing them to fester. As long as you all show one another respect and gratitude, there's no reason why you can't maintain a healthy balance moving forward.

THE MAGIC OF A FEW MINUTES

The day is full of opportunity and there are many chances to get little things done here and there, you just need to know where to look. Wake up 30 minutes early to get in a quick but effective workout or perhaps walk or cycle to the office for that endorphin hit. Use your lunch break to make phone calls, plans for the weekend, or meet up with some friends. In the evening if you're only half watching a show on TV, dual screen and get jobs done on your phone, such as paying bills or doing an online food shop. If your work is flexible ask for time off during a week when you have lots of personal commitments and offer to make up the time the following week, or ask a colleague to take something on for you, and promise to do the same in return. Get your (and your family's) things ready for the next day before going to bed, and squeeze in five to ten minutes for some mindful meditation before falling asleep.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

You can't do everything and you can't be perfect. Accept this and your life will feel less stressful. There will come times when you feel like you can't cope and that's when you have to seek help. There may be other times when you feel guilty because one commitment has got in the way of another. Hanging onto guilt will only bring more stress. Let it go. If you did everything in your power to do your best then that's all you can do. Be positive with how you think about yourself. Take some 'me' time even if it's just a few hours each week. Practising techniques such as mindfulness, if only for a few minutes each day, will help you to feel more in control of your life, which will lead to achieving more of what you want.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

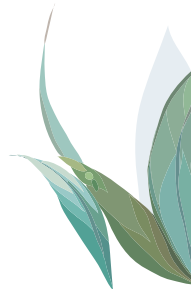
In most families both parents have to work, which can bring added stress and feelings of guilt. But that's just life. One way of helping with this is to know and stick to your limits. Learn to say no, and don't take on more than you are happy with. The same is true of your personal life. If friends or family ask unreasonable demands of you or your time, find strength in saying no, otherwise you'll have less time to do the things you want with the people who you really want to be with.

IS THERE ROOM LEFT ON YOUR PLATE?

It can be life affirming to try new things but there is only a finite amount of time in the day. The trick is to find a time and a place for them. Could you try something new as a family, and do it on a weekend or evening? Is it something you could fit in before work by getting up earlier? Perhaps your spouse or someone in your family could cover your commitments to give you more 'me time'? If it's important to you, then make time for it.

A CHANGE IS AS GOOD AS A REST

Just as you should reevaluate how much you enjoy certain activities from time to time, the same should go for friends. As you age you change, and if you find yourself regularly leaving a meetup with a particular group of friends feeling negative, maybe you should spend less time with them and more time with people who make you feel good about yourself.



WRITE DOWN A LIST OF TEN COMMITMENTS
THAT MEAN THE MOST TO YOU.

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*"share tasks with your family, so that everyone has a
role in keeping the house ticking over"*

WRITE DOWN THE THINGS OR ACTIVITIES YOU COULD LET GO OF IN ORDER TO DESTRESS AND DECLUTTER YOUR TIME COMMITMENTS.

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing.



ORGANISE YOUR CALENDAR

If you're someone who struggles to keep track of everything, or regularly finds themselves late or missing appointments, then the answer is a calendar

A calendar is so simple and effective, yet many of us fail to use one to help better organise our busy lives. Even those who do have a calendar could use it more efficiently to help turn a life of chaos into one of calm.

One sure-fire way to introduce a more streamlined and organised life, especially if you have a family, is to forget the standard calendars which offer one line or one box for each day. What you need is a multi-column set up, with each member of the family getting an entire column to themselves.

Not only will this allow you to keep track of everyone else's schedules, but in turn they can see what you have planned and therefore avoid stressful situations where you become double-booked and inevitably someone gets let down.

Another trick is to use a multiple-column calendar to better organise your own schedule, by using each section to manage a different area of your life. For example, one column could be labelled 'home' and include your family's activities, another could be 'work', the next 'appointments', and the last, that all important 'me' time for personal pursuits. You could even use one column to add things such as birthdays, so they stay separate from the rest of the events.

When using your calendar be conscious of when you book things in. If you're always on the go or have young children, for example, perhaps have a weekend or day off from doing a string of intensive activities, as a bit of 'downtime' can do you the world of good. Also remember to factor in travel time, when scheduling activities and appointments, and allow for traffic, especially if you have far to go or have to be somewhere at a specific time. This is essential if you have lots of things booked in back-to-back or several members of your family have multiple things going on at the same time. Finally, don't be afraid to start your day earlier than usual to fit an appointment in if it's important. Just make sure you go to bed earlier the night before to compensate.

OPTIMISE YOUR TIME

Time is short so you need to make the most of it. Rather than multitasking, which causes more stress, learn to manage your time more effectively

A great way to get things done when you have lots on your plate is to find holes in your schedule and fill these small fragments of time – in between your daily routine of regular commitments – with productive achievements.

This is where having a phone or smart device can be a lifesaver. For example, on the commute to and from work, waiting while you collect your children or for an appointment to begin, you can get an assortment of 'little' jobs done. Such as: finishing off some work, looking for a recipe for dinner, paying bills, buying a birthday present for someone, making an appointment, ordering some flowers, or just catching up with a friend over the phone. The possibilities are endless, and all these small things add up to more time for you to spend on the things that really matter.

Also remember that no man (or woman) is an island – you don't have to do everything on your own. You can ask family or friends to help when you're snowed under, and could always offer to return the favour in the future. If you don't want to burden a loved one, then how about paying someone for their time? Whether it's cleaning, gardening, laundry, childminding, heavy lifting, shopping or walking the dog, there are hundreds of people who can help. Use industry-recognised websites and read recent reviews to check the businesses and individuals have a good reputation for providing excellent service. Don't be afraid to get quotes for numerous providers as this will allow you to find someone within your budget, and also help you to judge whether you like and trust the person, which is crucial if you plan on inviting them into your home to do jobs around the house or care for members of your family.

ONLINE SCHEDULING

'Physical' calendars aren't for everyone. If you prefer to orchestrate your schedule online then there are a bounty of apps available that can help. Choose one that allows you to link up with a spouse or family members so you are aware of each other's commitments and whereabouts. You can even choose one that allows you to automatically add events when they are created through social media apps and emails.

COLOUR CODED

Coloured pens and stickers are a fabulous way of helping you to recognise at a glance what you, or members of your household, have coming up. So, for example, blue pen could signify a work obligation, whereas red could mean an appointment, and green could refer to fun activities. Alternatively each member of your family could be represented by a different colour to help distinguish who the commitment belongs to.

DE-STRESS BEFORE BED

Before you go to sleep at night, grab a piece of paper and write tomorrow's day or date at the top. Underneath write a list of everything you want to achieve. All this stress is now out of your head, helping you to sleep better. Then the following evening, check off all the things you achieved that day, and any that you didn't, add to tomorrow's to-do list.

MAKE ROOM FOR ME

The first thing you need to do if you find your life spiralling out of control is to schedule in some 'me time'

Just as healthy food is essential for a more productive body, relaxation is essential for an empowered mind and positive spirit, meaning that the happier you feel, the more you'll achieve elsewhere in your life.

The easiest way to do this is to put in place a 'phone-free hour' or 'no TV zone'. However, in reality this isn't as practical as it sounds, so instead schedule in some 'me time' on your calendar, just as you would an appointment. Then use this time to do something that will help you to let go. Whether it's practising some mindfulness, going out for a bike ride, heading to the gym, doing some gardening, socialising, or simply reading a book, something, anything to give yourself a break and an opportunity to relax.

