

GENERAL TIPS TO DE-CLUTTER YOUR WORLD

Use the DUMP, SORT, RELOAD Method

By Chris Perrow

DUMP:

Remove everything from your target de-clutter space:

- Junk drawer: pull it out and remove everything.
- Car: Remove the trash, maps, crayons, chap stick, loose pennies
- Desktop: Clear off the 85 pens, 2 boxes of paperclips, 3-hole punch, piles of piles
- Closet: Yes. Take it all out.

Freshen up the 'empty' space: vacuum the car, wipe out the drawer, dust off your desk, and sweep out your closet. A clutter-free zone deserves to be free of dust bunnies and candy wrappers.

WHY the DUMP: Working amid the clutter is very distracting and challenges your ability to make decisions. Any type of de-cluttering is a decision making process. Viewing the 'empty' space gives you a visual of a clutter-free zone so you can better imagine how it will look.

SORT:

Separate your 'stuff' into three piles:

1. KEEP
2. DISCARD (throw away or give away)
3. I DON'T KNOW

Take the DISCARD pile away. Put it in a trash bag or box but get it out of sight.

GO back to Pile #3: I DON'T KNOW. This is always the biggest pile. Repeat the process above.

Take the DISCARD pile away and add it to the bag or box.

GO back to Pile #3: I DON'T KNOW. Repeat the process again.

WHY the 3-Pile sort done 3 times over? We become more decisive as we handle 'stuff' several times. If you can't decide something is a keeper after three times through, it is highly doubtful that you need it.

RELOAD:

This is the fun part! You have emptied out the space, cleaned it up, and made your decisions. Now comes the action.

Put back ONLY the items in your KEEP pile. There are still things lingering in your I DON'T KNOW pile but they don't get to go back in the space.

SO, HOW do we put things back?

- Look at your space and look at your stuff
- How did you envision the function of this space during the DUMP stage?
- Do you need any tools? file bins, shoe boxes, drawer dividers. Once the space is cleared out and your stuff is whittled down, you are in a better position to determine what tools would work.

The Possibilities:

- CAR: use the back seat pockets to hold maps, a small plastic container for loose change, a basket or box to hold child entertainers (color forms, magnets, books, etc.)
- CLOSETS: Depending on your budget you can build a Barbie dream closet or add a shoe rack or shelf to make use of space. Shopping spots range from Wal-Mart to Loews to Organized Living.
- DESKTOP: Finding ways to keep paper filed, not piled, is important. A desktop hanging file holder is a great way to set up an action file to keep items that need your attention i.e.: Tickets, Bills to Pay, Calls to Make, Errands to Run. OfficeMax or Staples offer several options of sizes, colors, and style.

TIPS TO HELP THE PROCESS:

- It will get messier before it gets better. Be prepared for that going in. It makes the clutter-free area even sweeter.
- Don't tackle the whole house at once. Be realistic with the amount of time it will take. A junk drawer needs about 20 minutes, a clothes closet about 3 hours.
- If you are tackling a large space like a basement, duct tape off quadrants. Only work in one quadrant at a time.
- Reward yourself when the mission is accomplished: a walk, an ice cream cone, and a movie.
- Before and after pictures help you remember WHY you want to sustain this clutter-free zone

About Chris Perrow:

Chris Perrow designs organizational systems that fit the nature of the individual, department or company, helping people perform at their peak while maintaining order and flow. As President of Perrow Systems in Silver Lake, Ohio, Chris conducts training for time management, lean office, productivity, change management, leadership, and employee development. Perrow is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO).

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