Spring has Sprung

Step #1 to an Organized Life – Clear the Clutter

By: MaryLynn St.Germaine, Organization by Design LLC

AMONG THE TOP NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS- RIGHT UP THERE WITH losing weight- is getting organized. Now, January has come and gone and those resolutions are beginning to take a back seat to our everyday lives of constant chaos.

But spring is here. It's a time for new beginnings – a time to renew and refresh those good intentions. And as everyone knows, with spring comes spring cleaning! It's time to clean out that closet, garage or guest room. Donate those no-longer worn clothes, give away that never-used ice cream maker and make room to breathe. Take stock, time to purge our lives of the extraneous and clear out the clutter.

In this issue, we're going to focus on closets. Here, as in most areas of your home, you will likely find a lot of "I Might Need it Someday" clutter.

For me, "I Might Need it Someday" clutter meant a particular Hawaiian shirt. I kept this hideous, yet somehow necessary item in my closet "just in case" there was ever a Hawaiian Day at work. Well, "Hawaiian Day" never came and none of my friends ever hosted a luau. And I have to be honest, if they ever did throw such a fete, I'd probably go buy a cute little sarong before donning that particular multi-colored, Pacific Island frock taking up valuable real estate in my closet!

Have any of you heard the saying, "We wear 20 percent of our clothes 80% of the time"? Well, using these simple tips, you will surprise yourself with just how many items in your closet go unworn, unloved and unnoticed.

- Begin by turning all of your hangers to face backward. When you wear an article of clothing-return it the correct way. Look at your closet in six months and see just how many things were not worn. Those should be the first to go.

- Remember – just because you paid a lot of money for something, doesn't mean you should keep it.

- Ask yourself: Do I wear it? Does it fit? and most importantly -- Do I love it? If you answer "yes" to these questions, then return it to your closet. Purge the rest by donating to a worthy charity or by passing them along to a friend. The clothes in your closet should have earned the right to be there.

- Put those loved items back into the closet in an orderly manner. Organize your closet in a way that suits your own natural instincts. Some might sort by color and others by sleeve length (and then there are those of us who sub-categorize our clothing by sleeve length AND color). Set yourself up for success and create a system that makes sense to you. Otherwise, it will all be undone in a matter of weeks as you slip back into your bad habits.

- Make a deal with yourself that every time you buy a piece, you must get rid of a piece. One in. One out.

Start all organizing projects with a plan. Don't try marathon organizing. Take things in bite-sized pieces. I suggest beginning by identifying the time of day when you are most productive and making an appointment with yourself to spend 20 minutes on one particular project. You can do anything for 20 minutes.

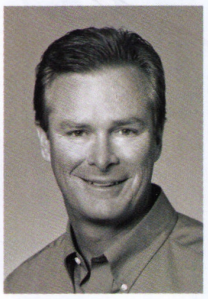
"I will organize my shoes this morning after the kids have gone to school", not "This weekend I am going to organize this whole house!" Create manageable goals that you can achieve. It is very motivating to accomplish something, no matter how small – as opposed to the defeat you feel when unable to achieve an unrealistically large and unreachable goal.

Give yourself a break. Getting organized does not happen overnight. Focus on what you were able to get done and then move on to the next organizing project. You will begin to develop good habits, and your success will create a momentum that keeps you going!

Finally, enjoy having a little extra storage and a few empty drawers. Don't rush out to buy more "stuff" that just takes up space and needs organization. "Stuff," after all, is just that.

See you next issue when I'll be tackling another organization project!

MEET OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS



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ANGIE PITRE is the founder and owner of the blog, "Echoes of Laughter." She's passionate about sharing simple ideas designed to help families make their lives better...whether it be easy and healthy meals, fun crafts, quick organizing projects, spray-painting adventures, or tales of parenting a teen and tween. Outside her love of home management, she's crazy for rides on her pink Townie bike, monthly lunches with girlfriends and polka dot socks. You can follow her at **applevalleygirl.blogspot.com.**

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