



TRANSCRIPT

Episode 11: The Other Thing You Need to Make Decluttering Work

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Welcome to the Get Organized HQ podcast. I'm your host, Tasha Lorentz. Every week we share practical strategies for less stress and more peace as we dive into all topics, life and home organization. I'm so glad you're here for this week's episode.

DECLUTTERING ISN'T ALL WE NEED

A couple weeks ago on the Get Organized HQ podcast, we talked about what to do when you want less stuff, but you want the stuff that you have. And I want to build on that in today's episode because I think that there has maybe been an oversimplification of the benefits of decluttering.

So we know that decluttering helps our homes be less stressful, less chaotic. It's easier to maintain the things that are in our homes. And that can kind of lead to the idea that if I simply declutter enough, my home will always be in good shape, ready for guests to come over nice and tidy.

And that is only partially true. And I want to share with you today the other thing that you need in order to make decluttering work.

So having less stuff, that is the first step. But even once you've decluttered and you have a lot less stuff, and you've taken load after load to the donation center and you've thrown out tons of trash and recycling, you might find that you still don't have that peaceful home that

you want.

YOU'RE LIVING IN YOUR HOME

And here's the thing. It is impossible to declutter yourself to a clean home. Decluttering helps so much. It limits the amount of stuff that you have to take care of. But the truth is, there is still going to be stuff in your home.

You're still going to be feeding yourself and anyone else who lives in your home. So you're going to have dishes and cups and silverware that need to be cleaned. You still have to wear clothes, so there's still going to be laundry to do.

And the truth is, you're still going to live and interact in your home. You're going to take part in your hobbies. Maybe you're a crafter. You might have beautifully decluttered and organized craft supplies, but craft supplies that sit on the shelf all the time and never, ever get used, they're not really worth having because they're not bringing you the purpose and joy that they were made for.

And so you are going to eventually take those things off the shelf and start using them. And the ribbon and the paper and the hole punches and the stamps and all of those different things, they're going to get spread out. They're going to get moved from their nice and neat home that they got when they were

decluttered.

YOUR HOME IS NOT A MUSEUM

And really that is why it's impossible to declutter yourself to a clean home. Because your home is not a museum. You are living in your home. You are doing everyday life and all of the activities and things that you love. You are engaging in those things in your home. And that is good and right.

When you come to the end of your life, you certainly do not want to look back and say, I had such a museum worthy home. I sat in my museum worthy home all the time and I looked at my nice and neat, organized and decluttered spaces and I did absolutely nothing.

You know that sounds silly, right, to say it, because we know that that is not what we want. But I think it's important to set the expectation from the beginning that there are going to be additional systems that you need to have in place if you want to take this all the way.

YOU NEED OTHER SYSTEMS

If you want a clean, tidy home that is always 15 minutes away from you being comfortable for a guest to walk into your home, there's going to be other systems in addition to decluttering that need to be in place.

I would even argue that even more so than continuing the process of decluttering your home or managing how much stuff is coming into your home, the systems that you set up, that is actually how you maintain the work of decluttering.

So yes, continuing to keep an eye out

for things, continuing to do the work of decluttering, I am not at all against decluttering. These two things go hand in hand. So please hear that. I think you need the decluttering. Having less stuff allows you to not be completely overwhelmed by the systems that you're setting up in your home.

But if you only declutter and you don't set up these systems that we're going to talk about today, that's when you can get into this really frustrated spot where you're looking around saying, I've done so much decluttering, why is my home not giving me the results that I was hoping for? And it might just be that a few simple systems are what you need.

NOTICE AND ACT

So a little phrase that I want you to keep in mind as you go throughout your home this week is notice and act, notice and act. And that is going to make a really big difference in maintaining the spaces in your home.

So the sooner that you notice something that is out of place and take action, the less time that that thing or that space has to get out of control. So it can be really easy to be in the kitchen, walk past the sink, and do the thing where you're like, oh, there's two cups and a couple plates from breakfast in the sink there. I'll get to it later.

And that would be fine. You know, there's not hard rules here, but if you notice those four or five dishes in the sink and you take action right then you go ahead and say, no, I'm putting those in the dishwasher right now, or, no, I'm going to go ahead and hand wash those right now.

That is how you keep the dishes in check. And

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you never get to an entire sink full of dirty dishes. If every time that you notice, oh, there's a couple dishes that need to be done, you go ahead and do that right away.

Let's give another example. If you walk into your bedroom and you're just feeling kind of bugged, it's one of those spaces where you're like, ah, this is just not how I envisioned my nice, peaceful bedroom looking.

