



House & Yard

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organizing

Straighten Up

Professional organizer Kathy Jenkins brings order to scary spaces like this closet by sorting its contents and starting over with a system for keeping it straight.

Almost everyone has a junk drawer where things are thrown — loose nails, rubber bands, bits of paper with phone numbers scrawled on them, batteries, twist ties, instructions for the toaster oven. Then some have an entire room for piles of stuff. Others sprinkle odds and ends — commonly called clutter — throughout the house, in every room, in the form of piles and scattered debris. There are the clothes that need to be donated or repaired, magazines yet to be read, bills to pay. And inside cabinets and closets it's not necessarily any better. Being organizationally challenged is not uncommon, and there is help for you.

Kathy Jenkins, professional organizer and owner of Come to Order, takes a practical approach to helping clients achieve that state of being that makes it possible to find what you're looking for and reduce the

SIMPLE rules of organization

Sort your stuff.

Identify what to keep.

Make a home for it.

Put it in a container.

Label, label, label.

Establish a system.

extra junk you really don't need. "I use the acronym S.I.M.P.L.E.," she says. "S is for sort your stuff. I is for identify what to keep." Jenkins explains that it's more productive to ask clients about what they'd like to hold onto instead of what they want to get rid of because that decision is a lot harder to make. "It's easier to determine what means a lot to you." M is for "make a home for it" — find a permanent place where each item will belong.

P is for "put it in a container." Jenkins says, "That sets up boundaries for the space that an item is allowed

to have. If you don't do this, then your stuff grows legs and walks away to other parts of the house." L is for "label, label, label" — this way you know what is where, even if you can't see inside the containers. Finally, E is for "establish a system for maintaining order."

Regarding the storage of stuff, Jenkins has a two-part rule. "If it's being stored in a closet, go for function and get clear containers or mesh bags and label them," she says. "If it's being stored out in the open, go for beauty and function — you could put CDs in a nice lined basket."

Through her preparations to work with clients, Jenkins has learned much about how people deal with their material lives. Understanding how their brains work with regard to sorting stuff and organizing helps her help them. She has developed a particular specialty in working with children to create lifelong organizational habits. And she is actively involved with the National Study Group for the Chronically Disorganized, which offers several levels of certification. Workshops like "File, Don't Pile!" for Hanover and King William counties, among other groups, are popular options, but she also consults by the hour with individuals.