

Take time to clear out the clutter from life and mind

The Christmas period can often be a double edged sword for me. Receiving gifts is definitely a highlight, but the same can't be said about finding a place to keep them.

Having limited storage space means that my home environment quickly become cluttered.

It's an insidious process, which I realise is born primarily out of procrastination on my part. One thing finds a "temporary home" and is soon joined by other objects, and this patch of disorganisation slowly grows like a colony of bacteria in a Petri dish. It would be interesting to see a time-lapse recording of this clutter building up, but the only lapse seems to be in my attention to my surroundings. I often fail to notice this phenomenon until it's reached critical mass.

There are some places that I don't like having lots of stuff, like my computer desk. When what should have been a pristine expanse started being dominated by things that had no real purpose being there, I decided it was time to act.

This seemed easy enough in principle, until I realised there was no quick and easy place for this stuff to go that wasn't already full of clutter.

That was when it became apparent it was time to take serious action. There was no way to have a tidy desk unless things had a place to go, and this meant creating a space to put them. This triggered a chain reaction, because to clear a space I

realised I'd have to put other things back where they belonged. Some things didn't belong anywhere, full stop.

Miscellaneous items had outlived their usefulness, like old pieces of paper or redundant electronics, and needed to go.

I decided to bring in the big guns; or at least a big black rubbish sack. It was time to begin the purge, and win back my environment from the clutter monster one space at a time.

There are many ways to approach ridding your environment of



clutter, and some great resources can be found on the internet. One approach is to do a little bit every day, about five minutes worth for example. This can break what could otherwise seem like an insurmountable job into manageable chunks.

Another approach I found is more like the one I took, using a rubbish bag and seeing how quickly you can fill it.

When addressing your clutter it's worth remembering that old saying: "One man's trash is another man's treasure."

You may have some perfectly good things you just don't need anymore, which could be given to friends or family, or taken to the op shop to find a good home.

You could also use a system of four boxes - one box you'd like to keep; one to relocate; one to give away; and one to dispose of.

If you need to access any other resources to inspire you in your decluttering mission, remember Google is your friend.

The benefits of decluttering extend beyond having a clean and tidy environment; it can save you time otherwise spent trying to find things. It can also save you money, because you're more likely to question if you really need that new purchase you'll have to find room for.

Most importantly, having an orderly environment where everything is in its place can have a positive effect on the mind. As we bring order to our disorganised surroundings, it is possible that we can address the habits that led to this situation.

Rather than staying on autopilot and letting habit take over, it can really help if you stop and ask yourself if something really belongs where you're about to put it. Ask yourself: "Is this the first place I'll look for this thing when I need it?"

Mindfulness has a part to play in decluttering, because clutter itself has a habit of building up under your nose until it's impossible to ignore any longer.

Paying real attention to the space around you, and how you treat it, can make it easier to keep it organised and tidy.

Whatever method you decide to use, it's important that you stick with it. It's no use creating a pristine space today if tomorrow you're going to fill it with something that doesn't belong there.

Tony Spencer

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