Okay, notice what is it that's making your bedroom not feel peaceful? Is the bed not made? Are there clothes strewn across the floor? Are there papers on the nightstand that go somewhere else? Notice what it is that's bugging you. Instead of looking at the room as a whole and saying, this room is bugging me, what specifically is it that's bugging you and what can you take action on?

STRENGTHENING THE MUSCLE

So if it's that the bed isn't made, can you just go ahead and make the bed? Typically, you know, that takes less than five minutes. Make the bed. And now you are not nearly as bugged by that space because you noticed what was bothering you and you took action on it. And this is kind of like a muscle that you strengthen, right?

And so those first couple of times, it might be take a little bit more of intentionality to say, oh, stop everything. I am feeling frustrated by this space. And I don't actually know right off the cuff what it is that's bugging me about the space. And I'm going to need to look around and kind of take inventory here and say, what is it that's bugging me here in this space?

But here's the thing. The more often that you notice an act, the more often that you just

keep this in mind and you do this and it really becomes a habit. Honestly, that is when it's going to become second nature to keep some of the spaces in your home more tidy.

Now, is this going to mean that it will look like a cleaning fairy has been to your home and that everything is always sparkling and perfect all the time? No, not at all. But this is how you can keep your home at a really good baseline pretty much day in and day out, by noticing and acting.

Okay, so keep that phrase in mind as you go throughout your week. Look for things, take action on them right away.

WHAT CAN YOU DO RIGHT NOW?

Now, there are going to be some things that you come across where you notice that something is out of place. Maybe you see a pile of returns that you need to make and you're on your way to work or about to take kids to school, or you have a meeting you need to hop on, and you cannot take those returns right now.

And so what can you do? Is it the place that they are that is bugging you? Can you go and put them in the car so that they're ready to go? Can you look at your calendar and say, oh, I have this pile of returns I need to make and I've been putting it off and say, all right, I cannot do it today, but I have an hour tomorrow afternoon that I'm free and I am putting it in my calendar, making an appointment with myself. I am taking those returns tomorrow.

And so sometimes you may not be able to take an action all the way from start to finish, but go ahead and do what you can. And I'll tell you, this can be a struggle for me. I am very much so an

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all at once kind of person.

WORKING WITH YOUR PERSONALITY

So I feel like there's kind of two philosophies when it comes to decluttering. You're either the person who wants to declutter one item at a time. So you're working on a bookshelf. You take off one book and you say, what am I doing with this book? No, I'm the person who's like, take off all of the books. Because I want to do the whole bookshelf all at once.

And that works better with my personality in general. However, that can actually kind of work against me when it comes to maintaining my home. Because we all know we're busy people. We have things happening in our lives and distractions, and it can be easy for me to fall into the trap of saying, I cannot do this all the way from start to finish. And so it's not really worth starting.

STRUGGLING WITH LAUNDRY

I would rather be able to complete the project. This is actually why it's really hard for me to stay on top of the laundry. That one is more of a struggle for me than pretty much anything else in my home, because the laundry is a thing that I really cannot do it all at once.

So we have a washing machine and a dryer. And obviously, when you put clothes in the washing machine, the washing machine has to run. So I have to put them in the washing machine and leave it. And now the action of doing the laundry, it's not on the top of my mind anymore.

And when the washing machine is done, like, 45 minutes later, I've moved on to something else. And then if I do have the thought in my mind

that, oh, I should go move the clothes out of the washing machine into the dryer, the whole thing happens again because I put it in the dryer and our dryer runs for one hour.

I may not even be home an hour later. And so then I'm going to have to remember again to come back, take the clothes out of the dryer, and then hopefully fold and sort them and put them away.

STARTING THINGS YOU CAN'T FINISH

But using this idea of noticing and acting, it can still move you along in your process. Okay, because here is the thing. I think that we have been told often to not start something we can't finish, right?

That is typically really good life advice. You know, don't start a project that you can't finish. Don't start decluttering an area if you can't finish decluttering in that area. You know, you don't want to make a bigger mess than you started with. And so don't start something you can't finish is, in a lot of cases, solid advice.

MOVING CLOSER TO THE GOAL

But when it comes to maintaining our homes, I actually think that is absolutely not true. All day, every day, we are starting things that we can't finish because it is moving us closer and closer to that finish. And you know what?

Before I ever finish this load of laundry, I'm probably going to have more laundry that I need to start that next process. But if I am just continually noticing acting and taking that next step, then the clothes that are on the floor, they're going to go in the hamper.

