

A photograph of a dining room interior. On the left is a wall made of rough-hewn stone. Above the table, several glass pendant lights of different sizes hang from the ceiling. The table is made of light-colored wood and is set with a woven placemat, a metal pitcher, a bowl of green apples, two small potted succulents, a black teapot, and salt and pepper shakers. Three white plastic chairs with wooden legs are tucked under the table. Large windows on the right side of the image look out onto a garden with a wooden fence and a tall green tree.

DECLUTTER YOUR HOME 7-DAY CHALLENGE

Introduction

So, you're fed up with your cluttered house and have finally decided enough is enough. You're sick of the mad morning rushes to find backpacks, boots, or an item of clothing you'd planned to wear. You are cleaning because there's just so much clutter to dust under and around - or sometimes skip altogether. More importantly, despite all your diligent cleaning, you still end up feeling exhausted and frustrated because the house still looks messy and not very clean.

You long to open a drawer or cupboard and instantly find what you need. Your dream is modest; you don't want a picture-perfect home, just a neat, tidy space where everything has its place and where there's a place for everything. You want some sanity in the madness of your cluttered home.

Decluttering your home is your only option. This is not to be confused with reorganizing or spring cleaning. You will just end up moving clutter from one place to another or dispersing it around. Your home doesn't need a good spring cleaning, it

needs is a good decluttering - and understandably, you don't know where to start.

This 7-day challenge will walk you through the process of thoroughly decluttering every room in your home in a few simple steps. A word of warning, however - it's not going to be effortless, so be prepared for some hard work and some tough decision-making, especially if you are attached to your "stuff". But the end result will be a totally transformed home and a tremendous feeling of relief and pride.

Decluttering your home goes far beyond having a sparkling streamlined home that's easy to maintain and clean. It's about making your life easier and more comfortable and ultimately, creating a warm and inviting haven for you and your family. This is a reward that is well worth the effort.

Chapter 1 – Why Less is More

In addition to the immediate benefit of having a tidier and nicer-looking home, decluttering has other powerful benefits, some of which go beyond the tangible.

1. **It declutters the mind.** Our minds are constantly processing everything around us even if we aren't aware of it. Clutter and mess cause the brain to go into overdrive, processing all the forms, shapes and colors in a space, often leaving us feeling drained and tense. After you declutter, you will notice that you feel calmer and happier in your space because your mind is calmer.
2. **Decluttering relieves stress.** Naturally, a decluttered mind will mean lower stress levels. In fact, a study carried out at UCLA found that families who lived in cluttered homes had higher levels of stress and tended to have more confrontations. In other words, decluttering is a great stress-buster!

3. Decluttering saves money. Once you experience the peace of mind that comes with a neat, decluttered home, you will be inclined to make wiser buying decisions to avoid bringing new clutter into your space. You will buy only what you really need - and plan beforehand where the item will go in your home and if you really have room for it. You will actually be amazed at how much money you were spending on things you didn't really need. Getting rid of duplicate gadgets and appliances that are just taking up space will also save money on maintenance and upkeep.

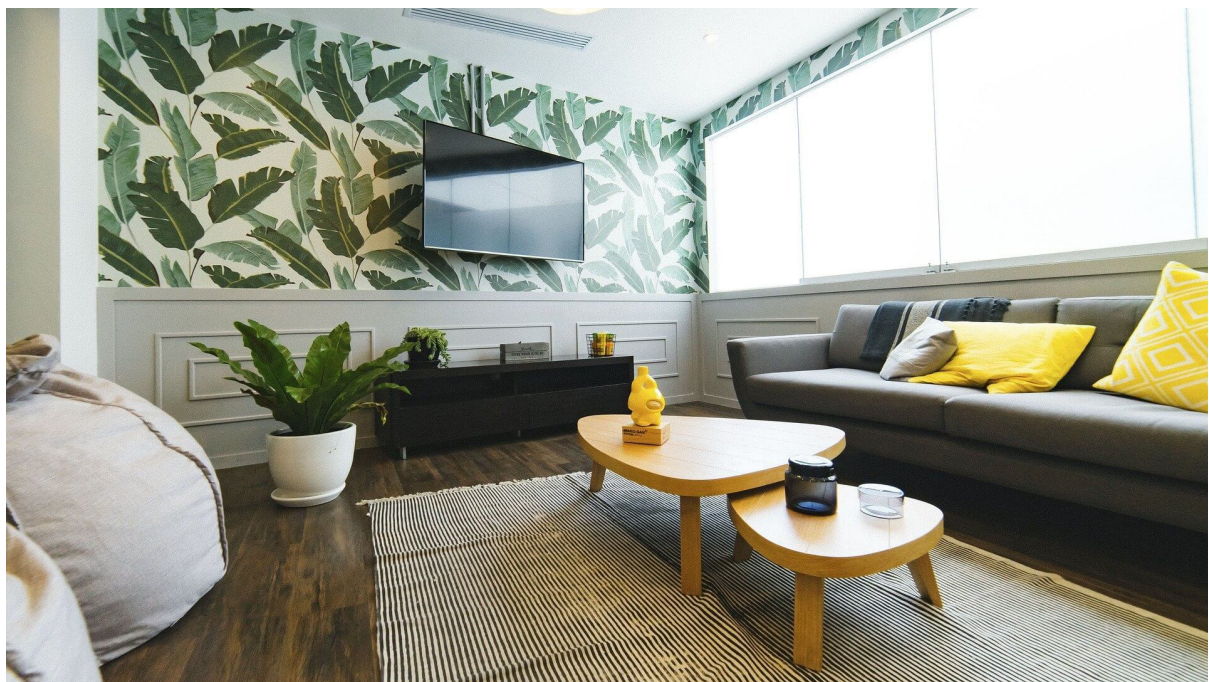
4. It makes cleaning easier. This is a no-brainer. Less stuff makes for easier cleaning and less time spent on cleaning. Your home will also stay cleaner longer because there's less clutter to gather dust.

