



TRANSCRIPT

Episode 41: Identifying & Maintaining Your Decluttering Progress

KATY WELLS *from* THE MAXIMIZED MINIMALIST PODCAST

WELCOME TO THE PODCAST

Tasha: 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.

Welcome back to the Get Organized HQ podcast. We have a really fun episode for you today with Katy Joy Wells from the Maximized Minimalist podcast. And I think that you are going to find a lot of those little light bulb moments in this conversation that help you to identify what your next right step is as you are decluttering, trying to maintain the decluttering progress that you've already done, trying to set up systems in your home.

A GAME CHANGER

There is one thing in particular in today's conversation with Katy that the way that she explained it was just different than anything that I had heard before. And I think it's going to be a game changer for you. And it's definitely a mindset shift for me.

So I'm really excited for you to listen in to today's episode and hear all about how we can not just declutter in one blitz weekend decluttering session, but set ourselves up for success to actually long term have less stress and more peace in our lives and homes. So

listen in to today's conversation with Katy.

INTRODUCING KATY

Well, Katy, thanks so much for coming on to the Get Organized HQ podcast today. I am really excited to talk about decluttering progress after that kind of initial burst of decluttering energy and momentum. So, yeah, thanks for sharing your time with us today.

Katy: So glad to hang out with you anytime, Tasha. Yeah.

KEEPING UP MOMENTUM

Tasha: So, all right. We just wrapped up Get Organized HQ virtual recently and I think hopefully a lot of people listening were able to come and attend that. And one thing I have noticed in the years of doing this is that people really can make a lot of decluttering progress over the course of that event.

There's just so much energy and inspiration around, like, let's get the clutter cleared out. And that's the first step, right, is like going through and finding these socks have holes in them. I have duplicate pizza cutters. Like all of these things. Let's take huge loads at the donation center.

AFTER THE FIRST DECLUTTER

But what I want to talk to you about is what comes next after that initial burst of

decluttering progress and getting things cleaned out. Like, how do you keep it from creeping back in? So maybe if we could even back up to get a big picture here.

Tell me a little bit about you and what your own decluttering journey has looked like, you know, over the course of sharing about it on your podcast and sharing about it online so people can get some context for that. And then we'll kind of try to dive into what you've learned about making this a lifestyle instead of a one time blitz.

NORMALIZING THE STRUGGLE

Katy: Yeah, such a good question. So I guess let's start with, I think a lot of us, here's the thing, mess and clutter are normal and I think we all need to normalize the struggle with it a lot more than we do because we're kind of sold this idea that it's this really easy solution.

Here's a course, a checklist, and all those things can be really helpful. But what happens when those don't work for you? And that's where I found myself many years ago with, you know, two kids under two, overwhelmed by clutter. Of course, I think the more kids you have, the more stuff comes into your home. At least that was, that was my case.

FEELING OVERWHELMED

And I was so overwhelmed by mess and clutter and I just, everyone around me said like, this is part of the season. You're going to miss this one day. And I was like, but I'm like anxious when I walk into my home. I'm stressed.

I turn and I turn from like happy, go lucky mom outside the home with my kids at the park to like, I walk through my front door and I feel

doom and I feel like depressed and anxious and I'm like, this is just a part of life.

So I just need to deal with this. And so, you know, trying all the methods that existed at the time and are still really popular again, I truly believe there's no one size fits all. I think it's great to pull different tools from different people. But none of them I found gave me the sustainability piece, which we're going to talk about today.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

I'm super excited about that. And none of them were designed for, I think, our very human psychology and biology, like how we are wired. The reality is we all have brains that are wired in a certain way. That's how we were designed.

And so many strategies just bypass that. They're like, here, just ask this one question and you'll be good to go. It's golden. So throughout the way, I created what I call my holistic decluttering philosophy. And that just takes into consideration the emotional aspect, right?

UNDERSTANDING WHY

We assign meaning to stuff, we assign symbolism to stuff. And of course how we're wired, we can talk about that too. And you know, it's acknowledging those pieces to help normalize the struggle. Because, you know, things like that costs money or what if I need that someday?

Right? That's how we're wired. Like we. That is still my default sometimes when I pick something up. But we can also use tools like how do we combat that wiring? How can we grow that declutter muscle and acknowledge that it's just the way we're wired. So it doesn't

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mean we just like throw our hands up in the air and say, well, forget it.

