Organizing your chaos

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Hollywood, MD- As the weather is getting warmer and the days are getting longer, you might be starting some spring clean at home. Many people find themselves in disorganized chaos and are looking to declutter and make their home more systematic. But where do you begin?

Kae Clarke, owner of Smart Organizing Solutions, said it’s all about adapting your home and making it work for you. “What works for one person, might not work for another. Learn to use your storage space in a non-traditional way and adapt that space.” Clarke said setting a goal to organize your home isn’t a goal, “it’s the result of having systems that work for you.”

Clarke said statistics show the average three bedroom home has 350,000 items, everything from paper clips to couches. In reality, you only use about 20 percent of what you own. “That’s a staggering number. And if you do the math and take the left over 80 percent, that’s more than a million dollars over the course of a lifetime that you spend on stuff you don’t need or don’t use.”

Clarke there are a few simple steps to follow when you set out to organize your home.

#1- Set your goals. What do you want to accomplish? Do you want to be able to entertain spontaneously without worrying that your home is a mess? Would you like to pay bills on time without having to search for them? Identify your goals and figure out what works best to help you achieve those goals.

#2- Pick an area that’s driving you crazy and start there, doing it incrementally. “Don’t say I’m going to organize my kitchen today. Set a goal to go through your kitchen drawers. Keep it realistic. Don’t feel like you have to do your entire kitchen at one time.” Clarke said.

#3- Purge. When you start going through your closet or drawers have separate containers ready to go. One container for donations, one for recyclables, one for trash and one for items that need to find a new space inside your home. “If you’re keeping something, put it away immediately, don’t let it sit there and say I’ll do it later. Same thing with donations. Put that container in your car so you can drop it off the next time you’re out”.

#4- Before buying something new see if there’s something in your home you can repurpose. “Find things that work in your house before you buy something new. Use the space you have available and make it work for you.”

Kitchens, closets and garages seem to be the areas where most families struggle to keep organized. If you’re focusing on your kitchen there are several things to keep in mind. “Start by organizing how you’re going to use it. Set up stations in your kitchen, like a beverage station or baking station. Have all of the stuff you need all together so your kitchen is set up the way you’ll use it.” Clarke also recommends starting each week with a meal plan and shopping for the week based on that pre-determined menu. “You know you’ll have everything you need.” She also said you don’t need to make a different meal 365 days a year. “Pick 30 favorites and rotate them and then throw in a few fun things throughout the month.”

When it comes to closets and garages, Clarke does not recommend pulling out everything and starting from there. “That’s a waste of time and just causes you more work. Go through your closet and give yourself permission to get rid of things. If you ask yourself ‘what if I might wear it?’ If you wanted it, you would have been wearing it.” If you keep a variety of sizes in your closet (ladies, you know what I’m talking about) you’re not helping yourself. “First of all, you’re giving yourself permission to gain weight. If you’ve lost weight and you’re serious about keeping it off, get rid of the stuff that’s too big. If you’ve held on to things that are too small, every time you look at that you’re going to feel guilty and you feel regretful. That’s not a healthy lifestyle choice.” Clarke said. If you’re a yo-yo dieter, she said it’s OK to keep a few things that are bigger and smaller.

Clarke then recommends sorting your closet by colors and style—sleeveless to long sleeve. “This way you know what you’re looking for and it speeds up the time it takes to get dressed.” She also recommends hanging outfits together instead of separating them. “If you always wear one top with one particular suit, hang those together. Organize your closet by function.”

The same rule of thumb is true for garages. “Set up zones. If you have kids’ toys in your garage, they should all be stored in the same area. You can always divide up the zones by season. If you group things together it takes up less room and it is easier to find.” Clarke also suggested installing overhead storage and shelving systems to make use of the entire garage space.

Clarke said part of organizing your home also means changing your shopping habits. “If something is free or a really good deal and you’re not going to use it, it’s going to burden you. Learn to say no. We need to hold ourselves accountable.”

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