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3 things to remember to conquer clutter

BE DECISIVE

Question everything and be decisive, says organizer Sheri Bertolini of Sheri's Organized Life, who believes the prevailing principle in eliminating clutter should be to "establish your (individual) culture. Decide who you are and where you are headed and measure everything against that. Furniture, clothing, keepsakes, décor, the way you live your life. If they don't support who you are and where you're headed, they're just taking up space.

"Ask of every item, 'What gives you the right to be in my house?' Then ask yourself about each item, 'Do you actually use, like, need all that stuff.' "

Then you must "be intentional" in getting the clutter sorted and removed, Bertolini says. "Indecision creates clutter."

BE OBJECTIVE

"Don't obsess about items. Look at them objectively," says organizer Liz Jenkins of A Fresh Space Home Staging and Thoughtful Organizing.

Jenkins says most people mistakenly think of decluttering as simply getting rid of extraneous stuff, when in fact it "actually has its roots in people's feelings about their stuff."

"People's stuff has history, it has meaning and it has all sorts of emotions tied to it. Understanding those concepts makes it easier for people to let go.

"Ask the questions, do I love it, do I use it, how does it make me feel? If there isn't a positive answer to at least one of these questions, you don't need it.

"Realize that physical clutter leads to mental clutter," Jenkins says. "Clearing out the clutter can lead to mental clarity and a better sense of peace in one's life."

BE READY

>> Have garbage bags, boxes and some time, as well as a plan for donating or selling the things you're getting rid of.

>> Reduce the paper coming in by stopping catalogs and junk mail. Jenkins recommends: www.optoutprescreen.com (reduce or eliminate credit card and insurance offers); www.dmachoice.org (get off junk mail lists); www.greendimes.com (get off catalog and junk mail lists).

>> Don't try to do your decluttering all at once. Tackle one area or room at a time.

>> Make the decluttering fun by playing high energy music, bringing in a friend and finding a way to reward yourself when you're finished.

>> Remove the things you're getting rid of from your house ASAP so that you're not tempted to bring them back.

>> If you're stuck, ask for help.