GETTING TO THE ROOT CAUSE

Katy says we're just wired to accumulate. But I think it's just important to bring that up because very much my philosophy, holistic. If you look at holistic medicine, it's getting to the root of it. It's not tackling the symptom, which often we do in declutter purges, organizing purges, all these things.

Great. It's going to help. You're going to feel better, your home's going to feel better for a little bit. But then you stop addressing. You don't get to the root. You know, we all know how the story ends. For me, my declutter purges lasted two weeks. You know, the results. And then I was. Felt like I was back at square one, which is so defeating.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

And when we're stuck in these cycles and maybe you experienced this before you met like Laura, right? And got into all the strategies and expertise you've learned over the years. Like it's this cycle of like, I tried. I was promised this method would work. I tried. It didn't work for me.

What's wrong with me? I'm a failure. I stink at this. Just among the stress and everything that we experience from clutter. So holistic decluttering again looks at the whole picture. Emotional ties, habits which we'll talk about, and systems that can really help support us along the way in a sustainable fashion.

And even through raising two kids, working 40, 50, 60 hours a week, when I developed this philosophy and concept and methods that

went along with it, it I was able to both make progress and like the same methods I use to make progress are also fantastic and the same things I use for keeping it at bay.

FINDING THE RIGHT TOOLS

So it's not like we need, you know, to like go to Harvard and like get some weird like math degree, like figure out like, how am I gonna like. It's this complex problem, which I certainly have felt like that in the past. It's a lot simpler than we think. We just need the right tools for the, for the right job.

DECLUTTERING AS A MUSCLE

Tasha: I love how you called decluttering a muscle. You know, something, a skill that you develop. And I feel like that's really encouraging for anyone who's like, yes, like, I've totally been in that, I would call it the blitz phase.

I've had that emotional high almost that has really inspired me to, you know, clean out that closet that everything kind of gets shoved into or go through that kitchen drawer where we just keep all of the odds and ends up.

WHY CLUTTER COMES BACK

And if decluttering is a muscle, then there's still benefit there. Right? Like, to that initial. Yeah, decluttering, like we're, we're practicing something. But what have you found is kind of like, what's the missing piece in that?

Like, why is it that two weeks later or a month later you feel right back where you were? It can be confusing because it's like, well, I got rid of all this stuff. Like, it should be, it should be gone. Why, why am I feeling back here just in a few short weeks?

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MINDSET SHIFTS

Katy: I think the mindset going into it is. And there's nothing wrong with this. It's like, oh, I'm going to declutter, I'm going to carve out time. I'm feeling so motivated, you know, with the summit, coming off that energy and then what happens? We lose the community aspect.

We stop taking action as much. We kind of go into it thinking like, this is a one time project or it's just like. And it is like you said, you're doing it intentionally to make progress and like, make you a lot of us. And just what I've seen in the summit, I mean, incredible progress, like jaw dropping.

DECLUTTERING AS A LIFESTYLE

And people feel so much better. They're like, I feel so much lighter walking into my home. I feel so good. But you have to expand your horizons and go like, this is a lifestyle. Like when I say, and commit to myself, like, I want to feel better and I want to get stronger and I want, you know, and part of that is, you know, eating more vegetables in my diet.

I don't eat vegetables for a weekend and then go back to eating the way I used to. No vegetables and a bunch of junk food on Monday. Right. But we do that with decluttering all the time. And it doesn't have to be continuous weekend marathons unless you want it to be for decluttering or organizing.

FITTING DECLUTTERING INTO REAL LIFE

That's fine too. It's really about fitting decluttering into your schedule, not the other way around, which we tend to do during those big purges. Right. Like, I gotta get a babysitter.

I gotta talk to my partner about watching the kids. Like, how am I gonna make this work? What does that look like when you go back to work Monday at 9 o'clock?

Was that, what does that look like when your kid's sick? Like, how do we keep up the progress? So I think if we just look at it again like this is a lifestyle. And for me personally, I work on my lifestyle when it comes to my fitness and nutrition in really small, nuanced ways.

SMALL STEPS

Right. And I don't do a big drastic overhaul come January and say I'm going from working out two days a week to seven days a week. We all know how that story ends too, right? When we bite off too much too soon, it's too much, it's too overwhelming. That's why by mid February, 86% of people have given up on their New Year's resolutions.

So again, using data we have maybe from our own personal experience, maybe from, you know, something like a New Year's resolution, we know how the story ends. So integrating it into our life, our daily life, in a way that makes sense for our busy schedules, because we're all busy, that's not changing anytime soon is really going to be such a, a big thing.