Because I noticed and I acted the clothes in

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the hamper, oh, I'm going to go ahead and put them in the washing machine. Oh, I noticed that the washing machine is done. I'm going to act on that and put it in the dryer. Oh, the dryer is done. I can act on that and put the clothes back in the hamper.

And you know what, if I never get to the longer task of sorting and folding, because that is a much longer task. All those other things I just mentioned, putting clothes in the hamper, putting them in the washing machine, putting them in the dryer, taking them out of the dryer, those are like 2 minute or less tasks.

And if I never get to the 15 minute task of folding and sorting all of the laundry, I still have clean clothes. I am closer to my goal than if I had said, well, I can't do all the laundry right now anyway. And so I'm just going to leave the clothes on the floor or in the overflowing hamper.

So when it comes to maintaining your home, taking those small steps, even if you can't finish the process all the way, it is always going to move you forward.

It's the same thing with dishes. If you have a bunch of dishes in the sink and you can't do all the dishes, going ahead and washing the dishes that you can, you're not going to have to wash those three dishes later, even if you only got to three of them and you are in better shape than you would have been now.

USING POCKETS OF TIME

Another thing is that I have been so surprised by how much I can get done in just 10 to 15 minutes. And there's a couple specific pockets of time that can be really helpful. So one thing I've noticed about myself over the last year or

two is that if we have plans in the evening and we're going to be leaving the house, honestly, anywhere in that last hour before we're leaving the house, I can kind of start to wind down and shut down a little bit.

Like, oh, well, you know, we've had the full day and we've had dinner and we have plans tonight, we're going out somewhere. And it would just be really easy to just sit down and get on my phone.

And the closer it gets to when we're going to leave, the easier it is to say, oh man, we're leaving in 15 minutes. I think I'm just going to kind of sit here and chill for a few minutes until we leave.

Now, I do want to say that sometimes those pockets of time can be really valuable. If you've had a really busy day and you just feel like you haven't had a moment to catch your breath and you have 10 to 15 minutes before you have to walk out the door, maybe the best thing to do is to sit down and grab a book and read it, or do a little bit of journaling, or even just do a little simple stretching or whatever it is that fills your cup and brings you life.

But one thing that I have noticed is that I can get so much done in that 10 to 15 minutes. And I do wonder if part of it is because I'm racing the clock and I want to see how much I can get done.

SURPRISING PROGRESS

But here's the thing. If you have a sink full of dishes, you're leaving the house in 15 minutes. I want to challenge you to go ahead and get done what you can of those dishes. I have surprised myself so many times. I have started the process and I've thought, there is no way I

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am finishing these before I need to walk out the door like it's not happening.

And I've started the process and I finished with time to spare. And then that was the best feeling ever. If we were leaving the house that night and I came back home and I didn't have dishes waiting for me, I didn't have to do them late at night before bed. I didn't have to do them when I got up in the morning or whenever I was going to cook dinner the next day.

Whenever it was I was going to get around to doing them, they were already done. And so using those little pockets of time while you're waiting for the next thing to happen, that has been a game changer for me.

TRY SETTING A TIMER

Now, another thing you can do is use that timer method I'm sure you've heard people suggest. Set a timer for 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes.

And if you have an evening where maybe you don't have plans, you're not leaving the house, and it has been a long day and you just want to unwind, maybe you've had your kids or your grandkids all day and they're finally in bed and you want nothing more than to put your feet up and put on your favorite show.

And that is totally understandable and something that I want you to be able to do and to relax and to breathe deep. But think about how much more relaxing it would be if you were able to sit down and say, oh, the house is relatively tidy.

Like I said earlier, we're not going for, like, cleaning fairy standards here. We're just going for the bare necessities are done, and I can

breathe in, breathe out, and not feel completely overwhelmed. And so those are the times when I would recommend setting a timer for 10 or 15 minutes and just making as much progress as you can.

CIRCLING BACK TO DECLUTTERING

And this is where I feel like it circles back to decluttering. The less stuff you have, it is true, the easier and faster it's going to be to get things put away and picked up. If your cabinets and your shelves and all of your various storage places aren't stuffed and overflowing it is so much easier to put things away.

If you don't have as many things that it's possible to get out and strewn across the house, then there's just going to be less things to put away whenever the day is done. So decluttering really does help you maintain these systems. It makes them easier. But the two of them really go hand in hand.

