



Define your clutter to get organized

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Cluttered guest room

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Ever feel like the clutter in your life is controlling you instead of the other way around? To regain control and get organized, it's useful to start by defining your clutter. In general terms, "clutter" is anything that distracts you from doing what you really want to do or being who you really want to be.

So, clutter isn't just a closet that's packed tight with things you don't use anymore, it's also a weekly schedule that doesn't have room for exercise or reading or reflection or _____ (fill in your favorite activity here). It's also the people in your life with whom you feel sad or sluggish or irritable, less than your best. And, clutter is the many things in your life that you love dearly but don't use or display or have places to keep.

It's important to note that clutter is not the same as disorganization. It's just as easy to have a lot of well organized clutter as it is to have useful, inspiring, treasured objects that have no well defined home. Your treasured objects can be just as distracting as clutter if they're always in your way.

Each of us has different forms of clutter in our lives. What is clutter to you may be a perfectly comfortable, functional environment for someone else. So, you have to define your own clutter as a first step to getting it under control. Use these four questions to get started. You may find it useful to write or type your answers as a checklist as you begin to get organized:

1. What stuff do you keep that you don't use or don't love? (Include objects and habits in this list.)
2. What stuff do you have around you that is distracting or disorganized? (Again, think beyond objects and include the clutter in your schedule.)
3. What spaces in your life (office, home, car) are too crowded with stuff? What parts of your schedule are too crowded with habits or responsibilities?
4. What are the unfinished parts of your life (those activities that you never have time to start or finish)? You will probably find that just by answering these questions - by defining your clutter - you already feel more in control. Congratulations! That means you are ready to select a source of clutter from your list and begin to get organized.

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