5. Decluttering frees up time. Less cleaning and maintenance means you have more time to spend on things that bring you real value and enrichment, such as spending more time with family and friends, pursuing causes you are passionate about or spending more time outdoors.

6. It transforms your mindset. When you step inside your door into your neat, sparkling home and experience the

peace and tranquility it brings you, you will reflect on your lifestyle. You will begin to realize that our crazy, consumer-driven culture does not bring us happiness after all. A simpler lifestyle with fewer possessions will allow you to focus on the truly valuable things in life like family, friendship, travel, and improving your mind. These are the things that bring happiness and contentment.

The bottom line is that decluttering has a profound effect on your overall wellbeing. So, with all these benefits in mind, let's roll up our sleeves and jump into the 7-day decluttering challenge!



Chapter 2 – Days 1- 4

Decluttering Key Rooms

The first four days of the challenge involve a major decluttering of the rooms that are used most often in the home. Once you have done this, you will have completed half the challenge. Remember, the goal is to declutter and not to organize or rearrange. That will come later.

Day 1: Declutter Bedrooms

- Head for the closets! The rule here is that anything that hasn't been worn in 6 – 12 months simply has to go. The same applies to things that don't fit well and duplicate items of clothing. Keep only the clothes that you currently wear, including shoes, handbags, belts, and other accessories.

Sort the clothes into three boxes: those that need to be thrown out altogether, those that can be donated and those that you absolutely want to keep but store away (these are things that have sentimental value like a wedding dress or a sweater your

grandmother knitted for you years ago but of course, you never wore).

- Do the same for all drawers and shelves in the bedrooms. Get rid of books, gadgets and knickknacks that are just sitting there gathering dust. Sort them in boxes to be donated or stored later.
- Tackle the nightstands, which always tend to be cluttered with tissue boxes, phones, medicine and other junk. Declutter and place these things in the drawer, where they are still close at hand but out of sight. Nightstands should be bare except for a bedside lamp.
- If you have a vanity table, get rid of items like unused hairbrushes, perfume bottles and accessories you never wear. Keep only the things you use on a daily or regular basis.
- Sort toys in your kids' bedrooms keeping only the ones your kids play with often. Get rid of old stuffed toys unless they have a sentimental value, games your children have outgrown, broken toys like Barbie dolls without arms, deflated balls and that old Barney doll the dog chewed up. A colorful touch is a great way to keep all your kids' toys close at hand but out of sight when not used.

- Another great way to declutter a child's bedroom is to enlist the help of your kids in a fun game, where they choose four or five of their favorite toys to keep in their rooms and store everything else away in a hall closet. These toys can later be replaced with five new ones from the storage closet when the kids get bored with the ones they have.

- Get your family involved in this part of the challenge, including your spouse or partner. They should be responsible for deciding what items of clothing they want to keep (while applying the 6 – 10 rule) and get rid of the rest. That way, you will avoid blame of throwing out a favorite sweater or shirt.

- Be firm and don't waver. Get rid of everything you don't need. Don't argue with yourself that the green evening dress is still in fashion and may come in handy on a special occasion - just ditch it. You can always buy a nicer one if that future special occasion does come up.

