

DE~CLUTTERING TIPS

- **Do it in small chunks.** Set aside just 15 minutes to de-clutter just one shelf, and when that shelf or that 15 minutes is up, celebrate your victory. Then tackle another shelf for 15 minutes the next day. Conquering an entire closet or room can be overwhelming, and you might put it off forever. If that's the case, just do it in baby steps.
- **Set aside a couple hours to do it.** This may seem contradictory to the above tip ... and it is. It's simply a different strategy, and I say do whatever works for you. Sometimes, for me, it's good to set aside part of a morning, or an entire Saturday morning, to de-clutter a closet or room. I do it all at once, and when I'm done, it feels awesome.
- **Take everything out of a shelf or drawer at once.** Whichever of the two above strategies you choose, you should focus on one drawer or shelf at a time, and empty it completely. Then clean that shelf or drawer. Then, take the pile and sort it (see next tip), and put back just what you want to keep. Then tackle the next shelf or drawer.
- **Sort through your pile, one item at a time, and make quick decisions.** Have a trash bag and a give-away box handy. When you pull everything out of a shelf or drawer, sort through the pile one at a time. Pick up an item, and make a decision: trash, give away, or keep. Don't put it back in the pile. Do this with the entire pile, and soon, you'll be done. If you keep sorting through the pile, and re-sorting, it'll take forever. Put back only what you want to keep, and arrange it nicely.
- **Be merciless.** You may be a pack rat, but the truth is, you won't ever use most of the junk you've accumulated. If you haven't used it in the last year, get rid of it. It's as simple as that. If you've only used it once or twice in the last year, but know you won't use it in the next year, get rid of it. Toss it if it's unsalvageable, and give it away if someone else might be able to use it.
- **Papers? Be merciless, unless it's important.** Magazines, catalogues, junk mail, bills more than a year old, notes to yourself, notes from others, old work stuff ... toss it! The only exception is with tax-related stuff, which should be kept for seven years, and other important documents like warranties, birth and death and marriage certificates, insurance, wills, and other important documents like that. But you'll know those when you see 'em. Otherwise, toss!!!!
- **If you are on the fence with a lot of things, create a "maybe" box.** If you can't bear to toss something because you might need it later, put it in the box, then close the box, label it, and put it in storage (garage, attic, closet), out of sight. Most likely, you'll never open that box again. If that's the case, pull it out after six months or a year, and toss it or give it away.
- **Create a system to stop clutter from accumulating.** There's a reason you have tall stacks of papers all over the place, and big piles of toys and books and clothes. It's because you don't have a regular system to keep things in their place, and get rid of stuff you don't need. This is a topic for another day, but it's something to think about as you de-clutter. You'll never get to perfect, but if you think more intelligently about how your house got cluttered, perhaps you can find ways to stop it from happening again.
- **Celebrate when you're done!** This is actually a general rule in life: always celebrate your accomplishments, no matter how small. Even if you just de-cluttered one drawer, that's great. Treat yourself to something delicious. Open that drawer (or closet, or whatever), and admire its simplicity. Breathe deeply and know that you have done a good thing. Bask in your peacefulness.