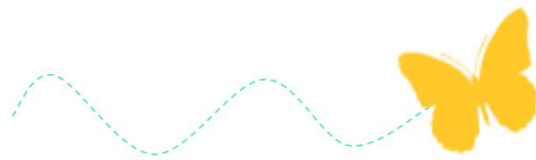


Tips for Living a DeCluttered Life

A Collection of Blog Posts on Simplifying



By Laura Sue Shaw

Clearing the Digital Clutter

Most of us focus on the physical clutter. But there is most likely more clutter lurking behind your screens on your computer and phone.

With that in mind, I decided to put together a list on another level of de-cluttering – digital de-cluttering! Here are some steps to get you started.

Desktop or Home Screen

The desktop on your computer or the home screen on your phone or tablet is a good place to start when decluttering your digital devices. If it looks messy when you start it up, chances are the rest of your time spent will follow suit.

So delete the files or apps that you don't need on your front screen and organize what does need to stay there.

Photos

Are all of your photos in one place? Start by getting them to one device and folder, then start organizing into folders based on date taken, category, etc.

It's also a good idea to back up your photos, which can easily be done through a cloud account or an external hard drive or USB port.

Files (Documents, etc.)

Next up is all of those files filling up your documents.

Step 1: Delete all the files you no longer need

Step 2: Start categorizing into folders based on your needs and personal preferences.

As for me, I try to keep my blogging and personal files separate. I also separate PDF ebooks, free printable worksheets, etc.

It takes some time getting things organized but then it's SO much easier to find what you need.

Folders

If you have a ton of files in each folder, you may want to take it a step further and create sub-folders within the folder to make things even easier to find.

Just don't go crazy with creating sub-sub-sub folders because that can end up making things harder to track down! Plus, it ends up just being annoying when you have to click a TON of folders just to get to one file.

Music Files

If you keep a lot of music on your phone or computer, it'll help to sort by artist, genre, album, etc. A lot of times it will do this automatically when you download or upload music, but not always.

Printables and Downloads

I mentioned these before under files, but it's worth repeating. There are some great resources available online for free or very cheap, but they're not worth much if you're not using them or at least know where they're stored.

When you know how to easily access these resources, you'll be able to quickly find the information you need.

With all of the electronics in our world, they're bound to get a little over-stuffed with apps, files, photos, videos, and more. Taking these first few steps in digital de-cluttering will lead to happier experiences using your electronics and it will make all of your things much easier to find!

Stress-Free DeCluttering

Here are some tips to keep your decluttering journey simple and stress-free.

One Area at a Time

It doesn't need to be a big area, either. One drawer, cabinet, shelf, or basket will do. It takes a little more time in the long run, but if you're not overwhelmed it's much easier to finish the process.

A Few Things at a Time

If the area is a major clutter collector and you know that a ton of things need to be cleaned out, take five minutes and find 5 – 10 things to throw away, donate, or move to their actual home. With just a few items to start with, you might even be inspired to keep going!

For an Hour at a Time

All day de-cluttering is just not really an option for me. If it takes over an hour I pretty much shut down and nothing else gets done. A good way to combat that is to set a timer and see how much you can get done in that amount of time. But then once it goes off you're done and can move on with your day.

Keep it Organized

Before you start de-cluttering do just a little bit of prep work: have a small, dedicated space for donation items, have a trash bag handy, make sure there's a basket or something nearby to collect items that go in a different part of the house.

Another good idea is to turn on something to pass the time and help you focus. For example, you could turn on some music or a podcast to listen to while you're cleaning out.

Make it a Habit

Getting into the habit of de-cluttering a little bit at a time is what will make the biggest impact in the long haul. If you make it a habit to de-clutter for 15 minutes a few times a week, it won't seem like such a big deal and your home will be kept clutter-free.

When you make these simple steps into habits, it really takes the overwhelm out of de-cluttering your home. Focusing on just a little bit at a time and then being done for the day can keep you from getting burned out and only getting halfway through the house.

This method has worked well for me and I hope you too can use it to become clutter-free!

DeClutter Your Email

My email inbox is a huge source of clutter in my life. It's something I have to stay on top of and ruthlessly delete and unsubscribe at times to get things back under control. Here are some more tips to declutter and organize your email.

1. Unsubscribe

If you want to get your email inbox under control, you need to use this ruthlessly. I usually feel kind of bad unsubscribing, but if I end up missing those emails I can always subscribe again.

2. Delete

Again, use it ruthlessly. And if you find yourself using it over and over from the same sender, it's probably time to go back to step 1.

3. Get Folders Organized

I have lots of email folders, but it's a quick way to move things that aren't urgent but I don't want to delete. It's also a great way to keep track of information without cluttering your actual inbox.

4. Follow up File

Have a particular file to put emails that might need more follow-up.

5. Reply right away

For the rest of the emails, reply right away or move into the follow-up file.

DeClutter Your Mind

Create Systems

Creating systems and routines for things that need done can make those tasks seem pretty mindless once you're used to them.

For example, when your routine is set to exercise first thing in the morning, then it's something you will eventually do automatically.

Make Lists

It's important to get all of those to-dos written down in a consistent place so you don't have to worry about remembering everything you need to do... you just take a peek at your list!

Keep a Journal

If you're keeping a list for all of your things to do, keeping a journal is a great way to keep track of all of your other thoughts.

My Journaling tends to go in spurts. But when I do it's nice to look back and see how things have ended and how God has worked in my life.

Use a Task Management System

Do you have a task management system? It could be on your phone or in a physical planner, but it's important to have one central location where you keep all of your tasks and due dates stored.

De-Stress

Take time to do something you enjoy to de-stress and get your mind off whatever is bothering you. It's tempting to feel selfish to take that time for yourself. Believe me, I've been there. But when I take just a little bit of time to relax I end up feeling rejuvenated. I'm more productive and therefore have more time to spend on other things.

3 Ways to Keep Your Home DeCluttered

So you have finally went through your things and taken several bags to Goodwill. Your home is less cluttered and more peaceful-feeling with all that stuff gone.

But how long will that last?

We all know clutter has a way of sneaking right back in.

But this time around, I'm determined to not let it overtake my house (again.) I just finished the biggest decluttering project I've ever done and I'm not going through that again! This time, clutter is out and it's staying that way.

So here are some principles I've established this year for keeping the clutter at bay. These steps can help keep your home decluttered for good.

Have Donation Box

Keeping a donation box in a closet or somewhere out of the way but accessible is a great way to keep clutter away because every time you find something to get rid of, you can simply put it in the box.

Having the box out of the way is also important though. If I see what's in it too often, I might change my mind about getting rid of some items!

Be (Very) Careful About What Comes In

This year I'm committing to being extra careful about what comes into my home. I need to be aware of what's there and if something in my shopping cart is truly necessary.

I'm not saying I'm not going to buy anything.. I still have a very big weakness for cute office supplies.. but I am going to be more conscious of what's being brought into our home so I don't end up with more clutter.

Keep a DeCluttering Schedule

Go through the areas that get cluttered the easiest on a regular basis. Every other month or so I'll spend a few minutes going through areas like the medicine cabinet, pantry, refrigerator and freezer, desk and paperwork, etc.

A really easy way to accomplish this is to use my Ultimate De-Cluttering Checklist every other month or so. It lists all the common areas clutter tends to hide so you can take care of it before things get out of hand.

Cleaning out the clutter was such a relief that I never want to go back to having that much of it. So with these three steps – having a donation box, being careful about what comes in, and keeping a decluttering schedule – I believe that this year my home is going to STAY clutter-free.