A QUICK TIP

And I want to offer just a quick tip here. If you specifically struggle with just keeping general things tidy. I feel like every house has things that don't really go anywhere super specific that you're using all the time and you need.

So I would count some dog accessories like that. Like if you have pets and their leashes and various things that you need like that for them. Where do you put those?

I have noticed this so much with video game controllers. Why are they so strangely shaped? They don't fit nicely anywhere. And I've gotten so annoyed before trying to keep them organized and they're just going to get pulled out again tomorrow.

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MAKE IT EASY

Anything like that. If you can have a designated spot where you just toss that item. So you're not sitting there trying to nice and neatly store and organize video game controllers in some little compartments. No, you just have a basket. This is the video game controller basket. All of the controllers go in there.

For my dog's toys. They go on the dog bed. Because I got so tired of pulling out the little basket where I was planning on storing them in my cube storage unit. But it was just a hassle.

It didn't take that long. But it was a hassle to put all the toys away. And it made me not want to get the toys out for the dog in the first place. And so now the toys that are out, they just get tossed on the dog bed. And I call it a day.

And so looking for ways that you can get your space to the standard that you want with as little effort as possible, okay? But setting that timer and seeing how much you can get done in 10 to 15 minutes and then taking that time to relax and realizing that that time to relax is probably going to feel even better because your house is tidied up beforehand.

REMEMBER YOUR WHY

And going along with that, I would really encourage you to identify what makes a big difference to you. It sounds really cliché to say remember your why. Right. Everyone says that about everything. Whether it's a health and fitness goal or a goal for your home or I don't even know if you want to read more books. Whatever goal you have, someone's going to tell you okay, remember your why?

But it is so true. When I remember how it feels

to wake up with a clean and tidied up kitchen and living room, it makes it easier for me to take that 10 to 15 minutes to clean up the kitchen. It really, really does.

And the other thing that I will say is that once you have done it a few times, so you've really had to dig deep and push through and say, I do not feel like tidying up tonight. I do not feel like following through on my systems, but I'm going to do it.

When you wake up that next morning and walk into the clean kitchen, or when you get home from work and you see that your bed is made and you don't feel frustrated by your space, that feeling is so good. And then you can call back to that feeling the next time.

So if you're getting up in the morning and you don't want to pause and make your bed, but you remember how it felt to get into a made bed last night, that can be huge motivation for going ahead and making your bed again today.

PRIORITIZE WHAT BRINGS PEACE

And along with that, prioritize the things that are actually going to bring you more peace. Are you the kind of person who cares about your bed being made? And you might have to do some trial and error to find out. Make your bed for a week and see how it feels. And if you're like, I don't understand the thrill and it doesn't make me feel any more at peace, it's okay to not make your bed if that is not the thing that's bringing you peace.

You know, I like having a clean bathroom. And periodically I'll go through my home and do what I would consider to be a deep clean. And I feel good about that and that's great. But I love walking into a tidy kitchen in the morning.

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And so I'm going to tell you that the dishes in my home get done way more often than the bathroom gets cleaned.

And even just the countertops get wiped off and the sink gets cleaned in the kitchen way more often than the bathroom. If you walked into my bathroom right now while I'm recording this, you would probably be like, Tasha, why are you doing a podcast about people's homes? Because your bathroom is not what I would have expected from you.

It's not. It really isn't. And I will go through maybe once a month or so and deep clean my bathroom. But it makes a much bigger difference to me whenever my kitchen is clean and tidy than when my bathroom is clean. And so I really prioritized, putting the time and effort into pretty much every day trying to make sure the dishes are done and it's okay if the bathroom slides.

EVERYTHING CAN'T BE A PRIORITY

You really can't prioritize every single thing. It's going to become overwhelming. You want systems that you can maintain. Having a bunch of systems in place and having all these checklists for all these different spaces in your home. If they're just overwhelming you and you feel like you can't keep up with them, it's not really going to help in the long run.

And so identify those two or three areas, systems that you can put in place that are going to make a big difference. I think a really good place to start with that is to think about what is bugging you the most. Whenever you think about, oh, I want my house to be better, what space are you envisioning that might be the first space to look in order to set up a system.

DON'T STOP DECLUTTERING

And then last but not least, don't stop decluttering. Remember that decluttering and these systems, they go hand in hand. And decluttering, it's not going to get you all the way there, but it's going to make maintaining these systems easier. And so keep up that good work and start looking for those systems you can implement and you are going to see changes in your life and in your home.

Thanks so much for tuning into this episode of the Get Organized HQ podcast. I'll see you next week.