

Take steps to conquer the clutter in your home

By Staci Dennis
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Some call it chaos, confusion or organized disorder, but a pile of papers by any other name is still clutter.

Untamed, clutter can suck time from your daily schedule. So sort it, toss it, stack it or give it away, but make the effort to get organized.

In your home, that means designating a function – or several functions – for each room. A kitchen, for example, is an easy one – it's a place to cook. But it also can be a place to store recipes, create shopping lists or stash coupons – and those three tasks can lead to clutter.

"If items in that room don't pertain to the function of the room, then relocate it, remove it or define where it should go," said Diana Vavrek, professional organizer and owner of Kicking Klutter in Suffolk.

Tackling an organization project can seem overwhelming. Experts say getting started is often the hardest part.

"A lot of people intend to clean their house, throw away the junk and update their decorations, but it just never happens," said Nancy Watson, a certified professional organizer in Chronic Disorganization and owner of Harmony At Home Organizing. "The best place to start is with a plan. Break it down into manageable steps."

Watson and Vavrek agree the best approach is to make a list, break the room into sections and stick with each section until it is finished. Watson suggests tackling the easiest items first so motivation levels remain high.

"If you need to sort through DVDs and figure out which ones to keep, throw away or donate, do that and then check it off the list," Vavrek said.

"When you feel a sense of accomplishment, you will be motivated to do more again the next day."

Spelling out attainable goals and creating a purpose for each room helps set the foundation for finding a place for each object in your house. That will help you decide where each item will "live."

The experts suggest making the best use of your space. "Don't waste prime real estate on things you don't use or need," Vavrek said. "Put the things you want near the places you use them."

Troublesome areas and items that cause even the best organizers heartache include closets, laundry rooms and cleaning supplies.

Closets, in particular, are tough to keep on track.

"Closets are a black hole of clutter," Watson said. "Keep a permanent donation box



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somewhere in the house so when clothes or shoes don't fit, just toss them in the box. Call for a pickup once a month or every other month."

Tami Sullivan, sales manager of Closet Factory for Hampton Roads, suggests maximizing space and function in all closets. Determine where cleaning supplies should go, and pick spots that are hidden but easy to get to.

"Vacuums, brooms, mops and most cleaning tools are hard to store," Sullivan said.

"Find, build or create a space that houses these items and keeps them out-of-sight. Hang mops and brooms on a garage wall and store cleaning supplies below."

Sullivan said the goal is to raise the level of efficiency in the entire home by creating areas for storage and easy access to needed items.

"You don't want to emotionally overload yourself just by the clutter in your home," Sullivan said. "Being organized can help relieve stress."

Sometimes conquering clutter isn't about organization at all; rather, it's about ending an emotional attachment to items.

"People will attach feelings to objects and that can be an obstacle for getting rid of clutter," Watson said. "Issues such as death, failed marriage, abandonment, and many more can be a root

get control of your closets

Tami Sullivan, sales manager of Closet Factory for Hampton Roads, offers these tips to conquer closet clutter:

- **Audit your wardrobe.** People wear 20 percent of what they have 80 percent of the time. Throw out, donate or sell what you don't like, doesn't fit or you don't want anymore.
- **Maximize your space.** Shoes are space hogs. Rotate seasonal shoes out of the closet to create space.
- **Group by type, then color.** Sleeveless, short sleeve, long sleeve and then by color.
- **Play favorites.** Put your favorite clothes together in an easy-to-reach location.

cause for keeping unnecessary items."

Watson encourages people to seek professional help, as needed, to work out the issues and move forward.

"If people need help in getting through their clutter, it's a good idea to call a friend or family member," Watson said. "It can be a fun experience and you can end up with a more organized home."

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