As well as adding in more free time, you need to declutter your calendar of anything that's not needed, and doesn't make you happy, just as you would your home. For example, catching up with people who don't make you feel good about yourself, or doing something for someone because you feel you ought to, rather than want to. By decluttering your calendar in this way, you'll find it easier to say 'no' to people and learn to truly appreciate the things you make time for.

MAKE A LIST OF EVERYTHING THAT HAS TO
MAKE IT ONTO YOUR CALENDAR EVERY WEEK.

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*"As well as adding in more free time, you need to declutter
your calendar of anything that's not needed"*



DECLUTTER YOUR FRIENDS

As we embark on life's journey, we meet a lot of people along the way, but having too many friends can be exhausting. Learn how you can declutter your friends in the same way that you can declutter your home

Over the course of your lifetime you will, without a doubt, meet a lot of people. As we navigate our way through life, some of these people we meet will end up becoming our friends. Friendships can form when we meet people at various stages of our lives, including when we go to school and university, when we start a new job, or when we participate in hobbies. But what really defines a true friend? What are the differences between acquaintances and life-long companions? And why should you hold on to some and not others?

THE THREE TYPES OF FRIENDSHIPS

According to Aristotle we have three types of friendships: friendships of utility, friendships of pleasure, and friendships of virtue. Friendships of utility are relationships that have a mutual benefit to both parties and they are the more functional out of the three. For example, these could be a neighbour that feeds your dog or a customer at work. The second is friendships of pleasure and these form when someone shares the same interests as you – for example, someone you regularly go to yoga with or play football with. Finally, we have friendships of virtue, which are based on mutual respect and compassion and usually form over a long period of time. These friendships are based on the idea that you share similar values and aspirations and can develop from as early as school years. But how are we meant to lead a balanced lifestyle with so many friendship circles? And is it possible to have too many friends?

Too often we hold onto friendships that no longer serve us, which is why it is important to take a step back every now and again to re-evaluate and ask yourself whether that friendship is of benefit to you. You have to ask yourself some key questions: Is this friendship making me happy? Is this person worthy of my precious time?

TIME TO LET GO

Maybe you can identify a relationship that is not making you happy and you frequently leave their company feeling sad. Maybe you have a toxic friendship that leads to arguments and constant negativity. We hold onto certain friends for a number of reasons, but a common deciding factor is because of time. If we have invested significant time into a relationship, we stick with it. But whether you've been friends for one month or ten years, if that relationship isn't adding anything to your life then why waste any more time trying to fix it? Perhaps you make an effort with someone and this isn't reciprocated – these one-sided friendships can leave you feeling exhausted. Like unnecessary objects in your home, it's possible to cull your list of friends.

LESS IS MORE

Focusing on the people that matter the most is a step in the right direction. We need to free ourselves of the stress that is caused by trying to please and instead focus on those people that make us happy. Choosing to have fewer, more valuable friends leaves you free from the unwanted pressure of trying to juggle your time between too many people. Pause for a moment and think about how you feel. Do you feel as though you are spreading yourself too thin? Do you want to invest more energy and time into people that matter to you? Then it's time to have a reshuffle within your friendship circle and direct your attention to those that actually benefit your life.

A NUMBERS GAME

According to anthropologist Professor Robin Dunbar, there are numbers at play. He believes that the average person knows 150 people as acquaintances. He goes deeper and suggests that within this group, 50 people are considered friends and 15 people as good friends. The most intimate of Dunbar's numbers is five – the group of friends we turn to in times of crisis. These are your ultimate friends who will be there for you through thick and thin. Take a moment to think to yourself of these five ultimate best friends and ask yourself whether you are spending enough time with them? Dunbar believes that one of the main reasons we should declutter and refine our friendships is so that we can ensure our time is being shared in an effective and manageable way. Having a small, intimate group of friends means that you can hone in on why these friends make you happy and concentrate on building stronger bonds. Focus on these small, intimate groups of friends and be confident when you decide to walk away from the relationships that are no longer working. You will find you will become happier, more energised and better at managing your time.



GET TO KNOW YOURSELF

Amongst all of this decluttering the one person that you need to get to know the most is yourself. Spending some quality time on your own in your own company is one of the best ways that you can truly understand what makes you happy and what makes your soul sing. When we have too many friends we frequently neglect our own problems as we become overwhelmed with everyone else's. We put our own problems and worries on the backburner – but this is wrong and this is when things can get a bit too much. Take a moment to organise and reflect on your own journey and stop worrying about everyone else. Why not take a walk to your local park or spend an hour doing something you love solitary, such as baking or making music.

“Choosing to have fewer, more valuable friends leaves you free from the unwanted pressure of trying to juggle your time between too many people.”



AVOID TOXIC PEOPLE

At some stage in our lives we will inevitably meet someone toxic. Toxic people are those who are draining and negative and are often those kinds of people who require too much energy and time. They are easy to spot as they can leave you feeling anxious and sad. These are the friends that we need to step away from. You can tell them your intentions by simply explaining to them face to face your reasons and walking away with your head held high. Be clear in the direction you are going in and walk away from people who don't make you happy.

LET IT FIZZLE OUT

Ending a friendship is never an easy task, but if you have identified a friendship that is no longer serving you then it's one that needs to be accomplished. One way of cutting someone out of your life is by slowly reducing contact and the amount of time you are spending with that person. Start by not organising to meet up as frequently and avoid texting back as often. It might not be easy and you will inevitably miss that person from time to time, but just keep reminding yourself of why you've decided to let go.

TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK OF YOUR 5 ULTIMATE BEST FRIENDS AND JOT THEM DOWN BELOW.

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HAVE YOU SPENT TIME ON YOUR OWN RECENTLY? WRITE DOWN 10 THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY. THINK ABOUT WHY THESE ADD VALUE TO YOUR LIFE.

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ORGANISE YOUR LIFE GOALS

Setting goals is a great way of us organising our lives and helping us to stay focused. But what are the secrets to making sure we achieve our goals?

At some stage in our lives we will all inevitably set ourselves a goal. This could be anything from running a race, reaching a goal weight or working towards a new promotion at work. Goals are great because they keep us focused and they keep us propelling forward in life. When we reach a goal we feel an immediate sense of gratification and this success makes us feel great. This action of setting ourselves targets allows us to step back from the present moment and think ahead to where we see ourselves in the future. If we invest the time in setting these goals and taking a momentary pause to address the direction that we are going in, we can identify areas in which we can blossom. However, although setting ourselves a goal is a great idea, sometimes goals can become overwhelming, especially when we set too many goals at once. When we overload ourselves with setting too many goals, we almost always set ourselves up for failure. We can avoid this but setting ourselves realistic goals that are attainable.

BE REALISTIC

Try to avoid setting a goal that is unrealistic and unachievable. Instead, try to focus on investing in goals that you are likely to achieve – that way you won't be left disappointed when you don't succeed in them. You need to ask yourself a series of key questions when writing down your goals. For example: 'Why do you want to achieve this goal?' or 'How will this benefit my life?' When you ask yourself these questions you will find that you are not just mindlessly writing down a list of goals, but instead you are making a conscious effort to work out how it will benefit you.

SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Once you have made your list of goals you can now divide them into two categories: short-term and long-term. Both are important, but what makes them different from one another is the amount of time we set ourselves to

MAKE SMART GOALS

When you begin to identify your goal it's important to apply the principle of 'S.M.A.R.T' to it. This stands for the following:

SPECIFIC: Avoid being vague. If losing weight is your goal then think specifically about how much you want to lose and by when. The more detail you can give yourself, the more likely you will succeed at reaching it.

