

PR DUCTIVE

Ignite! etting go

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Clutter

in our lives is costing us our most valuable commodity, time.

An office with a cluttered desk and files costs us 6 WEEKS A YEAR; time lost in searching for documents. We often say we don't have time to successfully sort and file things away and yet, realizing that we lose 6 weeks demonstrates that there was time in there somewhere that we gave away to searching instead of maintaining.

If this is true of an office, just one room, imagine what time are we losing in a cluttered home? The key is to clear your clutter and organize what is left that you need, use or love.

Why is it that some individuals can simply get rid of their clutter and others struggle with it?

Unfortunately, many of us have emotions that, consciously or not, stop us from releasing our clutter. In my work with clients I find that the following three emotions seem to be most common in this struggle.

Fear

We are afraid to let go. The comment I hear the most is "What if I need it one day?" True, there is always that chance; however we may only need 5% of what we are

Ignite! Letting go (cont.)

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hanging on to. The trick is that we do not know which items will be the 5% and so we hang on to 100% of the clutter. I recommend that we let go of 100% and if you need that 5% later, realize that another one is still obtainable, by purchase or borrow.

Another fear is that the item might be valuable. I have seen this concern with Beanie Babies, old books, china and National Geographic's to name a few. If you worry that you would be donating or throwing out something that is valuable search EBay for your particular item or hire an appraiser to determine whether or not what you have is valuable.

Gifts that were given to us are also difficult to let go of. We are afraid of hurt feelings or truth telling if the giver should ask what happened to their gift. I like to remember that it is the thought that came with the gift and not the gift itself. It is the "congratulations" or the "we are so happy for you" thoughts behind the gift that are what matter most. It is the thought, not the thing. If you still struggle with this, try to remember what you have given that person in the past. Most of us can not remember the gifts and certainly would not search their home to determine whether they still have it!

#2 Guilt

Sometimes items that we no longer need, use or love were once very expensive and so guilt takes a role in our struggle to move that item out. How do I just get rid of something that once cost so much money? A great sweater that no longer fits, a piece of artwork that you no longer like, exercise equipment that we no longer use (don't kid yourself) are all examples of our struggle with guilt. Think in

Ignite! *letting go (cont.)*

terms of giving this item to someone you know that might truly enjoy it or visit a consignment shop and put your item up for resale. Even exercise equipment can be resold this way. Don't let the guilt of expense stop you from de-cluttering your space. These items are actually "costing" you more in time and space.

Possibly the biggest items you can't seem to let go of were inherited. A dining table with 6 chairs that you don't need (you have a great set that matches your décor), or twelve boxes full of a relative's belongings passed on to you. How do you clear out these items without guilt? I first recommend checking with other relatives to see if you can pass these items on to other family members, keeping them in the family. If this is not successful for you, sell the table and chairs and put the money towards something that improves your family such as a child's education fund. The twelve boxes can be sorted through to detect true small treasure which would allow you to make a shadow box as a memorial to that relative. Instead of twelve boxes of "stuff" hidden in the attic you now have a true treasure you can put on the wall allowing everyone to appreciate and remember the life of that relative.

Sentimentality

Often our hearts are wrapped around the "things" that represent our lives and we feel that letting go of the thing will let go of the memory or the good feeling. Many of us keep all the cards and mementos that represent times or experiences in our lives. The problem is when we keep all that paper we get lost in it and the real treasures in the piles are lost and forgotten. Create a small memory box about twenty inches square where you can preserve the true treasure in your life. Limit yourself to this space to save your memories.

Ignite! letting go (cont.)

When you have large sentimental treasures like artwork the children have done it is fun to take a photo of the child holding the large piece. This way you only store the photo and not all the large artwork. It also demonstrates the age of your child when he or she created it. For children's smaller creations keep the treasures and not the papers used for teaching. We all had to trace letters and write book reports, these were activities for our growth and development and not meant to be stored once complete. So keep your heart open to future treasures, but discard those items that are crowding your space.

So if you need more time back and want to regain control of your space, recognize the emotions that are confining your battle against your clutter, schedule a time on your calendar to confront them and challenge yourself to overcome the emotional challenges!



As a Professional Organizer, Cyndy Ratcliffe works with home and small business owners in organizing their homes, offices and time. She received her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior level manager for approximately 20 years before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

Cyndy assists individuals to reduce stress, boost their image and me more productive through speaking, training and hands-on coaching of organizing techniques.

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