

Clutter Reduction Starter Guide

A Strategy to reduce your Clutter

365
LESS
THINGS

by Colleen Madsen

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About the Author

Colleen Madsen is a full-time blogger, a wife, a mum and founder of [365 Less Things](#), a blog that documents her journey to reduce clutter, consumerism and lead a more fulfilled, minimalist lifestyle. After a career in retail sales, Colleen is developing a new future that focuses on life experiences, family and helping her community.

Introduction

Absorb what is useful, discard what is not, add what is uniquely your own.

Bruce Lee

There are times when we look at our living spaces and think, *'I really need to sort through everything and get rid of all the clutter around here'*. Then as we contemplate the task as a whole, it becomes very daunting and quite frankly most people give up before they even begin.

To describe his approach to martial arts, Bruce Lee said, *'Absorb what is useful, Discard what is not, Add what is uniquely your own.'* This philosophy can be equally applied to many areas of life including reducing your clutter. Keep the useful items; discard the unused, broken and unloved items then you have room to introduce items and experiences that are uniquely you.

Rather than approaching clutter reduction as one large task, complete one small task at a time, in my case one task per day. I do not even concentrate on one area at a time, I might just see something during my daily routine and think, *'I don't need that'* or *'I might just sort through that drawer today'* and that becomes the task for the day.

If you keep the task small it never appears too big to handle and does not become a huge chore. As you complete today's task, you usually see something that you can deal with the next day. Then one task flows into another each day and suddenly you realize that it is no effort at all.

The Joys Of Clutter Reduction

I would like to point out the joy that can be found in reducing the clutter in your home. This joy can be appreciated from day one, not just at the end of the journey. See if you can identify with the joy of:

- **A Fresh Start** – It is never too late to begin a new phase in your life. Cut yourself some slack and do not dwell on the past. Acknowledge the things you got right and learn the lesson of your follies but either way do not dwell on regrets, just enjoy the fresh start you are making.
- **More Space** – It really does feel good as the clutter starts to disappear and you begin to feel the freedom of empty space growing around you. This feeling can be appreciated from the very first item and increases over time. Take a moment to focus on that freedom with every little piece of clutter you choose to remove and fill the process with joy rather than dread.
- **Less Maintenance** – It stands to reason that the fewer items cluttering up your home, the easier it is to keep your surroundings clean and tidy. Every item you remove is one less thing you need to maintain in any way whether dusting, cleaning or storing. Also house cleaning will be simpler if there are fewer items to be moved in order to access the surface under them such as benches and floors. And you gotta love that!
- **Guilt Relief** - We generally carry a burden of guilt for every item associated with the waste of money or lack of use. For every one of these items that leaves our home there is a relief from that guilt so long as we learned the lesson of needless waste.
- **Giving Back** – Whether we sell items to grateful buyers on eBay, donate items to charity, give items away to friends and family or recycle them, there is a good feeling that accompanies each action. Focus on those good feelings and it will spur you on in your quest.
- **Appreciation** – You will find that you have a higher appreciation for the items you choose to keep and their role in your household.

- **Being Environmentally Responsible** – For every unnecessary item you do not purchase, and every item that you give to someone in need, you are doing a small deed to save the environment. For every item that is manufactured there is a cost whether in natural resources or carbon emissions, so the less you contribute to the supply and demand of these products the better hope there is for our planet's survival.
- **Simplifying** -There is more to this topic than the title implies, having an uncluttered home and embracing the principles of staying uncluttered can simplify your life. I have discovered the freedom that clutter reduction has added to my life has allowed me to enjoy the present and foresee a better future.

