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Deciding How to Purge Clutter Despite Obstacles



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Imagine walking into a home where you could not see a speck of floor because each room was filled to the gills with boxes, papers, and other possessions. **This was the case when I first walked into my client Karen's home two years ago. Karen began "hoarding" items as a source of comfort and literally became "locked in" one room of her home for an entire year.**

I have had the pleasure of working closely with Karen to get her house back in order. Today, she is a whole new person and her house is a home again. **She walks around her home with ease; she no longer flinches when the doorbell rings unexpectedly; she entertains people at home; she's on the board of her homeowners association; she has gone back to school; and she keeps an organized home.**

As was the case with Karen, people dealing with Chronic Disorganization and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) can have a harder time making decisions especially when it comes time to staying organized or purging clutter. Since one of the keys to being organized and productive is the ability to make quick and firm decisions, this can cause real problems for these individuals.

However, this doesn't mean that decisions can't be made or that you won't succeed in staying organized. **It is a matter of understanding your obstacles and learning how to deal with them so that you can still accomplish what you set out to do.**

Because effective decision making requires certain key skills—sorting, prioritizing, comparing and weighing alternatives—our ability to make decisions can easily be compromised by outside influences. **These can range from stress, tiredness, hunger, time of day, need for medications, and emotional attachments or neurological issues.** It is important to think about these factors when deciding the best time to purge, organize and make other important decisions.

The following are some ways the decision-making process can be easier when it comes to getting rid of items you no longer need or want.

• **Assign areas for piles. You will need a “keep,” “discard,” and “maybe” pile.** Use a thick and strong garbage bag for your discard pile so that you can immediately seal up the bag and not second guess getting rid of the contents.

• **Keep the number of choices small.** Do not overload your senses with too many choices at one time. Start with one drawer, one area of the room, or one closet.

• **Look at one thing at a time to choose.** If you start with a closet, then pull out each article of clothing on a hanger. After that, move to your shoes and then to the shelves looking at each item individually. Move as quickly as you can.

• **Recruit a friend or family member.** For some people it helps if they do not touch the items, but let someone else hold them up to look at and decide.

• **Only allow yourself a limited number of deferred decisions.** Do not allow the “maybe” pile to get too big.

• **Avoid emotional questions to make decisions.** For example, do not ask “Do I want this?” Ask “Should I keep this here?”

• **Consider a professional organizer.** A professional organizer can guide you through the decision-making process and keep you on track.

Need some help making quick decisions? Here are a few “tricks” that will also enable you to have fun and be creative with an otherwise, potentially difficult task:

• **Flip a coin to decide.**

• **Pretend to be a favorite decisive hero**—what would Superman do?

• **Set up a basket to toss items, such as stuffed animals or socks, into.** Set a timer and see how many items you can throw in the basket in a set time. The items that don’t make it in the basket have to go.

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In addition to the National Study Group of Chronic Disorganization, Pea Organizing Services is a member of ADD Consults, ADD Resources, and the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO™).

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