
7 ways to better declutter
your home and life with
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When I work with clients, I hear all sorts of reasons why they find it difficult to part with their clutter; each one feels as real and as powerful as the next when it comes to keeping them in that unhappy, dis-satisfied, dis-organised space.

Here is my list of the top seven mistakes that "hoarders" make.

See if you recognise yourself in any of them, because once you recognise the things that are stopping you from moving forward and feeling lighter, then you know how to overcome them!

Mistake Number 1

The first mistake people make is that they feel as though they haven't got the time that will be needed to get the job done. They look at the area that is causing them the problem, calculate the



time they think that it will take them to get it sorted, and then slowly back their way out of the door, with a sinking heart and a look of fear in their eyes!!

When you look at it that way, all of us can fully understand why it elicits that kind of reaction, we've all been there! However, if we can just change our way of thinking a little, then it all becomes so much more possible.

The reality is that all of it doesn't have to be done at once. We can break it up into as many smaller time slots as we like. We can do small sessions over a long period of time if that is what's going to work best for us, or longer sessions over shorter periods of time. The choice is ours and the time scale needs to fit in with what we have available, so that it remains realistic and achievable. We'll need to have the discipline to keep going back and doing our little bits, but once we begin to see the results and feel the benefits of our efforts then the motivation to continue will be there.

So, time is something we can find, we just have to be realistic and creative about it.

A great idea is to set a timer for ten or fifteen minutes a day and just do as much as you can in that time. Then do the same the next day and the next. We can all find ten minutes in our day, no matter how busy we are, and the results do add up!)



Mistake Number 2

Often, if the clutter has had enough time to become a real problem, we can feel as though we just don't know where to start. We stand and look and shake our heads. We might even pick up a couple of things, look round to see where to put them, fail to find a better place amongst all of the clutter, put them back down, shake our heads again and walk away defeated with that sinking feeling in our stomach. Not a

good way to be or to feel!

The problem is that we see the whole picture. We scan the room, notice all of the piles, all of the undone paperwork, all of the unsorted, unfiled documents and of the unhomed bits and pieces and we feel overwhelmed.

What we need to do is zoom in! Tackle one pile, one shelf, one drawer at a time, then move on to the next. Don't look at the big picture to start with, just pick one small thing to sort, then move onto the next and then the next. That way we don't become overwhelmed and we can actually begin to make a difference. So when we feel as though we just don't know where to start we just need to pick one small place and go for it!



Mistake Number 3

The "hoarder" in us can keep things because we "might find them useful one day".

Whether this be clothes, books or pieces of bric-a-brac that we think are pretty... the range of possible items is endless!

The common thread between them all is that they can be put to some, as yet unknown use, at some unspecified time in the future! Now, I am not one for throwing out and getting rid of things just for the sake of it, but this way of thinking can lead to problems of overcrowding! If we find ourselves doing this then we need to stop, take a deep breath and think carefully and honestly about whether or not we are being realistic about a future usefulness, or is this keeping things just a habit that we've got into.

It may be that we do quilting as a hobby, and we save any pretty bits of material that we come across for use in future projects. It may be that we intend to lose a little weight so we keep that pair of jeans we love but just can't fit into at the moment. There's nothing wrong with that. But we do need to give ourselves a time limit on what we keep...and stick to it!

If we find that we haven't used that material or managed to fit back into those particular jeans within, say, six months, then get rid of them and in the meantime store them somewhere accessible but not where they will cause clutter.

That way we know where to find things if we do find a use for them, but we don't keep lots of things for open-ended periods of time, in the mistaken belief that we "might find them useful one day".

Mistake Number 4

Another mistake that we might make and a reason why we might find ourselves hanging onto items that no longer serve us, is because of the good memories that they have attached to them.



We have all had little collections or single items that when we have looked at them; touched them; smelled them, have taken us back to a time or place, event or person, that has made us smile! These are lovely things to have and to keep and to treasure and they add to our lives.