Some Small Tasks To Get You Started

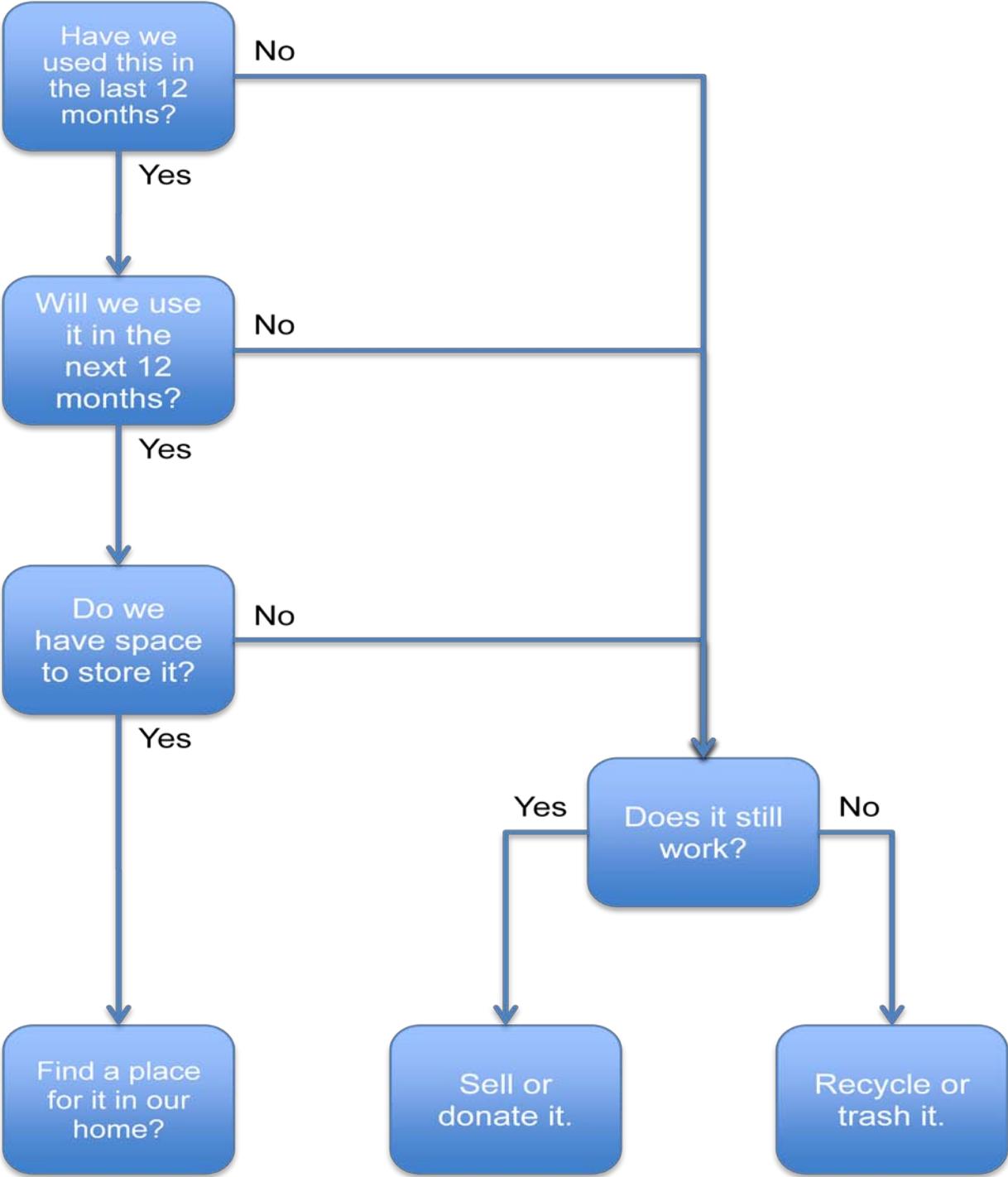
Every home or office will require different approaches to reduce clutter but the following tasks apply to almost every space:

- Clean out one kitchen drawer
- Take the accumulation of metal coat hangers back to the drycleaners next time you drop off clothes. (This helps them reduce their costs and our cleaning bills.)
- Go through your sock drawer and throw out the orphan and worn out socks.
- Pick one pair of shoes you never wear and put them in the donation box.
- Empty one shelf in the pantry, and check the used by date of each item. Do not put back anything that is past its used by date or is no longer used in your kitchen.
- Gather all the pens in the house and throw out any that do not work.
- Anglers, look in your tackle box, there are bound to be a few rusty items that belong in the garbage. (It goes for those rusty screws and nails in the garage as well.)
- Check the coffee table drawers for old magazines that you have not looked at in ages. Donate to community organizations, friends or recycle them
- Help the kids go through the toy box; throw away any broken items and donate any toys they have out grown.

