

CLEARING THE CLUTTER

SPRING CLEANING: Clear, Clean and GAIN BACK TIME

By Rowena List



Ah — spring is in the air. Isn't it uplifting? Spring can be a great time for renewal and what better way to renew your space and how you feel than with a thorough home "clear 'n clean." Of course, clearing and cleaning are two totally different things. Clearing means getting items out of your home and paring down. As we all know, cleaning is getting the grime off of your home.

Would you believe it takes 40 per cent less time to clean a clutter-free and well organized home? How's that for motivation? Is your home full of stuff you no longer need or use? Are you storing others' belongings? Or maybe everything is simply out and all over the place, instead of things being in their place. Do you have systems to help corral your clutter?

Take advantage of the extra bounce in your step this season and try my 6 simple organizing steps to clear and clean your home this spring.

Tip 1: What is it costing you to store other people's belongings or stuff that you're not using? Insurance, stuck energy and aggravation can all add to stress. You are no longer a storage locker for other people's stuff. This means your grown kids get to come over and claim whatever belongings they have you looking after. Give them a time limit when you would like their items gone. Has your garage become a storage area for your late grandparents' furniture? Now is the time to get ruthless and ask yourself: "what is the purpose of storing these things"? If there is a valid reason and you have the space, then fine. But if not, it's time to find a new home for them. Sell or donate them to someone who actually needs them.

Tip 2: Make arrangements for your local donation company to come by for a pick-up of your household items and clothing that are clean and still in good condition. Having a deadline will encourage you to get started and keep going.

Tip 3: Decide which area of your home is bugging you the most. Start with that area by taking one box or bag at a time and dealing with the contents. Don't get sidetracked. For example, if there are tools in one of those boxes and they need to go to the garage, simply place them in the garage and leave. Do not stick around the garage and start decluttering it. That can be done another day. Take



*IT TAKES 40 PER CENT LESS TIME
TO CLEAN A CLUTTER-FREE AND
WELL ORGANIZED HOME*



another chunk of time and work on your clothes. Start with your t-shirts. Keep the ones you love and donate the ones that no longer fit, are out of style or toss any that look worn.

Take the 15 minute-to-freedom challenge by setting the timer and going through your linen closet. Pull out all the old sheets and blankets that you no longer use or need. Don't keep them "just in case." These items are very welcomed by those in need. If the sheets and blankets are really old and in rough condition, they can be donated to the local SPCA.

Set the timer again and go through your kids' toys. What have they outgrown? Do the same for books and so forth.

Tip 4: Once you have purged your whole house, you can now look at setting up systems. Do you need clear bins to store seasonal clothing? Do you need hooks or shoe racks in your front hall closet? Do you need drawer organizers in your kitchen?

Tip 5: Spring cleaning time. Will you do this yourself or treat yourself to a professional cleaning service? Either way, make a list of what needs doing — drapes, carpets, windows, inside the oven and fridge, walls washed, mattress cover and duvet or blankets, outside of kitchen cupboards, tile grout and more. Could your place use a fresh coat of paint? What

about the outside of your home? Make up a schedule for when each of the areas can be tackled — whether it's you and your family doing it or you're hiring out.

Tip 6: Reward yourself. Now that you have purged, cleared out the clutter, set up systems and your spring cleaning is done, it's time to sit back and relax. Treat yourself to a massage, lunch out with a friend, an outing with your kids or whatever makes you happy. You deserve it!

Moving forward, you will have that extra 40 per cent more time. How will you spend it? ■

Rowena List is a coach, professional organizer and speaker based in British Columbia. Learn more at www.gettingittogether.ca.

