



Letting go of clutter

WE, AS PEOPLE, tend to accumulate a fair bit of extraneous stuff over the course of our lifetime. If left unchecked this flotsam and jetsam can build up until the thought of trying to clear it out becomes truly daunting. Even just deciding on a place to begin can seem like an overwhelming task and so the clutter is left to gather dust and take up valuable space in our homes and offices.

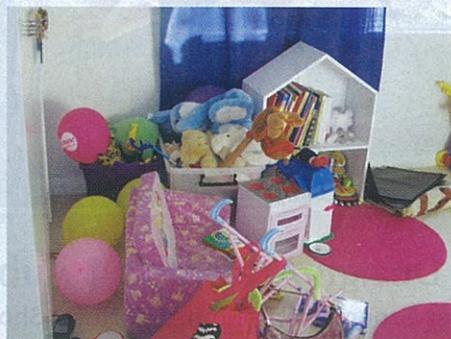
The sheer size of the job is often what makes people avoid spring cleaning and before you know it Christmas rolls around and a new wave of presents, wrapping, decorations and odd bits are added to the already sizable clutter collection.

To help you take charge of your clutter and get things looking spick and span for the holiday season, Professional Organiser Linda Eagleton of Creative Surrounds has some helpful tips on how to get started.

1) Choose one room. This is key as people are easily put off by the sheer size of the task. By selecting a specific area to tackle you can get a sense of achievement before you move onto the next room. By just focussing on one area at a time you can break down a Herculean task into easy to face portions.

2) Make sure you have a plan. Think about what you want the space to look like and how it will function. If it's an office you should aim for organisation and clear surfaces for working. If it's a bedroom aim to make it feel welcoming and relaxing. Put away any items on kitchen benches that don't get used daily and if you have never used that fish scaler, throw it away or give it to charity.

Assign your child's toys a specific home and teach them to pick up after themselves



A cluttered living space can make your life more stressful.

3) When de-cluttering, decide if you need or love each item. If yes, assign a home for it. If not, it's clutter and it needs to go. A lot of people have trouble letting go of items. The feeling that it may come in useful one day is tough to overcome. A good trick for the things you are unsure about is to seal it in a box with the date clearly marked. If after one year you haven't opened the box to retrieve something then it's safe to assume you don't need it and so throw the box away, unopened!

4) Items that are staying need to be grouped together so they are easy to find. Use labels if necessary to ensure you return items to their home and make sure you allocate a space for things so that they don't live on surfaces interminably.

5) Don't hold onto items just because you feel guilty. You can sell, swap or donate them. Have a market stall or give them to your local op shop who always welcome donations.

More than 88 per cent of Australians having at least one cluttered room in their house and 40 per cent feel anxiety and depressed about it. Being organised at home is too important to put off any longer.