

## Coping with Clutter



### **Face the Mess: Confine, Control, Conquer**

- Start to declutter: your home office desk, the laundry room, or the master bedroom. Cleaning out these areas brings immediate benefits as they are brought to better order.
- Then tackle other trouble spots, usually the public before the private, the easier before the difficult, the personal before the familial.

### **Incoming Clutter, Rotating Clutter, and Outgoing Clutter**

- Incoming clutter is best managed when it finds an immediate "home." Set up landing places for your incoming mail, school papers, unpaid bills, and purchases.
- Rotating clutter is best handled by FINISHING. Finish the dishes. Finish, fold and put away the laundry. Finish and put away projects when you come to a stopping point.
- Outgoing clutter is best handled frequently. Wastebaskets in every room collect outgoing trash. A regular collection to the exterior garbage keeps the home environment neat.

### **Encourage Cooperation, Make it Convenient, Be Consistent with Standards**

- Everyone in the home should clean up after themselves. Be sure neatness standards are understood. A good example is the best start. Watching until you are obeyed is a good teaching tool. It is better to address clutter frequently rather than letting it slide for longer periods.

### **Who will put it away? Where will it be put away? When will it be put away?**

- Individual accountability promotes group success. Make family members accountable for their own clutter. Make sure they know where each item's home is located. Set a timetable for cleaning up, such as: "Bedrooms are to be neat before TV is watched tonight." "Dinner will be served to everyone who has put away his or her laundry." "Soccer equipment is to be placed in the garage before we get out the post-game snacks."

## Preserving Important Family Records



### **Tools, Systems, and Routines**

- Gather tools to provide places to put paperwork right away, other places to keep paperwork as it is handled, a third place to file it permanently. Systems are individualized methods that work for you to retrieve an item after you have filed it. Routines are habitual times for tackling paperwork to keep it organized, filed, and available for use again and again. "Where is my passport, anyway?"

### **The Family Information Binder**

- Set up a secure and convenient place to keep paperwork that is frequently referred in your family's everyday life. Have dividers for each member of the family, both for work, school, and medical information (doctor's visits, prescriptions, immunizations, and childhood diseases). Use other dividers for information about the house, internet passwords, and essential numbers.

### **Family Identity Binder/CD/Thumb Drive**

- Copies of vital documents such as birth certificates, social security numbers, drivers licenses, passports, temple recommends, marriage certificate, adoption papers, fingerprints, individual portraits, family pictures, phone/email/addresses of extended family, vehicle ownership documents, insurance information, and loan papers are all useful in an emergency. Prepare a secure place for copies of these vital documents. Put originals in a safe, fireproof location.

### **Personal Journals**

- Set up a personal journal binder for each member of your family with dividers for each season of their lives. Put spare, useful supplies for saving pictures, and preserving treasures in the rear of the journals. Begin to find and store important papers in these personal journals.

### **Photographs**

- Gather tools, set up a system, and figure out a routine for conquering the photographs in your life. Label all photographs with names, places, and dates (whenever possible) to facilitate sorting, documenting, and preserving. Sort by individual, family, or timetable. Gather or purchase archival supplies for keeping the photographs safe and secure. Finish the project by consistent, repetitive focus for reasonable periods of time.

## Maximizing Time Management Skills



### **From Activity to Accomplishment**

- Most everything we do in life we are likely to do again. Why not do prepare right the first time for repetition? Organize lessons, presentations, parties, and many other activities now for easier re-dos again and again.
- Set up forms to gather and recall all pertinent information for repetitive activities and projects to help increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Prepare a specific place to collect and keep all pertinent data for the current project. This will aid us to function superbly now and also repeat the project a second, third, and fourth time with success.

### **Permanent Lists**

- Make up a permanent, reusable list when you prepare for a trip, calculate needs for a picnic, work on a presentation, or prepare for an important occasion. This facilitates competency.
- Most lists will be added to and improved upon with time, but with a master list at your disposal, much of the planning is already done.

### **Thinking in Bulk**

- Many home management activities are repeated over and over. Why not think in bulk? Greeting cards can be purchased, prepared, and stored once a year. Gifts can be prepared, wrapped, and stored for easy retrieval when needed. Stamps can be bought in bulk, too.

### **Standardize Procedures**

- Taking phone messages can be systemized with a form and teaching family members the proper procedures for successful recording of messages. Having a single location with a systemized method to keep complete contact information will bring long-term benefits. Having a master copy of all household and vehicle keys will save many a delay and/or locksmith visit.

## Organizing Closets and Cupboards



### **Set up a Plan**

- Decide where to start organizing, how much to do in one session, and when you will return to this project. Setting up such a plan will make it easier to return with energy and focus.

### **Pull Everything Out and Begin Sorting**

- Find a quiet time to begin organizing. Gather three containers (large garbage bags, heavy duty containers, or cardboard boxes). Label the containers: GIVE AWAY, PUT AWAY, and THROW AWAY. Decide which closet or cupboard will first receive your attention.

### **Make A Decision**

- Pick up one item and ask several questions: "Should I keep this item? In other words, is it useful and needed? If so, does it belong in this place?" If the item belongs, put it back. If it is useful and needed but does not belong here, put it in the PUT AWAY container. If the item is useful and but not needed, put it in the GIVE AWAY container. If the item is not useful and not needed, put it in the THROW AWAY container. Pick up the second item and repeat this process.

### **Keep Enough for Your Needs, Give Away Your Abundance**

- Sometimes you have more than you reasonably need of a single kind of item, such as toys, decorations, and clothing. Usually, keeping a "representation" of the treasured items will do. Decide how much is "enough" and share the rest by giving them away.

### **Organize Cupboards and Closets to Make Sense**

- Congregate like items with like items. Use containers to confine small items. Label containers for easy identification and future retrieval. Put items that are more frequently used nearer to the front and center. Put less used items up and away, down and in back of storage areas.

### **Routinely re-order Cupboards and Closets**

- Once your major cupboard and closet overhaul is done, teach other family members the proper place to return items. Set up a schedule to review each shelf and drawer on a routine basis. This will keep the clutter, confusion, and over-abundance in control.