MEASURABLE: When it comes to setting goals, keeping track of your progress is essential as this will keep you motivated when you can see the results. For example, weigh yourself often and make a note of it in a diary – that way you can see when the pounds are falling off and readdress things if they are not. Perhaps you are looking to save more money per month? If saving is the goal then set up a monthly direct debit from your bank account. This method ensures that you can easily keep track of how much you've put into your account over the last year.

ACHIEVABLE: Don't be unrealistic; avoid creating goals that are too lofty and impossible. Instead, set goals that you know that you can manage and you can work towards.

REALISTIC: Make sure that your goals match up with reality and are achievable in the time frame that you have set yourself. Set goals that you can realistically work towards. Your dreams can still be big and you can still challenge yourself to step outside of your comfort zone, just go about setting them in a realistic way.

TIME: Some of your goals may be very time specific. For example, you might be planning on partaking in a running race in October. But other goals may not need a time frame at all, such as 'I want to learn how to swim'. Having a clear idea of your timeline in your head gives you a sense of urgency, so set yourself a goal and work out dates on when you want to achieve certain things by. Timelines force you to stay motivated and keep on track.

achieve them. Short-term goals are anything that you want to achieve within a matter of months. For example, a common short-term goal is to lose weight before a holiday. On the other hand, long-term goals are anything you want to achieve in your near future, from two years to 20. Setting both of these types of goals and setting yourself a time frame gives order to your life and the direction that you are going in.

DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF

You are only human and sometimes life can get in the way of preventing you from reaching what you originally set out to achieve. But the worst thing you can do is to punish yourself for not reaching your goal! Instead, take a step back, press pause, reset and start again. If at first you don't succeed then try and try again.

DO SOME RESEARCH

Maybe you want to build a business? Or maybe you want to learn how to play a musical instrument? If you aren't quite sure where to start, your goal can quickly begin to feel impossible to reach. Look no further than the internet and Google for some peace of mind! Research is a vital step in the right direction to achieving your goals. For example, if it's music you are interested in, you can start by looking into local guitar teachers and invest in some lessons. These are simple steps but they are all going in the right direction to obtaining your end goal.



TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

There is no time like the present to set your goals and start working towards them. The more time you spend thinking about them then the less time you spend working towards them. So set your wheels in motion and start working towards your first goal today.

GET A DIARY

One of the best ways that you can keep on top of your goals and make sure you are striving forward is to note them down in a diary. Jot time frames and dates into your diary of when you want to achieve certain stages of your goals by. That way you will make sure that you are keeping on top of everything you set out to achieve.

"The worst thing you can do is to punish yourself for not achieving your goal!"

A circular wreath of blue flowers and green leaves surrounds a teal background. The quote is written in a white, cursive font in the center of the teal circle.

*"The first step in
crafting the life
you want is to get rid
of everything
you don't"*

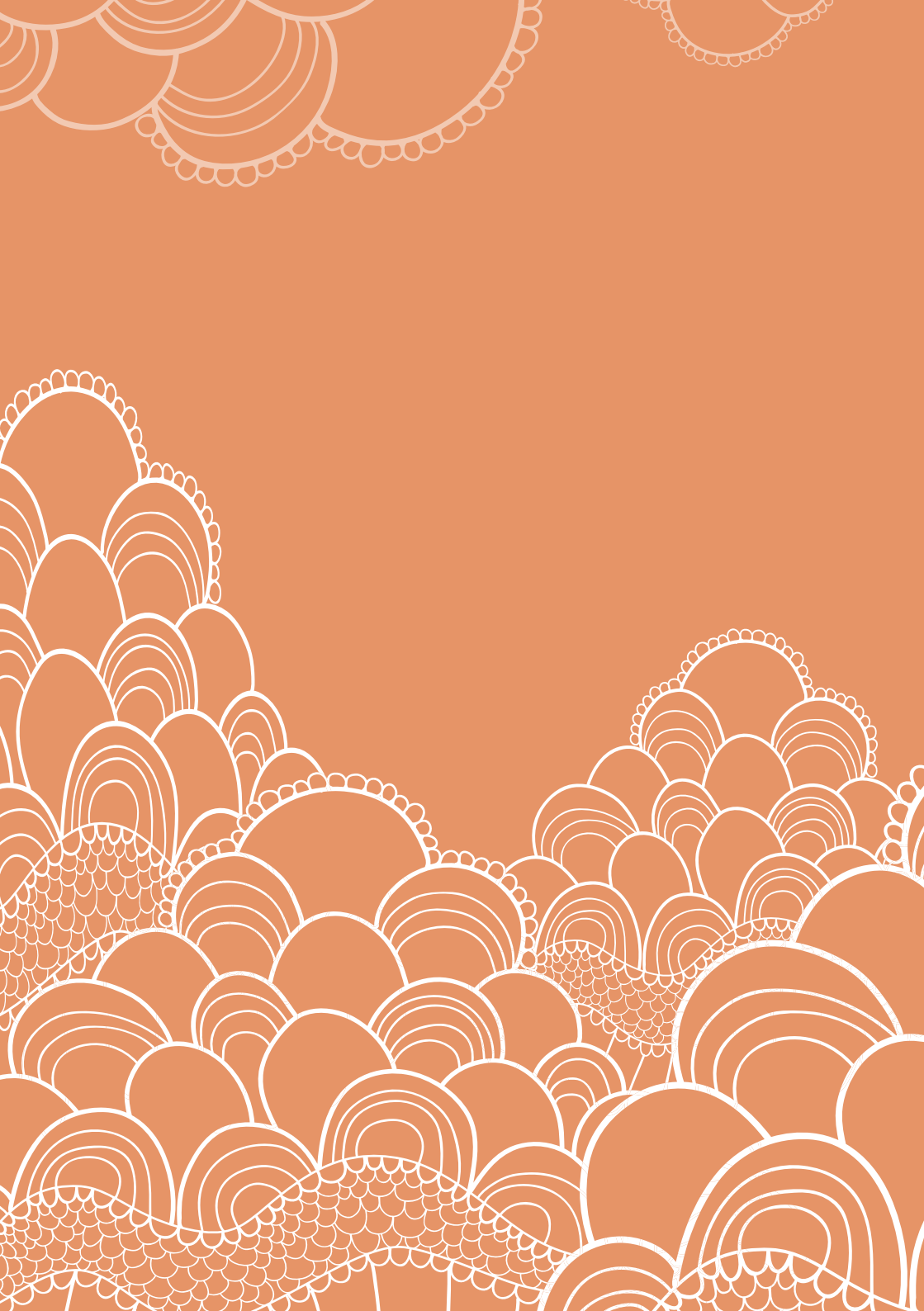
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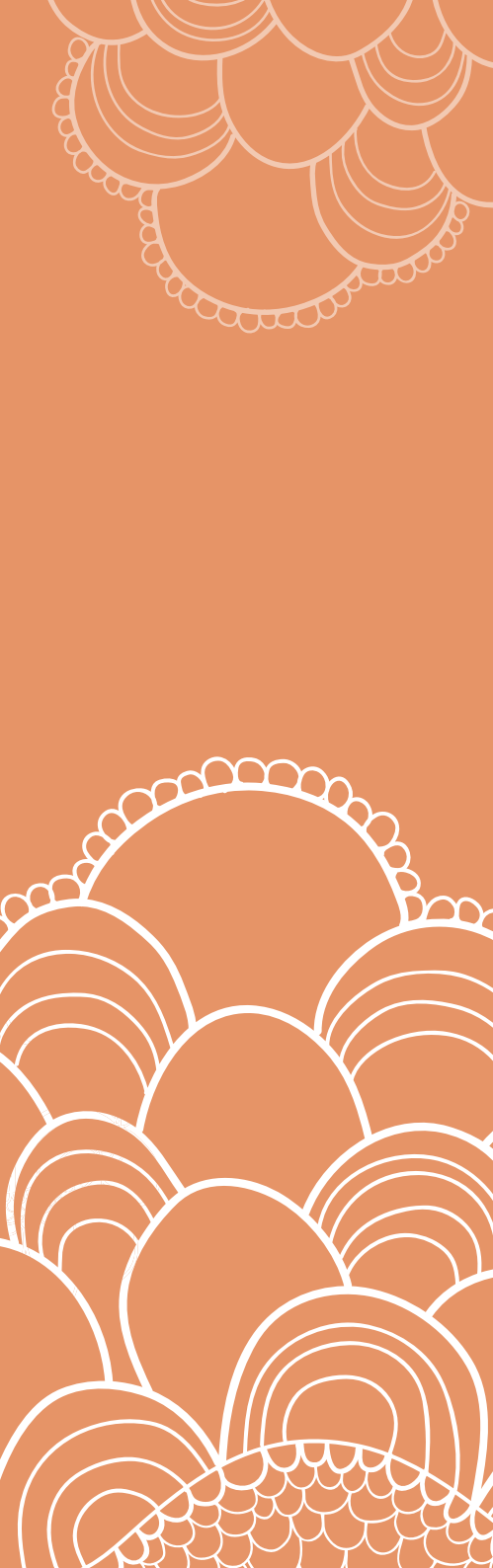
**WHAT WERE YOU MOST SURPRISED ABOUT WHILE
DECLUTTERING YOUR LIFE?**

