

## ALLOW THE POSITIVE ENERGY TO FLOW BY ELIMINATING PHYSICAL AND MENTAL JUNK

BY EMILY CHANTIRI

**JUST** for a moment, take a look around your space. Do you see piles of newspapers, magazines, files or even bills crying out for your attention? Are your thoughts full of mental clutter, a running dialogue of things to do? Rather than start, do you just leave it for another day, another time?

The longer you leave it the more the piles amass and then the task becomes all too big and arduous — until something happens in your life that triggers a change. De-cluttering your life is one of the most positive and affirming things you can do, so why not do it now?

### What will it take to simplify your life?

Sometimes it takes an event to trigger a change. Some events can be stressful, even traumatic, such as a death in the family. Other catalysts for change include starting your own business, having a baby, downsizing, moving interstate, or children moving away from home. At other times, it gets to the point where you just have to do something about it.

In 2002, Rebecca\* underwent a stressful year, including the end of her 10-year relationship. Initially, when she and her partner decided to end the relationship, Rebecca chose to stay in the four-bedroom home they'd purchased together. The main reason to stay in the home was to maintain stability for their 12-year-old daughter. The break-up had been difficult for all concerned.

After three years, Rebecca decided it was time for a change. The house was really too big to handle and was literally falling around her. The working single mother had little time to devote to the house; downsizing was the only option.

The benefit was that downsizing would enable her to purchase a smaller home, free of a mortgage. This event would signal a new direction for Rebecca. The only problem was how to condense the possessions she'd accumulated over her lifetime into a brand new contemporary two-bedroom unit.

"Initially it was really, really hard, because I'm very sentimental," recalls Rebecca. "There were so many memories and issues surrounding these things. Also, I couldn't stop thinking about all the things people had given to me. The choice was difficult. Which one do I take? Which one do I leave behind? When I was going through this process I realised I had to make a decision and do it."

"What helped me get through was coming to the decision that if I had to give things away, I would give them to people who really needed them. Even though I had this sentimental attachment to things, I do believe in recycling. I gave things to the animal welfare league, any good cause I could think of."

Letting go of possessions collected over many years can be difficult, so it's important to acknowledge a sense of loss when you start to let go. Rebecca believed her tendency to hoard things came from being the daughter of parents who had been through the depression.

"My parents never threw anything out," says Rebecca. "They'd

say, 'You might need it or you might be able to use this for something else later.' But once I started getting rid of the first few items, even though it was really slow and hard and emotional, towards the end it was like, gone ... gone and gone. It was like an avalanche — out everything went."

"Being able to break away from these entrenched values was very liberating."

After selling her old home and moving into her new space, Rebecca felt as though she'd created a new chapter in her life. Without the old house and the baggage attached to maintaining it, she found she had more time to enjoy her new life — more time than ever before to spend with her daughter and friends.

"When I think back to my old home, the feeling I get is that life was harder. I get a sense of darkness and heaviness, as the house needed so much work. I'd look at my surroundings and my thoughts were constantly filled with 'things need to be done'."

"Now, I've done a complete turnaround. I feel as though I've cleansed my mind and body. It was lovely to have a sense of starting afresh; it was like starting out on an adventure. I forced myself to change. By choosing a smaller apartment, I could never, ever go back to clutter. I've learnt that I live perfectly well with a few things, so why do I need all these other things? All my friends can't believe I'm now a minimalist."

Rebecca found once she was able to let go of the things she'd held onto for so long, a new way of life opened up: a simpler, but far more fulfilling life. She began to think less about the things that had to be done and more on spending the time to enjoy her new life.

Are there areas in your life worth freeing up? You may find that once you free up space in your life this may lead you to areas you've been waiting to explore. Perhaps it could mean taking the trip of a lifetime, writing the book, starting a new career or even a new relationship.

Professional organiser and founder of Get Organised Pty Ltd, Carol Posner, has helped many people simplify their lives. According to Carol, you can expect to be overwhelmed at first; you may even feel bereft at losing your possessions.

"People are repelled by their physical clutter," she says, "so they put it off and off until it gets out of hand or a significant event causes them to reassess their life. Eventually they have to summon the energy to de-clutter. Once they start, they can't stop; they start to release great positive energy."

The first challenge is to decide what to keep. There are some basic rules. For instance, if you haven't used the item or you intend to keep it to maybe fix it one day, the reality is you're probably not going to use it. You do have to bite the bullet and let it go.

Carol has this to add: "Remember when you let something go, something new will come into your life. It's the way of the universe. People are fearful of letting things go just in case they might want to use it later. This rarely happens."

# DE-CLUTTER



# YOUR LIFE



“Once you’ve identified the things you want to keep, you have a few options of what to do with the rest. You can trade them on eBay or give them away to charities. If you want to get money for the item because you felt you paid good money for it, try second-hand furniture and recycle clothes shops. It does take more effort to do, but you might get some satisfaction if you see money coming back in.”

### Where do I begin?

Once you’ve identified what you wish to keep, you’ll need to allocate proper storage areas. Take a look around your home or office space and surroundings to see if there are areas not utilised for storage — for example, wall space for shelves or cupboards. Also consider adding extra shelves in spots that are just storing air.