ESTABLISHING HABITS

And going into it knowing, okay, I'm going to make big progress, but what does this look like after.

Tasha: Right. And you'd mentioned before establishing those habits to, maintain this. And can you give some, like, concrete examples maybe from your own life of like, what are some

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of those habits?

Because when it comes to something like our health, it might be a little bit easier to identify, right? Like, okay, I should make sure I have a veggie every night at dinner, or I'm going to have a smoothie in the morning for breakfast, or I'm going to go, I'm going to get this many steps a day. Like, those are really concrete. But what do the habits look like when it comes to maintaining a home that doesn't make you feel stressed when you walk in?

DESIGNING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Katy: Yeah. So let me, let's back up just a touch on habits because I love habits and I love systems. But one thing I realized through my journey is that there is actually one key thing we can all do in our homes that make the habits we know we want to do so much easier, so much more automatic, and we can be much more consistent with them.

And that is actually one of the things I also recommend for progress and maintenance. So it's kind of twofold. But it's designing your environment to support those habits you want. The way we set up our home plays a huge role in our clutter maintenance.

CLUTTER VS. MESS

For example. I'll share the story. One of my clients, Sarah, she really struggled with her entryway. She was constantly, she declutter, she'd organize her entryway and then shoes, bags, coats, returns, all the things. So when she invited me to come check out her home, she's like, I have all this clutter.

What do I do? It keeps coming back. So first thing we did was we identified is this clutter

or is this mess and. Right. There's a difference between clutter and mess. We tend to use clutter as kind of like a catch all term. But clutter is things that, I mean, everyone has their own definition, but things that are no longer serving you.

That tends to be my definition of clutter. Anything that isn't actively serving me or my family's lifestyle and, or goals. Disorganized, excess, unused, unwanted. All those things and things that were useful 6 months ago can turn into clutter really quickly.

EXPECTED MESS VS. REAL CLUTTER

Right. As our seasons and habits and lifestyle change. So we identified what's clutter and what's mess. Right. Mess is normal, expected mess that happens from everyday life when we come in and drop our shoes on the floor instead of putting them in the entryway bench that we have, that is expected mass.

Right. We don't love it. We don't love seeing stuff on our counters or on our floors, But a reset where you put that stuff away at the end of the day or certain, times of the day are going to reset your space back to baseline tidiness. So again, we have to identify the proper problem to pull in the right solutions and habits to solve those problems.

DESIGNING A FUNCTIONAL ENTRYWAY

So after we looked at is it expected mass and is it cluttered, we looked at designing her home environment. And so she had this particular bench that like, the top was broken. I feel like we've all been there. Like we have something that's just not working, but we don't think like it would make that big of a difference to replace it or tweak it.

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So people couldn't even put their shoes inside the bench because the lid was broken. So guess where they were landing on the floor. Getting tracked through the house. Exactly what she didn't want to happen. So not in all cases, but in this case, we just decided to take that bench out and we shopped her house first.

SIMPLE SWAPS

She did have a couple trays that were like, you know, shoe trays in her garage. And I said, let's just test it out. Let's just pull the bench out. It's broken. Put a couple trays in there that are an identifier for the home, for shoes and see how that works. Right? And I'm telling you, she went from nagging her family every single day to put their shoes away with that broken bench, which, again, the more steps it takes to complete a task, the less likely we are to do it.

This is human biology as well. We have to work with the brain, not against it. It's not a personal attack. Our kids aren't putting their shoes away, even though sometimes it feels like it. And once we swapped out and shifted the environment, guess what started to happen?

MENTAL LOAD AND RESENTMENT

Her kids and her partner and herself, by the way, started putting her shoes in the. On the shoe tray right when they walked in the house. So when she was going through at the end of the night tidying her home, it was one less thing to deal with. And I will also say anyone that can resonate with this example knows, like the mental load that comes along with seeing stuff out of place all the time.

It like, wears you down. It's frustrating. And after some point, I'll speak for myself, but I've worked with thousands of women and families.

Resentment starts to come up, right? We're like, why am I the only one that sees or cares about this mess? Why am I the, Right.

BORING BASICS WORK

And to have that literally declutter that mental load, that resentment fade away simply because we design the environment to support our family into doing what we want them to do is so, so incredibly powerful and so motivating.