All these tasks really take very little time but you will feel good about it and inspired to move onto a new task tomorrow. If you feel more energetic, do more than one task and stock pile a few of the 365 things so you can have a day off every now and again, I do.

Clutter Reduction Decision Tree

Use this Clutter Reduction Decision Tree will help ask the right questions about your stuff, and ease your transition to a less cluttered home and life.



Have we used this in the last 12 months?

If you keep an item because one day you might need it then it is probably clutter.

Will we use it in the next 12 months?

If you will not use this item or even participate in the activity that it is used for then it is clutter.

If you have multiple versions of the item but only ever need one then it is most likely clutter.

Decorative items should be on display; if it will go back into storage then it is probably not useful to you. After all, you put into a box for a reason. Do I want to clean it?

Unless you are conducting serious research, there is no need to keep a vast library of books in your home.

If you are keeping something that was given to you even though you do not like it, it is definitely clutter.

Am I keeping this item out of guilt? I need to get my value out of this expensive item or recoup my outlay by selling it (old hobbies, sporting equipment, expensive clothing all fall into this category). Most items lose their value over time; they go out of style or do not have the latest features.

Do we have space to store it?

Do you have the space to store this item or is it just taking up precious space you cannot afford.

Do I want to move it out of the way when looking for something else? The more items you have taking up space in your home the more likely they are going to get in the way of each other forcing you to have to shuffle things around when you do have cause to use them.

Do I want to pack and unpack this item when we move in a couple years? This is a critical question for anyone who tends to move location on a reasonably regular basis due to work commitments for example.

Do I really need this item in order to remember good times or lost loves? If it is an item that has purely sentimental value yet you never get it out and look at it then there is a good chance you do not need it to remind you of the good times you had and the wonderful people you have known. If it means so much to you put it out where you can see it if not let it go.

Does it still work?

Check the condition of the item; looking for corrosion, tears, dents or blemishes, and test that it works. Determine if you have the expertise to repair it or can afford to have it fixed.

Sell or Donate It

Donating to charity is good for the soul, and can provide you with a nice tax deduction in some countries. Charities are not rubbish collection agencies, they are looking for functional, clean items to either sell or give to deserving families in need.

Give it to a friend who needs it, or organize a swap party where friends bring their unwanted items and everyone looks for items they need in exchange. Anything unclaimed at the end of the evening can be donated.

A garage or yard sale is a quick and easy way to sell large amounts of stuff you have purged from your home. Advertise locally, place good readable signs out to guide buyers to your door and make sure your neighbors know about the added traffic it will bring to your street.

Many items sell well on eBay, just open an account and post your items. Be sure to understand the costs involved, and do not underestimate your postage costs.

Recycle or Trash It

Most items have some value for recycling; a quick online search or call to the local authorities will identify your recycling options. Remember local dealers often collect old batteries, ink cartridges and cell phones for recycling.

We live on a fairly busy road and I have been known to take large items that I no longer require out to the footpath in the hope that someone will take them away. I place a sign saying FREE or PLEASE TAKE ME (being careful not to hold that on my person when walking out there in case they get the wrong idea) on the item and wait and see how long it takes for the item to disappear.

Once you have gone through all the previous options, all that should be left is the real trash. Small items can go into your rubbish collection but you may need to take larger items to the processing centre yourself.

Final Thoughts

Your house is your home only when you feel you have jurisdiction over the space.

Joan Kron

In our consumerist society we are bombarded with messages to buy more stuff and sometimes it is difficult to just admit you want less not more. Despite this discomfort, once the subject is broached almost everyone has a story about buying too much or not using the stuff in their home.

Removing the clutter from your life can free your mind to see the potential of your home or yourself. At first, the job can seem insurmountable but for most of us a measured steady approach will lead us to success.

Support is also crucial to making progress; family, friends or communities like ours at [365 Less Things](#) who encourage and applaud our progress help to keep us motivated to meet our goals.

We hope this eBook helps you start towards your uncluttered future, and look forward to welcoming you into the [365 Less Things](#) community.

Thanks

Colleen Madsen