It’s easy to get overwhelmed at first and then to just ignore it. Since we’re all time-poor, the best way to tackle it is in stages. Start with the problem areas first — for example, an overflowing drawer may be enough to tackle for one day, particularly for busy parents.

If children interrupt, go back to what you were doing when you finish attending to their needs.

The main point here is to complete the job and work on one area at a time. Then, in the area you’ve created for proper storage, use storage boxes and add a list of the items inside. The last thing you want to do is forget what you’ve stored and then have to go rummaging through each box.

“Unfortunately, people don’t store things away correctly,” says Posner. “They just keep collecting things and overloading their space. Eventually, cupboards and storage areas are full. Even garages become overloaded with items, with no room left to park the car. Then it starts impinging on the house and the items that could go into the garage end up in the house, blocking the energy flow. Feng shui concepts go hand in hand with de-cluttering; it’s all about energy flow.”

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“If things can’t flow in and out of our lives they cause a blockage, just as piles of clutter stop us from finding things. If feng shui is about clear, flowing, positive energy, then clutter is negative energy. No wonder we don’t want to go near it.

“As soon as you start clearing the energy, it becomes positive. You actually get energy from de-cluttering; you get a positive reward in your home and in your physical body.”

### Mental clutter

Physical clutter is fairly easy to recognise, but what about mental clutter? Perhaps a better term is “mental chatter”. Do you find your thoughts are constantly filled with tasks that await you, so much so that you lie awake at night thinking about jobs that need tending to? Mental clutter is the biggest drain of all.

With so much information creeping into our minds, it’s no wonder we’re exhausted. Our thoughts wander from bills that need to be paid, to meetings and appointments to keep for the day, even on to our aspirations and unmet goals.

Carol Posner believes people don’t empty their thoughts because they don’t have one designated place to write things down: “They write things on small pieces of note paper, misplaced around the home or office. Some families juggle times and schedules between three calendars or diaries. They write things in one and forget to put it into the others, then wonder why they forget and can’t keep track of things.

“All your thoughts that require action need to be written down regularly,” adds Posner. “Have a journal or a notebook — just one book where everything goes, even phone messages. Some items require more attention than others. Any item that requires urgent attention, highlight it with a highlighter pen and then cross it out once the job has been done.

“A book is great because if you need to refer to anything you’ll have it recorded. Importantly, add the date on each page so you know when you last actioned it. You also need one page for ideas. Write down your thoughts into the diary before you go to bed each night to make sure you’re not worrying about tomorrow’s task.”

### Technology lends a hand

In theory, technology can help simplify lives. By creating systems to eliminate recurring issues such as missed bill payments, meetings and so forth, you’re freeing up your thoughts to concentrate on more productive ones.

Firstly, if you prefer keeping a record on your computer, you could try a software program such as Outlook to log all your tasks, calendar dates and memos. Remember, the trick is to keep everything in one place, regardless of whether you prefer a computer program or a handwritten journal. You can also set up automated reminder emails to arrive 24 hours prior to a scheduled event or payment.

For families who have several calendars on the go, which include the kids’ activities and household activities, information can easily be missed. Use a simple calendar on your computer, then colour code it with each person’s activity and print it out for the whole family. This saves time and confusion. Remember to simplify — just one place to store your items.

Your biggest investment will be to block out times to organise yourself or your family, but the rewards will far outweigh the effort. Allow yourself the time and take regular short bursts to achieve things. You’ll need to be disciplined and stick to the time allocated. Also, it’s important to allocate time to do something fun for you. Reward yourself, whether you like to read, take coffee with a friend or do yoga.

Carol says there are only a few things we need to do each day to keep our lives in order: “We need a routine, just like kids respond to routine. If we don’t have a structure or routine we’re in the dark. This makes our lives easier and saves time and money. When I go into my client’s home or office, I often find things they’ve misplaced — even valuable things they’ve lost. I once found a \$50,000 share certificate; the woman had totally forgotten about it!”

The process of de-cluttering is really rewarding and uplifting

because not only have you done what you’ve been putting off for so long, you don’t have to think about it any more, thus freeing your mind. You’re able to move very quickly with your life without all these things weighing you down. You’ve emptied your brain, allowing you to think about doing other things. You become more creative and more in touch with where you want to be in your life.

### Are you ready to de-clutter your life?

If you said “yes”, make an intention to reduce the demands, stimuli, interruptions and busy-ness in your life. You have the power to do this. You simply have to begin to say no to those activities that don’t directly serve what you want for your life.

It doesn’t matter what your job is in life, mental and physical clutter does not discriminate. From lawyers, architects to home keepers, right across the board, everyone can simplify their lives. They

say it takes a month to change a habit, so you’ll need to be disciplined, but once you’ve managed it for a month it becomes natural.

German-born artist Hans Hofmann sums it up so well: “Everyone on this planet deserves to have some free time to think, relax and have fun. If you long for this, begin now to clear your plate and allow a new level of experience to happen in your life. Take charge. Eliminate time wasters. Make some decisions about what matters to you. The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”

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\*Names have been changed

AD QUARTER  
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