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing.

HOW HAS DECLUTTERING YOUR LIFE CHANGED YOU? HOW DO YOU FEEL NOW?

WRITE DOWN THE STEPS THAT YOU WILL TAKE IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT YOUR LIFE STAYS CLUTTER FREE.





DECLUTTER YOUR MIND

Discover how to empty your mind, process stress more mindfully, and learn how to really breathe and work on expressing how you feel



REFLECT ON YOUR MIND

A clutter free home and life are completely pointless if your mind is jam-packed with thoughts, feelings, worries and stresses

Taking a mindful approach to clearing your mind of clutter and organising your feelings will help you live your best possible life. It's so important that we take time to reset our mind and unburden ourselves. Writing our thoughts down on paper helps us to organise them, reflect and process them. Or learning basic meditation practices can work wonders.

The next few exercises are essential. They will help you to understand why you have begun this decluttering journey. Make sure that you refer back to these pages as you progress and remind yourself of the why.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO BEGIN DECLUTTERING YOUR MIND?

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing.

WHAT DO YOU DWELL ON THE MOST?



A series of 20 horizontal dashed lines for writing, arranged in ten pairs. Each pair consists of a top dashed line and a bottom dashed line, with a small gap between them. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.



EMPTY YOUR MIND

Devote some time to emptying your mind and organising your thoughts

Our minds are powerful. They have the ability to store memories, control our bodies and allow us to function on a daily basis, which is why it is important to check in with ourselves every now and again and adopt the same level of care for ourselves as we do for our friends and family members. When was the last time you stopped to ask yourself the following: Am I okay?

Often we become caught up in the busyness of modern life in between work, domestic chores, catching up with friends and working out, that we forget to stop and press pause. This, of course, means physically stopping to relax, but it also means stopping mentally to digest any thoughts and emotions that have risen throughout our busy days. It is just as important to organise and empty your mind as it is to clear out your home.

WRITE IT DOWN

One way to digest your thoughts is to put pen to paper and write them down at the end of each day in a diary. The simple act of writing can feel as though you are physically pouring your emotions onto a page, which can provide you with great head space and clarity. Although it's important to note down any physically challenging and potentially negative feelings that have crept up in the day, it is also vital to note down the positives to help keep the pessimism at bay. Some psychologists, like Nancy Digidon, suggest that writing a gratitude journal every night can make you become aware of all the good things in your life, which in turn can also lead to a restful night's sleep and an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Digidon's study showed that people who kept a gratitude journal to record their thoughts every evening before bed slept longer and felt happier.

STEP OUTSIDE

When was the last time you stepped outside and went for a stroll without the distraction of music, a podcast or other people? Walking outside among nature can be a great way to calm the mind and the mindless chatter in your head. Instead of concentrating on analysing any thoughts that you encounter while

walking, try to focus on the sounds of birds, the swish of the trees and maybe, if you are lucky enough, the lap of the waves on the shore line. Walking can be a great way to unwind after a stressful day, or a manic week, so try and make sure you set aside the time – even if it's just for ten minutes or so.

GET STRETCHY

Dedicate some time to yourself by making sure you spend quality time on a yoga mat once or twice a week. It's good for the mind, it's good for the soul and it's great for your body, but are you doing enough of it? Yoga is a moving meditation where, for 60 minutes, you invite your mind to switch off and be still. As you move through the various poses you will find your mind invariably wander to some of the following thoughts: 'I can't do that pose', 'She's better than me at this', 'When will I be more flexible?' or 'What am I going to have for dinner?' But the more you practise and the more time you set aside for you and your mat, the more you will invite the restless voice in your head to settle. Whenever you find your mind wandering, just come back to focus on your breathing and remind yourself of the phrase 'I am enough'.

MEDITATE

No one said that meditation was going to be easy. The minute you tell your mind that you are going to sit still for 30 minutes, you open up a can of worms and are reminded of hundreds of other things that you 'should' be doing. I invite you to reject those thoughts of what you 'should' be doing and spend some time emptying your mind and sitting peacefully still. There have been plenty of studies that have linked meditation to better mental health and many use it as a way of coping with stress and dealing with anxiety. By allowing your mind and body to be still, it helps you to stay centred and avoid stressing over things that aren't within your control. Set aside some time once a day to sit somewhere quietly, without any distractions. Before you begin, start by making sure that you are comfortable by propping your back up and making sure you are warm. This will stop your mind from finding an excuse to jump out of your practice. Second, start a timer on your phone. Begin with five minutes and you can gradually increase this as you begin to feel more and more comfortable in your own space. That way you don't have to wonder how long you have been sat there for, as your phone can do the hard work for you. Third, welcome any thoughts that come into your mind – but don't spend too long on them. You don't need to unpick them or over-analyse them, but instead allow them to float past you on a cloud. As time goes on you will be able to still the mindless stream of consciousness and sit in peace without the distraction of your own thoughts.

WRITE IT DOWN

If writing a diary every night isn't your scene then try a morning diary instead. Start every day by writing all of your thoughts onto paper. This doesn't need to be in formed sentences or censored – this is for your eyes only, remember, so write whatever jumps to mind. Write in a stream of consciousness style and get all of your thoughts, ideas, emotions or plans for the day onto the paper. By writing a morning diary, it can allow you to clarify, prioritise and reset your mind for the day ahead.

A PROBLEM SHARED IS A PROBLEM HALVED

One of the best ways to calm your mind is by sharing your problems. By offloading any mental or physical challenges to a pair of listening ears, your anxiety and stress levels can be quickly reduced. Why not organise a meet-up with a family member or a close friend and spend some time unpicking any built-up feelings?

ENDORPHINS MAKE YOU HAPPY

Ever wondered why you always feel so great after exercise? That is because exercise releases endorphins, and endorphins make you happy! Set aside time to work out, even if it is just by taking a quick walk. Exercise also helps to still your mind and reduce stress.



EMOTIONAL SPRING CLEANING

If your house is a mess you know it's time for a spring clean, so why don't we spend more time decluttering our emotions when it comes to our relationships?

