



Healthy Homes...Healthy Lives

Accumulation (clutter) occurs naturally over the course of our lifetime. If we continue to have a healthy relationship with what we own, we are able to manage the accumulation over time so that it does not become a problem in our lives. If, however, we either suffer with a form of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) (a.k.a. hoarding) or we become too emotionally attached with what we own, the accumulation becomes a problem that doesn't go away and worsens over time.

Accumulation (clutter) can become a real problem if left unchecked.

The first sign that accumulation has gone out of control is when items occupy too much space in the home and storage spills out from designated areas into the living areas of the home. The situation worsens when outside storage is built on the property or rented off the property to hold items.

The second sign occurs when the accumulation prevents easy mobility within an environment and causes tripping or falling to occur.

The third sign is when social interaction begins to diminish or completely cease to occur. There is either significant embarrassment associated with the living condition such that no guests are ever invited over or there is no physical room to entertain guests.

The fourth sign is when there is a change in mood or mindset and either anger or hatred driven by guilt sets in. Possession is driven by the perceived wants and desires (maybe even those of other people) vs. true needs.

The last sign is when there is a significant change over time in the financial situation. A lot of money starts to get diverted to contribute to the problem (eg. adding to a "collection") or address the problem (eg. buying storage containers). This is when basic needs start not being met due to the lack of disposable income.

Clutter has a huge effect on both our physical, mental and financial health.

Effects on Physical Health

- Exacerbates allergies (dust mites, dander, mold and other allergens)
- Increases risk of bug infestation and can cause germs to multiply
- Increases the risk of fire (especially if papers are stored near electrical equipment or heaters)
- Increases the risk of injuries from things falling down, bumping into items or tripping on items



There's HEART inside everything we do.



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Effects on Emotional/Mental Health

- Increases stress and anxiety (eg. makes you late when you can't find things, can cause arguments/separation/divorce with loved ones who live in the environment and don't have the same philosophy about accumulation)
- Competes for your attention, resulting in decreased performance (eg. home office)
- Depletes your energy (feeling of being overwhelmed)
- Can exacerbate symptoms of other mental issues/diseases
- Fosters procrastination (avoidance of decision making)
- Prevents living in the moment and blocks out new things/experiences from coming into your life

Effects on Financial Health

- Can cause physical damage to the living environment (paint scrapes, buckling floors etc.) requiring repair
- Items hold "wealth" that could be released if sold to pay other expenses (eg. for wellness services not covered by the government/massage or physiotherapy, gym membership etc.)

The time is now to deal with clutter.

Most people think that they have more than enough time to deal with the situation only to realize when they really have to do something it takes much more time than they ever imagined. Or worse, they wait too long to deal with the situation and then it becomes completely out of their control to deal with and the daunting task is burdened on family members to address.

Remember de-cluttering is done from a position of strength not defeat.

Although you may feel some loss as you remove items from your home, remember it is within your control to make those decisions. Also remember to focus on keeping things that provide value today; not those that provided you value in the past or may provide you value in the future.

Also keep a healthy mind through the entire process: don't let guilt about what you spent on an item in the past that wasn't used or was part of a project never realized, weigh you down.

De-cluttering is also a great way to get some needed physical exercise!

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