



Less Mess, More Energy

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“Never again clutter your days or nights with so many menial and unimportant things that you have no time to accept a real challenge when it comes along. This applies to play as well as work. A day merely survived is no cause for celebration. You are not here to fritter away your precious hours when you have the ability to accomplish so much by making a slight change in your routine. No more busy work. No more hiding from success. Leave time, leave space, to grow. Now. Now! Not tomorrow!”

Og Mandino (1923 - 1996)

Beginning a new year often gives us the push we need to clear up the clutter than has been clogging our lives – you know, out with the old and in with the new. I recently took great pleasure in pulling out my bulging files from last year, tucking them into a sturdy box and filling my file drawers with sparkling clean, empty files (ok, one woman’s pleasure is another woman’s idea of insanity).

Whether you set aside a couple of days to make headway or give yourself 15-minute increments here and there, we offer up these as suggestions to help make 2008 less cluttered and more energized.

If you want help cleaning your clutter, there’s an entire army of people out there that love nothing better than to help you organize your space and your stuff. Visit the **National Association of Professional Organizers** at www.napo.net.

Michelle Passof is one of our favorite de-cluttering divas. She has published a book for do-it-yourselfers called **Lighten Up: Free Yourself From Clutter** and presents workshops throughout the country.

Another favorite author on the subject of de-cluttering and organizing is Julie Morgenstern. Her book **Making Work Work** focuses on de-cluttering and organizing from a work perspective.

If you’re a piler, check out www.pilecabinet.com.

Clearing the clutter can go beyond just the physical act of finding a space for everything. Instead, it might be time to get rid of all that stuff you’ve been holding onto since seventh grade. There are people who will joyfully pick up your stuff. **Freecycle** is dedicated to helping you easily find good homes for the things you no longer want or need. You can find a Freecycle group in your area by going to www.yahogroups.com and searching for Freecycle. I have given away an old 30-foot television antennae, over 100 bricks that were cluttering up my side yard and an aluminum storm door. In each case, people magically came and hauled the items away while thanking me profusely! The only effort required on my part was to draft and post a free ad on my local Freecycle message board. Each one took less than one minute.

Sometimes clutter comes in the form of noise – unwanted sales calls definitely fall in this category. You can eliminate most of them by putting yourself on the do not call list at www.donotcall.gov.

For a different take on organization, check out ***A Perfect Mess: The Hidden Benefits of Disorder--How Crammed Closets, Cluttered Offices, and On-the-Fly Planning Make the World a Better Place***, by Eric Abrahamson and David H. Freedman. These authors contend that neatness for its own sake can actually hamper creativity and efficiency.

What steps can you take to reduce or eliminate some of the noise clutter that surrounds you 24/7?

Ten Easy Ways to Eliminate Clutter

1. Become an active member of the clutter control patrol – walk through the house once each day and pick up items that are homeless. Help them find their way home. Remember that clutter begets clutter. Once you leave something in a place it doesn't belong, it will soon have neighbors.
2. Use the one-in, one-out rule. When you bring something new into your home or office, something else has to go.
3. One of the best ways to eliminate clutter is to keep it out of your house or office in the first place – don't buy what you don't need!
4. Keep a designated garbage can or shredder right inside your home or office so that you can automatically drop or shred your junk mail. If you have a post office box, don't even bring the junk mail home.
5. Create a "home" for everything.
6. When you bring items home, immediately put them where they belong.
7. Have a clutter accountability party. Find one or two friends who want to work on de-cluttering their home or office. Pick a day, call each other in the morning and tell them what you plan on accomplishing during the next one to four hours. Schedule a mid-morning check in. Encourage each other and then get back to work. Celebrate together when you have finished.
8. Declare clutter free zones in your house – especially if you live with a messy person. Agree on the areas that are clutter free and keep them that way.
9. Set aside a few minutes once a week to clear out a drawer or cabinet.
10. Remember it takes about three weeks to create a habit. Celebrate your successes! If you fall off the clutter-free wagon, forgive yourself and get right back on track. You've got much better ways to use your energy!

Marci Moore, ACC and Pam Williams, ACC. co-founders of Innergized!, Inc., help individuals, teams and organizations successfully navigate transitions, build on their strengths, develop stronger relationships, and create the energy necessary for lasting results. They offer a unique and fun team approach to their speaking, coaching, and consulting. Visit www.innergized.com to learn more or to subscribe to their free Innergizing Tips e-newsletter.