Our feelings and relationships can be just as messy as our bedrooms, but instead of working through our problems, we often let them fester, and as the issues get worse our emotional well-being suffers. If you spring clean your house, you sort through the mess, throw out anything you no longer need and end up feeling less stressed. You can do the same for the clutter in your mind. You wouldn't hang on to a pair of jeans that make you feel less confident so don't hang on to anything or anyone in your life that isn't a positive influence and don't hold on to grudges. Just like when you're sorting through your clothes, you need to look at your different relationships and think about how they make you feel. Learn to accept what you can't change and work through what you can to create the life and relationships you want.

STUCK IN A RUT

If you're in a relationship which used to be good, whether with a partner or friend, but you now find yourself feeling unhappy or constantly arguing, it's time to declutter. Ask yourself what the issues are and how they're making you feel. Are you having problems with money? Are you struggling with intimacy? Do you argue a lot or just not talk any more? Often we get stuck in a rut, negative actions turn into patterns and then cycles and instead of talking about the problems, we bottle them up or ignore them. The first step is recognition. Write a list of why you feel unhappy and what you would like to change.

If you and your friend or partner are arguing a lot, talk about why you argue and listen to each other. Are you expecting too much of the other person? Are you too critical of them? Are they not being supportive or helping out enough? Sort through your issues by discussing ways in which you can both improve your actions and be happier. You might just need to spend more quality time together, show each other more kindness or affection or simply eliminate distractions. It's important to know what you want, but also be understanding and listen to what your partner wants. You may be angry about something they've done, but you can't change the past and getting angry isn't going to

make you feel better. Let go of resentment, talk about what you want, change the way you communicate and reassess your expectations. Change starts with you. Learn this and you can find true happiness. If you take the time to declutter your relationship, you can save it.

PUTTING YOURSELF FIRST

Often in relationships we try so hard to please the other person that we forget about ourselves. This can also make us unhappy. Try putting yourself first for a change. This doesn't mean not thinking about others, but think about what you want and how you can achieve it. If you talk to your partner or friend they may even agree with you. You can't be a good partner if you're not happy so make sure you declutter your mind and work through your feelings so you can be the best, happiest version of yourself, not only for you but for the people who love you too. Start by making a list of how you feel about yourself, whether that's fat or ugly. Now write this list again but write "I am not fat", "I am not ugly". Now write another list of all your good qualities. You need to love yourself for others to love you. If you're struggling, get a friend to help. The best partner or friend will make you feel good about yourself.

LEARN TO LET GO

If you've decluttered your mind and you've talked through the issues, but you're still not seeing any changes and you still don't feel happy, you may have to accept that you no longer need this person in your life. Ask yourself how they make you feel, if they are a positive influence in your life and if things can change. If not it may be time to let go and move on.

DECLUTTER YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT BEING SINGLE

If you're single and unhappy, it may be time to declutter your heart. Dating can be stressful, but try and focus on the positives. Enjoy your independence. Focus on what you want and what you don't want. If you're on a date with someone you're attracted to, make sure you remember what you're not looking for; it's more than just attraction. Assess the situation. There are endless dating apps these days and we constantly have a million things open on our screens. Are you using multiple apps and not investing enough in the conversations you're having? Or are you going on dates, but with people who aren't emotionally ready for a relationship? It's also important to make sure you're ready to date. Are you holding on to the past? Are you over your ex? Let go of the past so you can move forward. Picture how you want your life to work, think about how you can achieve this and work through your relationships a step at a time to achieve this.

DON'T OVER-DECLUTTER

Just like when you're spring cleaning your house, you can go too far in a bid to sort your life out. You don't want to throw out a top you don't often wear and end up regretting it. Similarly, you don't want to delete all your contacts and unfriend all your mates. Think carefully about losing someone from your life and make sure you've tried everything to make it work. Cutting someone out is a last resort but may be something you need to do if they're a negative influence.

DECLUTTER YOUR SPACE

While we're talking about decluttering your mind and not your home, the two go hand in hand. A positive environment can make you feel better so if you're struggling with intimacy in your relationship, make sure your bedroom is a calming environment. Tidy up, make the bed with fresh sheets, get a plant or light some romantic scented candles. It'll definitely help get you both in the mood.

HOLDING ON TO CLUTTER

Holding on to clutter can prevent you from living a full life. Don't live in the future; live in the now. Do you think thoughts like "I will only be happy when xxx"? You need to learn to be happy now. Don't keep a pair of jeans because you're going to be thinner in the future. Instead, learn to be happy with your body now. Similarly, don't stay with someone because you think they'll change if you know deep down they never will.



MASTER MEDITATION

Meditation has been practised by Buddhists for hundreds of years and their reputation for being some of the most chilled-out people on the planet speaks volumes

One form of meditation practised by Buddhists is mindfulness. It focuses on paying attention to the moment, which seeks to ease stress and anxiety. The idea is to not think about anything in particular, so that when you 'awaken' you feel revived and ready to live in the present.

Practising the technique regularly will focus your concentration, as well as your ability to remain calm under pressure and to live in the now rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. The knock-on effect of this is that you can better handle stressors when they surface and control your emotions and reactions.

One of the main reasons people struggle with mindfulness is they think they're not 'doing it right', because the mind wanders. But the more you practise the better you'll get at pulling your mind away from distractions. If you're struggling, imagine you're sat on a warm grassy bank next to a gently flowing river, your worries manifest as crinkled brown leaves that drift down into the water. Notice them but allow them to drift away out of sight and return your attention back to the flow of the river. Moving forward you'll be able to do this in your day-to-day life, not only during moments of mindfulness.

Mindfulness isn't for everyone, and there's a small percentage of people who believe that the practice can exaggerate their anxiety. If this is you, just start small or try using one of the many great apps out there to talk you through the process with the bonus of soothing music. If you're still not convinced try a more physical form of relaxation, such as gentle exercise like walking or exercise which practises mindful movement, like yoga, tai chi or body balance.

MEDITATION STATION

Clearing your mind is tough. If a thought pops into your head imagine you're stood on a station platform watching a train whiz by. Each part of the train is a different worry. Once the train is gone focus on the still and quiet left behind.

KEEP A JOURNAL

Sometimes opening up to someone about what is worrying or upsetting you can seem impossible, so why not try writing it down instead?

Writing things down is a brilliant way of not only working out what is bothering you, but it can also help in coming up with ways to tackle the issue itself. By getting into the habit of writing down your woes, you'll begin to notice patterns of what triggers your stress and identify tactics to manage your emotions when they arise, ultimately helping you to cope with stress in the long term.

As tempting as it may seem to list all your grievances and complaints in one long rant, the key to success here is to be a little more productive, so focus on finding a solution, as well as identifying the problem. For example, how are you coping with your worry and stress? What have you tried to do to alleviate it? What have you learned from the situation? What do you think you would do differently if it happens again?

If writing prose isn't your thing and you're struggling to make a start, then try answering some more direct questions that will challenge your thinking and ability to cope with problems, plus force you to use some objectivity and rationality. For example, what is the likelihood of the thing you are worrying about actually happening? Will worrying about it stop it happening? What can you do to control the situation if it does happen? What's the worst that could really happen? Could you cope? How do other people you know cope with these things? What will worrying actually achieve? What coping techniques can you use to stop yourself from worrying?

Attacking your problems in this way will show you emotion isn't always useful, and that it can hinder reason, thus perpetuating the feeling of hopelessness and anxiety. Just remember, worrying doesn't solve your problems, rational thought and logic do, so the more you learn to control your emotions and think objectively, the happier you'll be.

