

What is clutter?

Clutter comes in many forms: you may think of it as physical objects like old newspapers or a stack of boxes, but it also comes in the form of a mind filled with random thoughts, unable to see the forest for the trees.

You might think that physical clutter would be easy to recognise, but we humans are very good at getting used to things and situations and often simply don't realise when we have stepped over the thin line between "disorganised" and "cluttered". Things in a disorganised room simply do not sit in their proper space. A cluttered room contains things that just ended up there because there was no room for them anywhere else.

Clutter attracts more clutter

Once we allow things to accumulate, it is easy to simply add more because the space is already being used as a dumping ground! Things need to be put in the right place rather than just plonking them down 'for now'. Ask yourself: When will you put them away properly? Doesn't it make sense to do it straight away?

Mental clutter can be tackled

It forms thinking patterns and habits that are hard to break later. However, it is possible to change those and un-learn some of them.

The main trick to decluttering – your home AND your mind - is **learning to make decisions** about what you really need to keep, and what you can accept to let go. Of course, there is a grey zone between the two, a very personal space for you to explore and draw your own separation lines.

It's an ongoing process

Organisation and staying clutter-free requires a certain amount of maintenance to keep it going, and the occasional re-shuffle to adjust to new requirements or developments. Think of it like using a refrigerator: whenever you return from the grocery store, you need to shift things to fit the new stuff in. Home organisation works along similar lines, with one difference: you don't as often remove things from your home as you do from your fridge ... and that is where maintenance comes in.

How clutter affects you

If you have read this far, I assume you have recognised some of the situations described above and are already aware that bad organisation and **clutter causes mental, and sometimes physical, stress**. Just picture a bit of clutter in your home right now and you'll realise how the thought of that clutter is affecting your mood and how your energy levels suddenly went down! The physical space and the mind are closely linked and the only way to move forward is to change the way you deal with clutter in your mind, alongside with the physical decluttering.

Removing clutter is not the first step

First you have to understand the reasons why clutter has accumulated and change those habits and behaviours to avoid the clutter from returning straight away. It's not easy, but it can be done.

Clutter is expensive

You may have bought an item of clothing only to find that you had that exact thing in your wardrobe already. Or you may have things stored away that you never use and could actually sell. Or you have that extra bedroom you cannot make use of because it is filled to the brim with clutter. Or worse even: you are paying for storage somewhere else!

Clutter causes stress

Any kind of distraction can be a reason for stress. Quite apart from the physical objects around us, such distractions could come from inconspicuous things like a smart phone next to your bed at night: they light up, buzz, vibrate, or indicate otherwise that something is happening ... and to some degree that attention-seeking behaviour of your phone (and other stuff) is to your own detriment. It might just be bad sleep at first, but it could lead to psychological distress, headaches or other physical effects.