- Again, toys and items of clothing with sentimental value that you absolutely can't part with can be stored away but should not be cluttering your closets and drawers.

When you are done, all closets drawers and shelves should contain at least half of what was in/on them before. Mission accomplished!

Day 2: Declutter your kitchen

Brace yourself. You're going to be absolutely astonished at all the stuff you will find stashed away in your kitchen cupboards, totally forgotten! You'll probably find stuff you bought and never used as well; pasta machines, mini-blenders and other gadgets you thought would make your life so much easier when you bought them.

- Again, apply the trusty 6 – 12-month rule here with no buts, while going through every cupboard and drawer in your kitchen. Get rid of everything you have not used within that timeframe. The likelihood that you will ever use it or that it's necessary for your kitchen is almost nil.
- Keep only the essentials. You don't need 10 spatulas, 6 baking dishes and 30 mugs if your family consists of 4 people. Keep only the items you need to keep your kitchen functioning and ditch the rest.
- Get rid of duplicate gadgets and appliances. For example, if you have a multi-purpose kitchen machine, it can serve as a blender, juicer, mixer and food chopper, so you can get rid of other similar gadgets.

- Place working appliances and other sorted items in boxes. They can be donated or sold in a garage sale to make you some extra cash.
- Go through spices, canned goods and other food items and throw out anything that has expired. If you have a pantry, declutter that as well and place all food items in it to make room in your cupboards.
- Declutter your countertops by placing items on them in your now-emptied cupboards. Your countertops should be bare except for the things you use every day like a coffee machine, kettle, fruit bowl or blender.
- Group utensils and cutlery in drawers where they are easy to find.
- Get rid of chipped and cracked plates and glasses, stained pots and rusty utensils.
- Separate pots from pans and sort them in different cupboards. Make sure you match everything with its proper lid.
- Sort essential plastic containers and make sure each has a matching lid.

When you are done, your drawers and cupboards should contain much less than they did before and countertops should be bare except for essential appliances and items.

Day 3 – Declutter bathrooms

Bathrooms can get easily cluttered with expired medicines and beauty products as well as a lot of unnecessary stuff that isn't used on a daily basis or has gone bad. Thoroughly decluttering your bathroom is actually essential for your safety and the safety of your family.

- Invest in small baskets and organizers that fit into your bathroom cupboards to sort and store hair styling products, makeup, soap and face towels. In the meantime, you can sort these items in small plastic bags for the decluttering process and buy baskets and organizers later.
- Start with the medicine cabinet and carefully go through everything, throwing out anything that has expired. Sort prescription medication on an upper self, first aid products on another shelf and general medications like painkillers and

aspirin on another. You may want to consider small baskets to organize these items as well.

- Next, go through all cupboards, drawers and bathroom closets and get rid of old or expired products, as well as ones you've bought but never used.
- Once you have made room in the cupboards, clear the sink counter of everything except essential daily-use items like toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap dispenser and deodorant. Items like shampoo, conditioner and daily-use beauty products can be placed on the lower shelf of the cupboard where they are easily accessible.
- Since bathroom storage is usually limited, remember not to overstock on shampoo, toilet paper and other toiletries so that your storage space is always organized and roomy. Consider keeping these items in a hall closet near the bathroom if you have one.

Ideally once you are done, your bathrooms should be completely bare except for a few items on the sink. The cupboards and drawers should be much roomier now as well so that you can later organize your items neatly.

Day 4: Declutter living and family room

Take a good look around your living room and you'll notice that there's a lot of miscellaneous stuff cluttered on shelves, tables and maybe even in corners.

- Start by decluttering books, magazines, newspapers and CDs. Again, use boxes to sort these things. Keep only books that you know you will read again. Get rid of novels and other books that you've read once. Get rid of piles of magazines and newspapers. This is also a good time to take note of any subscriptions that you don't need to renew. Sort everything in boxes to donate or throw away
- Sort your CDs and again, keep only the ones you do use.
- Get rid of broken remote controls, unused cables and other clutter around your entertainment center.
- Get rid of knickknacks that are crowding shelves and tables. Store them away if you really love them. Keep only a few beautiful pieces that will stand out and catch the eye.

- Declutter board games and other toys and get rid of the ones you don't use anymore. A good idea is to keep these items stored in a decorative chest in a corner of the room.
- Declutter your furniture. If your living room is crowded with end tables, footrests, floor pillows, chairs that nobody uses and other superfluous pieces of furniture, consider getting rid of these items for a more open and streamlined space. Keep only the functional items that you and your family really use. You will be amazed at how much more open space you can create by getting rid of these items.