TAKE CHARGE WITH CBT

If you feel like you're weighed down by negative thoughts or as though your emotions always spiral out of control in times of stress, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help

There are just three things you need to do for CBT to work – catch it, check it, change it.

STEP 1 – CATCH IT – NOTICE THE PROBLEM

You may think that trying to ignore your worries is the best way to deal with them, but actually this only makes things worse. Imagine for instance that a friend said “don't think about that giant pink elephant”, that's all you'd be able to think about, and it's the same with anxiety. So step one is to acknowledge whatever it is that is making you feel stressed – for example, “I've got too much housework to do”.

STEP 2 – CHECK IT – RATIONALISE THE PROBLEM

Tap into your logic rather than your emotion, because it's your emotion that is making you feel bad and keeping you that way. How much of what is worrying you is justified? Do you really believe it to be true? Remind yourself of when things like this have happened before and how you coped. Look at the facts of the situation. In the example of having too much to do, if you break down what you 'must' do, is there still time to get things done? Can you ask someone for help? Put it into context. Do other people have similar troubles but manage to cope? Ask yourself honestly, how important is this in the grand scheme of things?

STEP 3 – CHANGE IT – RE-EVALUATE THE PROBLEM

Now ask yourself again, how much do you believe in what was upsetting you? Does it really matter? Maybe you've not completely changed your view on it, but you should start to feel less bothered by it and you may even have some practical strategies for solving the problem.

BE DECISIVE

For some people making a decision is as simple as breathing, but for others making a choice is an agonising and time-consuming affair. So what's the solution?

Often the reason for struggling to make a decision lies rooted in a negative experience from the past, while for others it can be an overwhelming fear of upsetting, offending or angering someone. The trick is to take away the pressure of having to get it right. Use reason, not emotion, and ask yourself – does it really matter? Will the choice you make matter this time next year? How about tomorrow? What about if a friend was faced with the same decision, would they struggle? What choice would you advise them to make?

This is where activities such as decluttering can really help, as it forces you to repeatedly make decisions and hone in on what you consider most important. Once you start to recognise when something feels right, you can use it to help you make decisions elsewhere in your life.

Just as some people struggle with making a decision, others can have difficulty saying no – often for similar reasons. Worrying about how it will make someone else feel or view you can force you to say 'yes' when you may not really want to. Again, look at the situation rationally. Are they really likely to get upset or angry if you say no? If they do, doesn't that say more about them than it does about you? Remember you cannot control anyone else, only yourself. You can only feel guilty if you give in to someone else's control. Hold on to the belief that you have the right to say no and make decisions that are right for you.

People who struggle with decisions or who can't say no often end up multitasking, because they have too much on their plate, which in turn impairs their ability to make good decisions. The answer is to prioritise. Again remove emotion and look at the facts. What needs to be done first? Which things are important and what can wait?

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Vocalising what you want or don't want can be hard if you've always given in to other people's demands. Practise by starting on little things of no consequence and remind yourself you made a decision that was right for you. Practising in front of the mirror can also help with your confidence. For example, try "I see what you're saying, but I actually think this..." or "Thanks for thinking of me, but on this occasion I'll say no".

WHAT TO DO FIRST

On a piece of paper draw a vertical line down the middle and horizontal one across to create four boxes. In the first one write, 'Have to and want to', in the second add, 'Have to but don't want to', then 'Don't have to but want to' third, and in the final one 'Don't have to and don't want to'. Add all your tasks to the relevant boxes, then work through them from box one to four.

START A TO-DO LIST

Write down everything that you would like to accomplish today and start completing each task one by one. Now start every day with a simple to-do list.

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO RELAX

While mindfulness is a sure-fire way to meditate that has been working wonders for centuries, there are other approaches you can take to achieve relaxation. Here are just a few...

FIND YOUR HAPPY PLACE

When you feel overwhelmed or confronted with things that upset you try going to your 'happy place'. To find your happy place imagine yourself somewhere alone, where there are no distractions, nothing to be scared or fearful of. You can imagine yourself sat there quite happily and peacefully on your own. With that place in your mind, concentrate on building a picture of it. What can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? All these things should relax you, make you smile even. Then the next time you start to feel anxious close your eyes, ground your feet, practise your breathing (see opposite page) and concentrate on your happy place.

CLENCH AND RELEASE

If you are finding it hard to let go there is a technique which can coerce your body into relaxing. The idea is to clench each muscle, hold it for ten seconds and then exhale as you release. Rest for 20 seconds then move onto the next muscle, repeating all over the body. This is particularly helpful if you have muscle tension or sit for long periods of time at a desk, and will give you a more pronounced feeling of relaxation.

COACH YOURSELF WITH SELF COMPASSION

Don't berate yourself for making mistakes, instead be kind and praise yourself for being brave enough to make them. Close your eyes and recall in your mind the times where you've shown and received kindness. Think about occasions when you felt like the best you could be. Remind yourself to live in the here and now, enjoy every moment. Remind yourself of all the good things you do, all the things you like about yourself, focus on feeling good about yourself and let the warmth spread through you.

BATHE IN NATURE

Developed in the 1980s by the Japanese this idea sees you immerse yourself in nature when you're feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated, and can be as simple as taking a stroll in the woods, or anywhere away from urban environments, such as a park, meadow or beach. You will be distracted and therefore less focused on your worries, lowering cortisol (stress) levels, and because the blood will be moving more vigorously, thanks to the gentle exercise, you'll also feel more positive due to the release of endorphins (happy hormones).

LEARN TO BREATHE

The key to meditation, mindfulness or feeling relaxed is breathing properly. When you're faced with stress it can trigger your flight or fight response because the brain believes you're under attack. This causes you to take bigger breaths in then out, sending oxygen into your muscles preparing them for action. The trouble comes when there is no 'real' attack, and this rapid breathing starts a panic attack. To relax properly requires controlled breathing, the same breathing which can bring you out of a panic attack; bigger breathes out then in. So breathe in through the nose for five seconds, hold, then out through the mouth for seven. Repeat.

CREATIVE MEDITATION

Creative pursuits can have a healing and protective effect on the mind, and the great news is you don't need to be a Picasso to do them. Adult colouring, dot-to-dots, or even just doodling are simple but hugely effective ways of reducing stress and increasing positivity, which in turn can lead you to feel more productive and in control of your life.





DON'T LET STRESS BECOME YOU

Stress can often be the source of many health and relationship issues. It can affect your mental and physical health as well as how you interact with others

If you don't seek help or look for solutions for your stress, it can become all-encompassing and feel impossible to overcome. Stress can also be very isolating and cause irrational and aggressive behaviour that might not be normal for you. Identify the sources of your stress so that you can then find solutions that will help towards reducing it.

WRITE DOWN 5 THINGS THAT YOU ARE STRESSED ABOUT.
NOW THINK ABOUT POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

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STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES

Our senses are powerful time capsules; smells, sounds and tastes have tremendous power to take us back to a moment in our lives

The smell of chlorine may make you feel powerful for swimming lengths, while baking smells may take you back to childhood. While meditating on these smells, dig a little deeper into the emotions they bring. Allow yourself time to enjoy the other sensations they bring with them. Once you have identified your five favourite smells, try to meet the other smells you may encounter in day-to-day life with the same degree of attention. Appreciate the sense of smell, we may find ourselves ignoring it unless we're actively using it!

LIST FIVE SMELLS YOU LOVE AND HOW THEY MAKE YOU FEEL.