Right? When we see these little tweaks, I think often we think, I need some new strategy. It doesn't exist yet. I'm waiting for the right person. But the really boring basics are what get you there. And so go in your entryway or look at some clutter or expected mess hotspots in your home, we all have them identify as this clutter or is this mess?

MAKING IT WORK FOR YOUR FAMILY

And how can I design my environment to support my family into putting their keys away, putting their homework away? Yes. Sometimes it is a quote unquote bad habit. We need to kind of help retrain our kids or our partners or ourselves. But designing the environment hooks like, you know, this hooks bins homes for things really, really helpful.

Having a catch all bin sometimes can be helpful because sometimes we just need a catch all bin, and that's okay. Some expert might say, don't do that ever. That's the worst thing. But you have to do it. You have to make it work for you. And that's the beauty of it.

THE DONATION STATION

And then the last thing I'll say related to designing your environment to support you in

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taking action is something, I swear by. I call it a donation station. It's a simple. It can be a bin, like an old Amazon box, literally, a garbage or recycling bag. Hang it on a hook somewhere, put it in your home there.

That, it is visible and accessible to your family. And every time you see that bin, it is a gentle reminder. Hey, what can I let go of today? Hey, you, know, I walked past this pile of stuff earlier. I might not have two hours to tackle that pile, but I did notice two things in there I know are easy clutter I can get rid of.

SMALL ACTIONS ADD UP

I can add to that donation station that. Those small nuances, I mean, they continue to create this long, huge compounding effect over time.

And, so design your environment for success.

DECLUTTERING VS. MESS

Tasha: Yeah, I love the way that you differentiated that. That not everything that is out of place or making us feel stressed in our home is actually a sign that the space needs decluttered.

And it also could be a sign that the space needs both. It might be some clutter mixed with some mess, 100%. But it can be so frustrating. It really is that classic, well, which way does it go? Is it a square peg and a round hole or a round peg and a square hole?

FORCING THE WRONG SOLUTION

But, like, trying to force a solution that isn't the problem. And so if you keep coming back to your entryway or whatever spot it is, and you keep decluttering and saying, I've cleared all

of the clutter out of here. Why is it still looking like this? It might be that you're trying to put a solution on a space that isn't actually fixing the problem that that space is having.

A LIGHT BULB MOMENT

Katy: That's right. A hundred percent. It's so true. And anytime I explain that and talk about that, it is a light bulb moment for people, and it was a light bulb moment for me when I was. Same thing. Round peg, square thing. And I'm, like, trying to hammer it in. This is supposed to work.

Like, I'm trying to force it to work. And then again, when we keep failing, when the mess keeps coming back, when we identify it as the wrong. This is clutter. Right. That word is so loaded. So loaded. There's so much meaning attached to that word, especially in our culture.

A YO-YO PATTERN

And as women and moms, I think, tend to take the brunt. Right. Because of our society and our culture. And so that gives it's like a mental beating. It's, like, exhausting to feel and stay in that yo yo pattern. So, that is just a really fantastic place to start when it comes to progress and maintenance on the back side of things. After you've had that really, you know, powerful progress from the summit.

DECLUTTERING VS. SYSTEMS

Tasha: I'm just curious, like, you work with clients all the time. You do coaching on this. Just as a ballpark, where would you say the dividing line is? Like, do you see more people coming and their real root problem is decluttering?

Or is it more often that you see that the root problem is coming up with a system to maintain expected mess?

DECLUTTERING IS THE ROOT

Katy: Decluttering. Yeah, it's the root. Right. And so once we're able to. Right. And it's just, like, working out. It's like building that muscle. You don't go from. At least I hope you wouldn't go from, like, you know, bench.

I don't bench press, but it was first thing that came to my bench pressing 0 pounds to, like, going for 50. And I feel like sometimes it's what we do in those purges, and we're like, we. We're like, oh. And we get up and we're like, yeah, I feel good. I feel good. But then the next day, we're, like, so sore that we don't work out for, like, eight years.

SYSTEMS BECOME EASIER

We're like, I don't want to feel that way. Right. And so, yeah, 100% getting to the root of it. And we all have different reasons for that. But I will say, once we make that progress, typically and not always, systems can happen a lot easier because there's less clutter to manage.

And when there's less clutter to manage, we can think clearly, we have less decision fatigue. And I think we can look at things more objectively compared to when we are completely buried and overwhelmed. That, like, the thought of integrating a habit or being objective and getting like, it's hard. It's so much harder because literally clutter overwhelms our brains.

