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# Enough Stuff

## How to conquer clutter during spring cleaning.

by Bridget McGinn, for *The Bulletin Special Projects* / Photos by Kevin Prieto

Need some incentive to declutter and simplify your home? Consider this: while preparing to move her family into a new house, professional cleaner Erin Murray once found \$170 she had stashed away and forgotten.

"Sure made my cleaning and purging worthwhile," said Murray, who owns AMADEUS Cleaning in Bend. "Did you lose your favorite earrings a year ago? Clean your house and I bet they will turn up."

Aside from unexpected finds of money or jewelry, there are other reasons why someone might want to tackle a major clearing out of their home; one of the most common is a move to a new location. A desire to tackle clutter might also be part of a plan to take care of it so that someone else doesn't have the responsibility later on. Some people are forced to downsize due to life changes, such as when a senior moves into assisted living or when there is a death. Or maybe the urge to purge arises out of

a desire to live more simply.

"Stress, anxiety, irritability, financial loss ... often one or all of those emotions are behind a desire to purge," said Sheri Massine, owner of Order By Design and a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers. "By the time someone calls me, they are typically frustrated."

Adding to the frustration, many people feel ashamed to be in need of the services of a professional organizer to help effectively manage their space or time, a sentiment that Massine empathizes with, but firmly dismisses.

"I believe there is no room for shame," said Massine. "Asking for help from a professional organizer is no different than seeking any other form of help, whether it be medical, fitness, legal, financial, etcetera."

Like other professionals, Massine takes a pragmatic approach to discovering the best way to work with each individual client.

"I am not in this work to judge," said

Massine. "I am doing this to help clients simplify their lives by teaching them a new way to view their 'stuff.' My intention is to help them shift the way they think about things and help them take back their space and their time."

Because maximizing time management is a part of the organizing process, people often find that when their space is clutter-free they have more discretionary time, and also save money because they no longer purchase on a whim or accidentally duplicate items.

"There is a big connection between our minds and our house clutter," said Gina James, owner of Bend Estate and Transition Services and member of the National Association of Senior Move Managers. "How does it make you feel about yourself when you look around at unfinished projects or piles of things? The whole process of decluttering is a freeing process, emotionally and financially."

The process, however, can be challenging.

"Many folks have a hard time letting go and seem to want to box stuff up and store it away in a garage or closet," said Murray. "However, this does not work. Eventually the boxes just get piled up and the clutter is still there."

To clear clutter, start by clearing your mind. A mindset adjustment is an important first step toward successful clutter clearing, said Massine.

"When assessing your situation, keep reminding yourself that space is finite, and time is finite. This mindset is helpful because it is an absolute truth. It creates a solid foundation for all the work to come," said Massine. "Then, go through your space room by room and truthfully note how each space is working—or not working. Determine what needs to change in each space for it to be most effective."

Understanding that everyone has things that are precious to them, and that sometimes letting go can be dif-



difficult, is a vital part of the work of James, Murray and Massine. Compassion and acceptance are key characteristics that allow professionals to be successful in helping people transform from clutter to clean.

"It is tough for people to face all their 'stuff' and clients often feel the most reluctant when we initially move all of their stuff into the open for the first sort," said Massine. "It can feel like a huge project. My job is to show that there is a way through, to reassure them that I know what I am doing."

Sentimental items are those people find the hardest to let go of, said James. Often people are more willing to let things go when James suggests donating to a charity that is close to their heart.

"If they like animals I might suggest the Humane Society Thrift Store," said James. "If people see that someone else might really benefit from an item it can be easier to let it go."

For those preparing for a move, especially one that involves downsizing, James recommends doing some serious space planning well in advance. Doing so will help determine where furniture will be placed, and what there might not be room for. Other factors to consider when purging before a long-distance move are necessity, cost and lifestyle.

"If you are moving to Phoenix, you don't need all those winter clothes," said James. "And it might actually be more affordable to purchase new furniture in your new location versus paying to having it all shipped."

Of course, perhaps the simplest

course of action is to avoid surrounding yourself with clutter in the first place.

"Some people will buy everything they can simply because it was on sale, yet they never even use it or wear it or whatever," said Murray. "And it just piles up with the rest of their clutter."

Save your money instead, advises Murray, and use it to hire a housekeeper on a bi-weekly basis to help keep your home clean and organized.

"Often times our society tricks us into thinking we need more. We don't," said Murray. "Trust me, from a housekeeper's point of view, less is actually more."

Less stuff equals more peace of mind, and Massine enjoys seeing the positive shift in how people relate to their belongings after conquering clutter.

"There is a sense of ownership over the items they decide to keep," said Massine, "And a tangible relief that follows letting go of heavy, toxic, unhelpful things."

"People get overwhelmed, but it really doesn't need to be that way if you start small. But just start," said James. "Starting now when you have the choice is a totally different process than when you are forced to do it because of circumstances."

Contact information: AMADEUS Cleaning, 541-213-5114; Bend Estate and Transition Services, [www.bendstateservices.com](http://www.bendstateservices.com); 541-550-7444; Order By Design, 541-977-8348, [www.orderbydesign3.com](http://www.orderbydesign3.com).





## CLUTTER CLEARING TIPS

- Start small, and at your comfort level; try a single drawer or a shelf in the medicine cabinet.
- Tackle big projects little by little.
- Take on one room or area at a time.
- Do not go out and purchase any storage containers before you sort and purge.
- Be prepared with boxes or tarps divided into categories such as donate, recycle, toss, consign, elsewhere.
- Set a realistic time frame to work within, such as 30 minutes every Saturday.
- Do not set yourself up for frustration by beginning a clutter clearing session when you know that you will be constantly interrupted.
- Enlist help. Invite a good friend or two over to help sort and make decisions. Play music, drink wine and make it fun. And don't forget about the people you share your home with. Divide up chores daily and make cleaning a family matter.
- Do not keep anything that makes you feel heavy, stressed, sad or anxious.
- Do not categorize something as a treasure if it has been forgotten or buried in dust.
- Have a professional transfer all of your videotapes to DVD, a huge space saver.
- Own a shredder, and after picking up the mail each day shred what is not needed immediately instead of setting it on a counter.
- Take photographs of special items such as collections, and keep them in a memory book to help in the process of letting go.

## COMMON CLUTTER CULPRITS

Keep an eye out for these items listed below, as they represent common clutter offenders:

Books and Magazines  
Tupperware  
Christmas ornaments  
Beauty products

Spices  
Unopened mail  
Linens  
Cleaning supplies



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