

MARCHING TOWARD SPRING

Organizing For A New Season

Spring has sprung and everywhere you go, birds are chirping and building nests, squirrels are collecting nuts, flowers are popping up through the soil, and what better time of year than now for a fresh start in your chaotic home? Start this new season of rebirth with a rebirth of your own by following these ten ideas for a simpler, less cluttered life.

1. **DECLUTTER.** Clutter drains your energy and makes it difficult to find what you need when you need it. To declutter your home, attack each room systematically, beginning by removing anything that doesn't belong in the room and taking it to the room it should live in. Then go through the room, boxing up for donation, anything that is not giving you joy or value. Rather than thinking that you're seeking things to let go of, pretend you are shopping in your home for things to give to someone else.
2. **ROTATE DÉCOR.** After a while, you begin to not see how much you have in the way of décor items in your home. You keep adding new items without removing any of the old items. Begin by removing all the décor items in the room until all your flat surfaces are clear. Dust the furniture while it's empty. Then put only half the items back, boxing the other half up to store. Then, after the holidays, you can pull out the decorative items you stored, and box up the other half. By rotating your décor, you declutter and you are able to enjoy seeing "new" things every six months.
3. **DO A CABINET DEEP CLEAN.** The kitchen is the heart of most homes and tends to collect clutter in cabinets and drawers. Take a weekend day and empty each cabinet, evaluating the items within. Whatever you don't use at least once a year, donate.
4. **PURGE YOUR WARDROBE.** You're not the same person you were in high school or college, and just as you change, so does your personal style. The clothing you wore as recently as two years ago may not be right for who you are now, you may have gained or lost weight, or you just tend to be a clothing collector. Spring is a terrific time to purge your wardrobe of the things that you no longer love or wear, and make room for some things that express the current you.
5. **READING IS FUNDAMENTAL.** However, chances are you have books lurking in your home that you haven't read in decades and will probably never pick up again. Go through your books and either donate them to a school or shelter, or sell them on www.half.com or with another used book retailer. Books can easily take over your house if you're not careful, so keep on top of them and make room for a few new best sellers on your shelves this spring.

6. **CLEAN OUT THE GARAGE.** If your car sits in the driveway because your garage is too full to park inside, it's time for a clean-out and spring is a great time to do it. Plan a two-weekend project. Use the first weekend to sort your things into different areas of the garage; one pile to keep, one sale, and a bunch of trash bags for the rest. Take the second weekend and hold a garage sale. It's even more fun and you'll make a lot more money if you can get your neighbors involved. Neighborhood garage sales always draw larger crowds than individual ones.
7. **DIVIDE AND CONQUER.** If you have kitchen, desk and bathroom drawers that drive you crazy with clutter, consider creating more organized space by using drawer dividers. These handy units can be plastic, metal mesh, wooden, or acrylic, but they all do the same job. They section the large open space inside each drawer into small, defined compartments, helping to create permanent homes for things, as well as keeping them very visible. Drawer dividers are inexpensive and can be easily found at WalMart, Target, Container Store, Office Max, Office Depot or Staples.
8. **HAVING THE RIGHT TOOL IS HALF THE JOB.** Follow your natural tendencies when it comes to organizing. Figure out the solution and then purchase the tool, and not the other way around. If your mail and bills pile up on the kitchen counter, accept the fact that it's the easiest and most convenient place to put it. Work WITH that tendency, and place an organizing tool there to corral the mail, and keep it organized. Choose something aesthetically pleasing to you, such as small wicker baskets or a wooden mail sorter.
9. **BIRDS OF A FEATHER.** Grouping items together is a great way to organize to make various tasks simpler. For example, gather up your gardening gloves, soil, fertilizers, stones, flower pots, and all the other things you use for gardening and keep them all together in bins in the same area of the garage. Also, keep a bucket filled with rags, soap, wax, sponges, wheel polish, leather polish and window cleaner and label the bucket "car washing stuff". Create a gift wrapping container filled with wrapping paper, gift bags, ribbons, bows, tape and scissors, and label the container "gift wrapping center". When a task requires several items, it's simple to just group them into a "kit" of sorts then they are always handy when you need them.
10. **PREPARE YOUR PAPERWORK.** I can't stress enough how crucial it is to draw up your Will, Living Will, Durable Power of Attorney, and Healthcare Power of Attorney. These documents are important to have prepared in advance so that should anything happen to you, (and it might) so your family isn't thrown into a legal nightmare. These documents are not difficult to have created, and there are software packages available to help you. Do it for your family, it is truly a gift of love.

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