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SMILE, IT CONFUSES PEOPLE

Mindfulness practice isn't heavy and serious self-introspection all the time. We look to find joy in moments that we are present

Write down 10 things that make you smile. Try to be as specific as possible, what was it about that funny cat video that tickled you? The things that make you smile should not make you shameful; there's nothing wrong in enjoying the silly things in life! As you write your list take a moment to recognise how each item makes you feel, even in just its mention. Be mindful of the smile forming, whether inside or out, where does your smile originate?

Smiling begets smiling, which in turn invites more joy from the world. Endeavour to include these things into your day-to-day routine.

| WRITE DOWN 10 THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 10 |



FEEL THROUGH MUSIC

We can destroy the perception that mindfulness is a calm and serene practice by using music

Music can be cathartic, and we can use that quality in our mindfulness work. Write down five songs that make you feel mindful. If you would like, listen to them too. Focus on feeling connected to every part of your body and being in the present moment; feel the emotions that the music evokes. We can let go of self-awareness when we dance, yet also feel profoundly connected to our bodies.

Music recalls times, places and events in our life; if your mind brings those moments to you, allow it compassionately and calmly. However, if you feel your emotions are spiralling negatively, gently guide yourself back to the present moment by recognising the beat, the melody or the individual instruments.

WRITE DOWN FIVE SONGS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL MINDFUL.

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- 3 _____

- 4 _____

- 5 _____



TECHNOLOGY FAST

For all the immediate satisfaction technology gives us, our devices can prevent us from living 'in the moment'

We've all noticed people experiencing life from behind their phone screen, capturing the moment instead of enjoying and savouring it. We are also bombarded with information that is unhelpful in living our lives, and we can easily become upset or anxious over things we can't change. Turn off your devices, or at least put them on silent or airplane mode, and switch yourself on. Write down ten activities that don't involve technology. How can you plan them into your schedule? Acknowledge any feelings of guilt or helplessness that may emerge when you forego your tech of choice. The hour before bedtime is an excellent time to carve out for a no-tech-allowed space, you may find you sleep easier!

WRITE DOWN 10 ACTIVITIES THAT DON'T INVOLVE TECHNOLOGY. THINK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN PLAN THEM INTO YOUR SCHEDULE?

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| 4 | | 9 | |
| 5 | | 10 | |



LOVE YOURSELF

You are great. You may only believe that when someone else says it, but now is the time for some positive self-talk

Sit quietly and scan your body; start at your feet and move around your body up to your head. Think about the way you use your body in many ways and write down five things that you love about yourself. These may be physical; ie 'my legs are strong', 'I have a cute nose', or they may be more abstract – 'my dinner parties are fabulous'. This may seem silly but refer back to the list when you feel a little down on yourself. You have much to love about yourself. If you feel yourself slipping into negativity, stop yourself, acknowledge the feeling and talk kindly to yourself.

WRITE DOWN FIVE THINGS THAT YOU LOVE ABOUT YOURSELF.

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*"What you think, you
become. What you
feel, you attract.
What you imagine,
you create."*

Buddha



MAKE DECLUTTERING A WAY OF LIFE

Becoming clutter free will bring harmony to your home, order to your life, and ultimately a sense of calm to your mind – all you have to do is keep going!

Life is stressful; no one will live a stress-free existence. All we can control is how we act and how we respond to life's stressors as and when they arise. In the case of our home environment, it's well within our control to create and maintain a tidy, clutter-free home; you just have to find the inner strength and motivation to do it and then keep it up.

For many people decluttering is a chore, but like anything we don't want to do, it's a case of mind over matter. Tell yourself, 'I can and I will do this, and my life will be better for it'.

At the start or even during the midst of the decluttering process, there may be times when you feel like giving up or that you can't cope with some of the more emotionally draining elements of purging your belongings. Just try to stay positive, remind yourself why you are doing this – because you want a tidier home and a better life with less stress and more happiness. In time you should start to experience a rush of excitement that comes from letting go of things you no longer need. This is your brain's way of letting you know you're doing the right thing, it's responding to the fact that you are relaxing. This feeling can be addictive, so go with it, feed off it to keep yourself motivated as you move through the rooms in your home.

Every journey starts with a single step, and all you can do is move one step at a time. Putting away items and keeping check of clutter as and when you notice it is taking the journey one step at a time. If you let clutter build by putting off dealing with it, before you know it you'll be back to where you started. To succeed you have to commit to this change for at least two months, in which time you should have conditioned yourself to make this habit automatic. So keep moving one step at a time. If you put things off you'll fail, so be consistent. Keep it simple, just deal with one item at a time, and soon your home and your lifestyle will be everything you hoped it would be when you started.

MAKE DECLUTTERING A LIFESTYLE CHOICE

Old habits die hard, which is why you have to force yourself to stick to the changes you've chosen to make. Cherishing what you have, and letting go of what you no longer want is just the start, as there are ample ways you can keep the decluttering love flowing...

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

It helps to keep things looking spick and span if every item has its own designated spot, which again feeds into the principle of respecting the items that you've chosen to keep. So when something is finished with, automatically return it to its home. When deciding where that home needs to be, you should consider keeping similar things together, especially similar things of a similar size, and store them closest to the place where they will be used the most. Utilise boxes and storage solutions for smaller and miscellaneous items, and you'll find labelling these containers can really help to keep things organised. Not only because it will help you assign new items a home in the future, but it will also inform those you share your space with where to return things. Another helpful tip when storing belongings is to place them in a way that helps you to see everything at a glance, often this is upwards or neatly stacked on top of one another. Not only does this save space but it means you can easily see how much of each item you have, which is especially helpful in relation to food shopping, so that you don't buy more than you need.

CLUTTER ZONES

You might find it impossible to keep 100 per cent of your house free from clutter 24-7, and that's okay. No one is perfect; life isn't black and white, and there is happiness in the grey. Try designating specific areas that you'll permit a portion of clutter to accumulate for a limited period of time. For example an 'in tray' or letter holder for mail and leaflets, a magazine basket for things you are currently reading, a clothes chair in the bedroom, etc. While it's okay to allow the clutter to build for a day or two, you don't want this to reach a detrimental level where it aesthetically blights areas of your home and starts to encourage you to let things slide elsewhere. Set a regular time to tidy away these clutter zones, if not every evening, then how about every Thursday evening? Do what works for you, but don't ignore it.

CLEAN & TIDY: DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, YEARLY

There's no way around it. To keep your place looking the business, you're going to have to keep on top of the cleaning, or pay someone else to do it, because the cleaner your house is, the less likely you are to let the mess creep back in again. Every day you should tidy things away so that when you go to bed at night everything is back in its rightful spot, including things like cleaned dishes and laundry. Once a week, a good 'surface clean' should do the trick when it comes to keeping the place looking great, whereas a once-a-month deep clean will help you to spot and prevent bigger problems occurring.

Rather than an annual 'Spring Clean' to revisit the decluttering process, do a bi-annual one. By decluttering in the spring and then again in the autumn, you can get rid of things you haven't used in the past six months (excluding seasonal items), as the chances are if you've not used it in the last six months, are you likely to use it in the next? Decluttering in both the spring and autumn also means you can swap around any stored seasonal items, so come March bring down your summer clothes, toys, and equipment from the attic, and replace them with any woolies, winter wear and wellies, etc.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

You need to stop accumulating. It sounds obvious, but in practice it can take, well, practise. The first course of action to take is limit yourself to a certain budget each month that you can spend on 'items' that don't fall into your traditional grocery shop (which are things that you need to survive). Start with a relatively low amount, for instance £10-£20, and only allow yourself to buy one or two items with the money. This will only work if you're strict with yourself. You might be tempted to cheat, but you're only cheating yourself out of the opportunity to achieve your own goals. By making a conscious decision to limit your spending on needless things, it will hone your skills at choosing quality items. It will also force you to consider borrowing, renting and hiring things instead.

