

Four Clutter Challenges and What to Do About Them

Backdrop - clutter is a relatively new phenomenon

Our lives are cluttered:

- Not just our homes and offices but our.....
- Inboxes
- Social calendars
- Projects & dreams
- Our kids non-curricular activities

Bombarded by Cultural Messages to overspend and overextend. We're overwhelmed, have low energy and no time. From the media we receive messages like:

- Shop till you drop
- I want it and I want it now
- Have it YOUR way
- I'll sleep when I'm dead
- Life should be fast, instant, and easy
- You can have it all – right now

We need to be aware of these cultural messages so we can get back in control

Where do we start?

Shop less (saving time/money)

Get out of the fast lane, rest, practice good self-care

Beware of cues to have instant gratification, buying unneeded solutions

Reevaluate the trend to have our kids be “booked solid” after school activities

As you listen today, look for one thing you will put it into place—whether it be inspiration to begin, an approach to take, or a specific tip. Look for something you can take action on after the call.

The 4 Big Clutter Challenges are:

1. Getting Started (inspiration, motivation, and a game plan)
2. Dealing with too much stuff – can't let go (not going to solve in this class)
3. Avoiding a Big Mess & Overwhelm
4. Keeping things decluttered (permanent solution)

1. Getting Started (inspiration, motivation, and a game plan)

Inspiration - *Nothing changes if nothing changes.*

Motivation - Spring is here— have a date you're working towards (anniversary, BD, visit)

Game Plan – Decide to get rid of clutter. Make it a high priority.

- **Determine your approach and what you will accomplish in the allotted time (vs unfocused busy work)**

Example – 3 approaches to decluttering the bedroom:

1. Microbursts – 1 shelf of closet
2. Middle Ground – Entire Closet
3. Big Project – Entire room

- **Determine Length of Decluttering Session**
 - Time - Make friends with a timer – a key tool for getting started and staying on task game--beat the clock, fun to estimate & see how accurate you were, keeps you moving and focused – not stopping to perseverate
 - Task – name the task you will completed

At the end of X amount of time, I will have done X. or. . .

My one big focus today is to do X (regardless of how long it takes).

- **Prepare for Decluttering**
 - Line up help & support
 - Know where you'll take the excess – and someone to take it
 - Plan rest and lunch breaks (have prepared food on hand)
 - Have labeled boxes: relocate, trash, recycle, give away
- **Have a vision (e.g., beauty/efficiency)**
- **Make it a project** (name it, design it, gather needed resources, determine the outcome, choose a date, length of time decluttering, etc)
- **Decide where to start:**

Work in zones, rooms, or trouble spots, to enhance health & well-being, for a specific event or purpose

 - Zones: pantry, kids toys, laundry, etc.
 - Rooms: bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, etc.
 - Event-company coming: entry way, front room, other visible rooms
 - For Health & well-being: bedroom (to improve sleep; kitchen (to improve healthy cooking); bathroom (to reduce stress of getting ready in the morning)

2. Dealing with too much stuff – can't let go

Why problem?

Can shop wherever we are – airport, grocery store, convenience store

Can get a barbeque grill and patio furniture at the grocery store – trend - one-stop shopping experience (groceries partnering with Wal-mart and Target and grocery stores are stocking a wide variety of electronics and household items. And because we need to go to the grocery store regularly, we're confronted with opportunities to buy electronic equipment, furniture, gifts, stuffed animals, lawn art, and more.

Basic Truths about Clutter:

People are unsuccessful at organizing clutter (e.g., plastic containers)

People who shop a lot, often have clutter.

People who have difficulty making decisions, often have clutter.

- Don't shop so much!
- Use your vision to help you decide: beauty/efficiency
- Get help making decisions – work with a virtual or live buddy – trade support
- Talk nice to yourself – expect a mess
- Hire a professional organizer or very organized friend (Brenda – gold standard)
- Get clear on the costs of keeping everything (life is too big to drag it around with you) What are the costs of clutter? Step over, dust, clean, pay for storage, argue over, forever sorting through, can't find things – waste time)
- Get counseling if you really can't let go of stuff

3. Avoiding a Big Mess & Overwhelm

- Decide what you will accomplish, determine how long you will work and finish it in the allotted time (**go back to challenge 1 – what will you accomplish and by when?**)
- Tear up one thing at a time – declutter the closet, then move to the night stand, then to the dresser drawers. Don't try to declutter all of them at once. (timer: 10 minutes per drawer or 60 minutes for the entire closet)
- Talk nice to yourself – what do we say to ourselves that scares us – sense of overwhelm?
- Your buddy can help you make decisions so you won't feel alone

4. Keeping things decluttered

Commercials would have us believe that a house cleans and straightens itself if we use their products – not! So we whine a little when it feels like work and we have to keep doing it – demand resistant – hate routine

- Considering picking up stuff and straightening part of your fitness program – the Earth Gym (bending, getting on your hands and knees, reaching, range of motion)
- If you think you don't have enough time to regularly declutter, look for wasted time or time spent on things you don't get enough bang for your buck. Where can you cut or eliminate low priority activities: TV, talking on the phone, packed social calendar, surfing the net
- Decide that you will keep things picked up – list the benefits
- Make peace with routine (don't resist)
 - Every morning, evening, certain day (morning minutes)
- Train the family (believe that it's possible to do) (we teach people how to treat us) – age-related regular chores (we have 5 minutes before dinner, let's pick up these toys; before we read the bedtime story, let's hang up your clothes)
- Make it fun - Job Jar (singles or families) – all ages
- (If short of time, energy, or have chronic pain) Maximize the minutes
 - (every Saturday & Sunday morning, I empty dishwasher and wipe counters while waiting for tea kettle)
 - Waiting for kids to come home
 - Before a scheduled call or appointment
- Declutter seasonally
- Set a timer - 10-15 minute microbursts (motivation, fun, game-like)

© 2009 Cheryl Miller, wellness strategist, life coach, and Mayor of
<http://www.cherylmillerville.com>