There you have it! You have decluttered the major rooms in your home in just four days! Now, give yourself a big pat on the back and let's move on to what you need to do next to complete the challenge.

Chapter 3 – Days 5 – 7

Completing the Challenge

Day 5: Declutter your attic/basement/storage spaces

Now, it's time to tackle your storage spaces to make room for those boxes of things you want to keep after you've finished decluttering your home.

Day 5 is dedicated to getting rid of some serious major junk and will probably be the hardest day of the challenge. Understandably, an attic, basement or other storage space is one of the most dreaded when it comes to decluttering. Most of us use the "out of sight, out of mind" principle when it comes to storage spaces. We check anything and everything in there with no method to the madness. Hopefully, the task won't be too overwhelming with a little bit of organization, with the following steps:

1. Work your way around the space, starting on the right side and decluttering as you go until you have made a full circle.

2. Place boxes in the center of the space to fill with the stuff you will donate or throw away, as well as larger items that don't fit into boxes.
3. Make sure you label boxes clearly with "throw out", "donate" or "sell".
4. Make sure you go through everything, putting what you have sorted for keeping along the sides of the space. You can organize everything later. Day 5 is just for decluttering.

If you have an attic, basement and large storage closets, choose only one storage space to declutter thoroughly on this day. You can declutter other storage spaces later after you have completed the challenge and given yourself some rest. The goal here is to declutter one space to make room for your boxes of "home clutter"

Hopefully, these steps will make your task a little easier. Start decluttering as follows:

- Get rid of broken furniture. If it's been lying there for a long time, it's never going to get fixed. Throw it out - or schedule a definite date to get it fixed if you can't part with it.
- Get rid of old holiday decorations, worn-out luggage, boxes of clothes and unused sports gear and tools. Remember, these things are stored away because you don't use them. Remember to be decisive. Keep only what you really do need to keep stored (such as camping gear) and ditch the rest.
- Expensive things like exercise bikes and other sports equipment can be kept if you think you will need them in the future - otherwise, consider selling them for some extra cash.
- Sort tools and other small items and consider if you want to invest in shelving to keep these things organized.

The likelihood is that most of the stuff in your storage space is junk. Why is that spare tyre lying there taking up space? What are you planning to do with that box of broken Christmas tree ornaments? Why are those faded lawn chairs stacked against the wall when you have a perfectly good set of new ones? I think

you get the idea. Get rid of it and be amazed at all the space you will free up. Make a resolution to never let your storage space become a junkyard again!

Day 6: Organize your rooms

Congratulations! All the hard work is done. The next two days are the most enjoyable part of the challenge because now, you can get creative and have some real fun! Here's what you need to do:

- Go through each room you've decluttered and take a good look around. Ask yourself if there's anything you can declutter further, such as unused pieces of furniture, digital screens, lamps and other items.
- Determine the goal of each room and whether everything is arranged to fulfill the maximum purpose of that room. For example, the goal of your bedroom is good quality sleep but you may also be using it as a personal workspace. In this case, the room should be optimally arranged to suit these two goals. Consider if your desk and computer are positioned in a separate area of the room, perhaps near a window with a nice view. Double-check that it is thoroughly decluttered, streamlined and

neat. Ideally, the only thing that should be on your desktop is your PC.

- Your bed should be positioned with nothing crowding around it and plenty of room to get in and out. Consider removing extra chairs and tables that could be causing a cluttered, crowded look.

Another example is the living room. The goal of this room is possible to relax, watch TV and spend time with your family. Rearrange the furniture so that you have nice open spaces where kids can move around. Tables should be within arm's reach and the TV should be positioned where it is easy for several people to gather around and watch.

Your kitchen table should not have more chairs than you need and should be positioned where it is easy to navigate around. Whether this table is used for eating, preparing food or doing homework, it should always be bare except when it's being used.

- Sort out cluttered cables, which can be a real eyesore if you have several electronic devices in one room like computers, stereos and TVs. Not only does this make a space look untidy, but it can also be a downright hazard as well. The good news is

that there are several ways to solve this problem, such as cable clips, cable cords and other innovative solutions. Make a note of all the rooms that contain cable clutter so that you can buy the required solution ASAP.

- Make sure that everything has a "home", meaning a designated place where it can easily be found. Each room should be clear of all but the bare essentials. Everything else should be stored away in the space you've made for it when decluttering.
- Remove wall art and small rugs and place them against the wall.