As long as you are doing this for yourself and your loved ones, you will achieve your goals. Just keep in your mind's eye the benefits of living a decluttered life, and remember how unhappy things were before you made the change. You can keep this up, just believe in your ability to succeed.

AVOID THE MATERIAL

Write a birthday or Christmas wish list for ten things that aren't material possessions (including money, vouchers or experience days).

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"Appreciating and respecting what you choose to keep is part of the decluttering process, so give cupboards and storage spaces a good clean before putting belongings away"

BASK IN GLORY

At the end of the decluttering process, make sure you enjoy the fruits of your labour. Invite friends and family over to witness the change and revel in their surprise. Take photos and share them on social media or decluttering support sites to empower others, and stick before and after pictures on your well-organised pinboard to keep the motivation flowing moving forward.

FIND A SPONSOR

If you know someone who has superior organisation and cleaning skills, ask them to act as your sponsor. They could help you declutter or simply provide advice, inspiration, and check up on your progress. They could help monitor your spending and incentivise you if you fall back into bad patterns of behaviour. Alternatively try online decluttering support groups for motivation.

A FRESH START

Appreciating and respecting what you choose to keep is part of the decluttering process, so be sure to give cupboards and storage spaces a good clean before putting belongings away. Choose a cleaning product with an uplifting scent that inspires you or puts you in a good mood, so you'll start to associate it with this newly adopted mindset.

KEEP YOUR CALENDAR/LIFE/DAY AND COMMITMENTS CLUTTER FREE

SORT OUT YOUR SCHEDULE

Just as your home can get cluttered, so can your daily routine, which is why it's so important to make time for your needs as well as others

There are only so many hours in a day, but often the amount of time you give yourself to truly switch off to enjoy life only equates to a handful of minutes.

After you've had a chance to declutter your home, take time out to look at your schedule, and see if there are ways you can declutter that too. For one week, keep a diary of everything you do, and at the end of the week, using a different colour pen, circle anything you did because it made you feel good. Looking at the page there should be balance. Obviously you can't go around 24/7 living a hedonistic lifestyle just doing things that make you feel great, there are obligations and commitments. However life shouldn't only be about doing the things we have to or ought to do, or things that we just do to make other people happy.

So now you have the evidence in front of you in black and white, try to re-evaluate your daily routine. Could you make time for yourself? Could you get up slightly earlier before your day begins or find room in the evening to do something that is just for you? Could you start a new hobby or activity that you've been desperate to try? Is there time at the weekend, if you changed things up a little? Could you drop something you don't enjoy doing for someone else, so that there's more time for your needs?

Just as you've let go of things you don't want in your home anymore, you can let go of people who don't make you feel good. Naturally, rejecting people or saying no to an invitation to do something can feel horrible, because no one wants to upset or anger another person, but you can't control that person and how they feel, you can only control how you feel. The question is, don't you deserve to feel happy?

TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE

Life can get hectic when there are many demands being made of you. Write down your weekly commitments to discover gaps in your schedule and use these holes for some well deserved 'me time'.

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

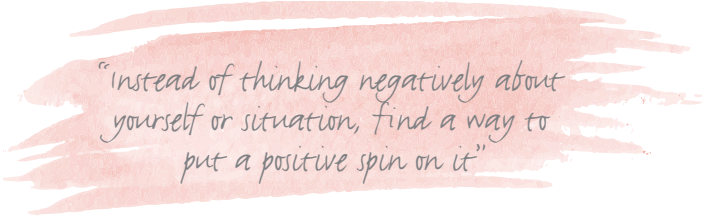
KEEPING YOUR MIND CLUTTER FREE

Decluttering your home is the first step in freeing your mind, but there are many other things you can do to help achieve a sense of calm.

Everyone deals with pressure in their own way, but sometimes the methods are counterproductive; drinking alcohol, eating bad food, staying in bed for long periods of the day, etc. There are many better ways to free your mind when things get too much, such as exercise, proven as one of the most effective and instantaneous ways of busting stress. Not only will you improve yourself physically but exercise reduces the level of cortisol (stress hormone used for fight or flight) in your body, which can increase the risk of illnesses such as depression and heart disease. If you're not used to exercising, start slow, just take a walk in the fresh air. Furthermore, if you can exercise away from an urban setting such as the woods, beach, or fields, all the better, as 'nature bathing' is another sure-fire way to dissolve stress.

Stop giving yourself a hard time, and instead of thinking negatively about yourself or situation, find a way to put a positive spin on it. For example, rather than thinking 'I'm rubbish at keeping my home tidy,' say to yourself, 'I'm good at noticing when things aren't how I want them to be and I'm improving at putting them right'. Realising your own capabilities and limits can be very freeing. You don't have to be perfect, you aren't going to be the best at everything, you can't do everything. Let go of that burden to be perfect and just be you.

Know that you can't control other people, what they say, do, and act. The only person you can control is yourself. Part of this is realising when other people's issues affect you, and retraining your brain to know it's not your fault, for instance avoid blaming yourself, or someone you live with, for the clutter, try to be positive and find the joy in improving your home together.



"Instead of thinking negatively about yourself or situation, find a way to put a positive spin on it"

FIGHT ANXIETY BY LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Living in the moment will bring peace to a busy mind. Clinging onto bad things in the past or worrying about things that might happen in the future, is detrimental to mental wellbeing. Practice mindfulness and force your mind back to the present. You're not a time traveller, you can't go back and change things. Nor are you a fortune teller, use reason over emotion and realise that worrying about what might happen won't stop it from happening.

A HEALTHY MINDSET

Ultimately you can achieve a free mind by staying positive, appreciating what you have, learning from your mistakes, setting realistic goals, believing in and empowering yourself and others, tackling problems when they arise, and knowing that you do deserve to be happy and have good things, whether that's some much needed time for yourself or a calm, clutter-free home and existence.

CARE FOR YOURSELF AS WELL AS OTHERS

If you have children or are a carer for someone in your family it can be more difficult to make time for yourself, but where there's a will, there's a way. Try not to devote every weekend activity to them, instead try to do things that you enjoy too. Also don't be afraid to ask for help from family, friends or hire someone to help out.



EXPERIENCES OVER POSSESSIONS

Encourage friends and family not to indulge you with 'possessions' that may take on sentimental value and hinder your ability to declutter in the future. This will happen most at birthdays and Christmas, so consider asking for an 'experience' over physical objects, such as a meal out, a day at a theme park, a spa retreat, or making a donation to a charity of your choice.

HABIT IN 60 DAYS

It varies from person to person but it's generally accepted that it takes two months for something to become an instinctive, automatic response. So on the date that you finish getting your house in order, mark two months to the day on the calendar. During that time keep the declutter process present in your mind: put things away as soon as they are finished with, keep to a weekly cleaning routine, and limit yourself in what you buy, all the while being vigilant about what you keep. By the time the 60-odd days roll around you should feel that keeping your home and life less cluttered is easier and more organic. But if you feel you still need support, mark down another month. Just keep making the right choices for you and your home, and you should notice a shift in your behaviour and mindset when the month is up.

DECLUTTER *your* LIFE

The amount of both physical and mental clutter that we can accumulate without realising is actually quite frightening. One minute we can be ambling along quite happily, not realising that our load is getting heavier and heavier and that we're beginning to move slower under the weight of it all – until suddenly we can't move. This interactive guide is here to help you get your life in order and learn how to process all of the unnecessary junk we hold on to. Discover how to organise your home, life and mind with our simple exercises and accessible advice.

**Digital
Edition**

SEVENTH EDITION