The problem arises when we have so many of these items that they are actually starting to cause us stress.

They begin to feel more like a burden than a blessing and we feel obliged to keep them rather than them bringing us pleasure. If this has become the case, then we need to take action. We need to look at what it's costing us emotionally, rather than giving to us, to keep these items. We need to be looking forward to creating exciting, new memories and not holding on too tightly to those that we already have. We won't lose the past just because we let go of the object associated with it, we will still have the good memories that they have attached to them.



Mistake Number 5

This can be especially true of things that have found their way to us through inheritance, quite often larger items such as pieces of furniture, left by loved ones who had real emotional attachment to them.

We feel ourselves to be their guardian and the keeper of the family history. We feel like we have been entrusted to keep these things future generations. If we also love these items then that's not a problem. If we look at them and they give us pleasure or we find a use for them in our homes and our lives then, again, they are adding to our quality of life. But, if they weigh us down and clutter our homes and thoughts and emotions then we really need to part with them. Not easy at times, I know, but we have the right to live lighter and clutter free, and just because somebody else loved something it doesn't mean that we have to love it too.

We can also "inherit" from our children; they leave things with us when they go off to university, buy their first home or move in with a new partner. They tell us "it's just for now", "just until we get a bigger place", "we don't have the room for it just now" and promise they'll take it when they do! Sound familiar? Again, there's no reason why we can't keep it if it's not causing us a problem, perhaps we can even put a time deadline on it, but if it is, then they need to take responsibility for their own "stuff".

If they really want it that much then they can come and get it, if they don't then it's fine to get rid of it. Inheriting things doesn't have to stress us out.

Mistake

Number 6

If our children are still at home and are actively contributing to the clutter, or are at least not exactly helping to prevent it then we might make the mistake of

feeling resentful; using the excuse "well, it's not all my clutter so why should I be the one to tackle it?"

True, very true, but it is us that it's causing emotional harm too. It may be that they don't even see the build up, that it doesn't actually impact on their lives, or it does but they just can't see the point of tackling it either. Try talking to them, asking for their help, and if not, then just go for it anyway. Think about how the clutter is making us feel,



think about what it is costing us in terms of our emotional wellbeing, what is it preventing us from doing? Then think about what it would mean to us to have it sorted, to be back in control.

What difference would it make to our lives, to the way that we feel, to what we could then achieve. We need to take responsibility for ourselves and our own happiness and get it done! The difference it would make to us is what is important here, not who will help us regain control and feel lighter again. So, if we catch ourselves thinking it's not all my clutter so why should I be the one to tackle it, acknowledge the truth in that, then step up and get on with it anyway, because of the difference it will make to us! Also, we may find that once it is sorted, everybody else in the house may be more willing to help keep it that way!



Mistake

Number 7

Our final possible mistake in this list is that of keeping putting it off. We can feel the problem weighing us down, we can feel the stress that it causes us, we

can feel the weight of it in our lives, but we just can't face getting started! We think of a hundred different excuses for leaving it as it is, for just a little longer. In our hearts we know that this is a mistake and that we are doing ourselves a real dis-service by settling for living with our clutter.

We need to stop and be honest with ourselves. We need to acknowledge what it is costing us to stay living that way. Perhaps we feel as though we can't invite friends round, move our businesses forward as we would like, have people to stay, find things easily when we need them. We need to picture that space as we would like it to be.

Picture it in our minds eye in all its detail, and then think how it would make us feel if it were already like that. What would we now be able to do that we couldn't before, how would we feel, and what difference would it make in our lives.

We need to hold these new feelings in our hearts and then we will find that we want to get started and get sorted and that we don't want to delay any longer. We want those feelings and possibilities to become our reality.

Every time we can feel our determination slipping, then we can take ourselves back to that wonderful, sorted space we can see in our head and renew our positive intentions and feed our desire to stop putting it off.



Find out more about how Lesley can help you make your house in to a home with her online learning and one to one services at www.lesleybeattie.com