The goal of day 6 is to make your rooms as open and streamlined as possible, but also, to give you a "clean canvas" to work with on day 7.

Day 7: The finishing touches

The final day of the challenge requires the least physical work but a lot of creative mental thinking. Finally, you are going to

add the finishing touches that will transform your home. For this challenge, you will need a notepad and a pencil.

Go through each of the rooms you have decluttered and reorganized. The rooms should look as minimal as possible with bare floors and walls. Your job is to assess the following:

- Look at the arrangement and color coordination of the room and decide where the rugs should be placed and if you want to put all or some of them back. It could be that the room will look better with one nice, big rug without the smaller rugs you had previously scattered around.
- Do the same with the wall art you have removed. You may prefer to rehang it all or just have one or two pieces. You may even decide that you would prefer to buy some new pieces of wall art.
- Make sure the curtains are in good condition and match the furniture, or whether it's time to buy new ones.
- Decide if you will buy a few pretty plants and where you will put them.

- For your bathroom and storage space, consider purchasing wall organizers or extra shelving to keep everything neat and tidy.
- Consider whether the children's rooms need shelving where all their school supplies, toys and other belongings can be organized neatly and easy to find.
- As you go through each room, write down what you need to buy, add or remove to complete the transformation.
- Now comes the really fun part. Go out and shop for all your new additions!

The key idea after decluttering is to keep it simple. But simple doesn't have to be cold, sparse or boring. With less clutter and a few colorful touches, your home will become a cozy, inviting haven. Every room will exude warmth and comfort while being optimally functional and easy to keep clean and tidy. This should be your goal on Day 7 – adding those final touches that will totally transform your freshly-decluttered home.

Chapter 4 - Tips to Help you Breeze Through the Challenge

Keep these tips in mind while going through the challenge. They will help ensure that your home remains clutter-free for years to come.

- Digitize your media. This is a great idea if you're a music or movie buff who owns hundreds of CDs. Putting all your media on your computer will not only enable you to find what you need more easily, but will also minimize clutter and free up loads of space.
- Invest in organizers. Spend an hour online and check out how far this industry has come. There are literally hundreds of organizers in all shapes, sizes and colors and many of them are pretty cool. They include everything from small boxes to

organize makeup and accessories, tiered baskets to organize soap, shampoo and towels in your bathroom closet to colored folders to organize important papers and keep your drawers uncluttered. Organizers are a great investment for keeping things orderly and minimizing clutter.

- Label boxes clearly when you are decluttering. For things you intend to store, label boxes for "clothes", "Christmas decorations", "toys" and so on. Things you will not keep should be sorted in boxes labeled "donate", "throw out" and "sell".

If you are undecided about what to keep and what to discard, ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I assuming that I will really need this in the future? (If yes, store it away.)
- Do I have another item that will serve as a duplicate to this one? (If yes, get rid of it.)
- Does this item bring me joy and have happy memories? (If yes, store it away in a drawer or cupboard.)
- Can I convert this to digital format? This applies to documents, newspapers and magazines you may want to read later. Simply scan them and store them on your computer.

- Be firm. If you find you are having trouble parting with things, remember why you are decluttering in the first place.
- Take "before" and "after" pictures of each room to keep yourself fired up, but also to be able to see how much you've accomplished and give yourself a nice treat!
- Go hard on clothing items unless they have real sentimental value like a wedding dress or your baby's first pair of shoes. Remember that fashions change, people lose or gain weight and really, nothing is easier to replace than clothes.
- Build extra storage. Consider building additional storage space, such as cupboards above doors, shelving in the attic or basement or a bathroom closet if you don't have one.
- Use hooks behind doors and inside cupboards to hang up bathrobes, coats and small kitchen utensils.

Conclusion

Isn't it amazing how much stuff we accumulate in our homes over the years? This 7-day challenge will really bring that home. Hopefully, it will make you determined not to repeat the experience.

So, what's next? After taking a well-deserved break, you can consider other spaces to declutter, such as your yard, your office and even your car. Once you see how decluttering can transform a space and bring you so much calm, you will want every personal space you are in to be as tidy and organized.

More importantly, you will also be very wary of replacing your old clutter with new clutter. This is a real breakthrough. Buying less and spending less time shopping for new stuff will save you time and money to do the things you really love. That is a huge added bonus.

After completing the challenge, there's only one thing left to do. Give your house a thorough cleaning! Life is going to be so much easier from now on.

Best of luck on your decluttering journey!