WHERE TO START

Tasha: Right. So what I'm hearing is still

starting with decluttering. Like, this is almost always going to be the root. Get rid of the things that are not benefiting your home and environment.

And then if you're still having problems in an area and you've decluttered the area and you've looked at like, okay, what can we get rid of? And it seems like whenever you come back, there's not that much to get rid of. That's when, all right, maybe this is actually a space where we need a different solution in place.

FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION

Rather than saying, well, we need to get rid of all the shoes in our house, if we just quit wearing shoes, then, you know, the entryway would not have shoes in them.

THE DASH METHOD

Katy: 100% Yeah. So one of my favorite acronyms I teach and methods is DASH. It's, the, D stands for declutter.

Right. So problem area. Let's just go with closet. Right? I'm overwhelmed by my closet. I don't know where do I start, Right. Do I get. Go out, get bins first? Do I declutter first? Right. So we die and DASH is declutter. Declutter what you can. By no means does your closet have to be perfect in order to move on.

ASSESSING YOUR SPACE

In fact, it won't be. But just getting that initial layer done is going to be fruitful. Then we can look at what organizing looks like. So declutter, organize, and then the A in DASH is for assess. This is where now that we can breathe a little bit more in our closet. Yes. There might still be more to go.

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We can say, do I need to tweak anything in this environment to help me put things away? Do the categories of things that are overflowing, do I need to declutter them more? Should I do a daily reset? Right. Do I have a spot for my pajamas?

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

What's bothering me? And reverse engineer to a simple solution. And I promise you, they are very, very simple solutions. Then we can go into systems. And that's really in the assess phase. We can go, do I need to go back to decluttering? Do I need to organize? Do I need to move in through the rest of the method?

SYSTEMS AND HABITS

So systems and habits come. So a system. If you look at. I'm a big fan of Dancing with the Stars. I haven't seen it in a long time. But a system is like the broader, like the dance, right? So if the cha cha cha is a system, the individual movements of that dance are the habits within that system.

So a really simple system I put in place for my closet, because I throw things on the floor. In fact, before I did this interview, I took my pajamas, threw them on the floor, and I was like, I should probably put them away. But I didn't care because I have a system in place for it. It's just a simple reset at the end of the day.

DAILY AND WEEKLY RESETS

And if I don't do it daily, I do it once a week. And, that's okay too. Where I pick things up, put them away, do my laundry, et cetera. But the habits that could help support that system would be one of my favorites. I'm not sure if we've talked about this, Tasha, is OHIO—

another acronym.

THE OHIO HABIT

Sorry, I'm acronym heavy, but I love them. And if you're from the state of Ohio, are you in Ohio? Aren't you?

Tasha: We're in Indiana, right next to Indiana. I'm like, I knew you, I knew you were mid last. Lot longer of an acronym, though. So I'll give you next year. You can come back with. We have four letters max in our method.

ONLY HANDLE IT ONCE

Katy: I can't go beyond that. So I'm from Iowa, so I always joke like, I need one for Iowa, but I can't. I won't do that. So only handle it once. Right? And you've heard this, you've taught this. It's similar concept as don't put it down, put it away. Or if it takes less than 30 seconds to do, do it now, not later.

I just like acronyms. My brain. They make my brain happy. So OHIO would have been a great habit to support that system. So I have less to pick up in my reset. And the idea is, even though we're not going to be perfect, we're going to put stuff where that doesn't live, doesn't belong. Piles are going to accumulate.

HAVING A PLAN B

I can still look at that. I can look at those piles now and not assign so much heavy meaning to them. I'm a failure. I stink at this. What's wrong with me? My kids don't care. I'm just destined for a cluttered home till the kids move out.

All the things I used to think just looking at a pile of stuff, right? Because our stuff talks to us. And I can go, oh, I was just tired. No big deal.

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That's expected mess. It happens. I'm human. So here's the systems and solutions to follow it up. And just being able to do that and have those as like your plan B, your fallback plan.

REDUCING STRESS AND MENTAL LOAD

It really helps your brain get less aggravated and stressed by the mess that you know is going to happen anyway. I'm not saying it's all unicorns and rainbows and you'll never get triggered by mess landing on your countertop or in your closet again. But it really drastically brings those stress levels down.

HAVING A PLAN IN PLACE

Tasha: Definitely. And knowing that you have a plan in place for fixing it, cleaning it, like whatever, whatever, your word is there, that can be such a stress reliever. So something like the dishes. If you're seeing dishes pile up around the sink, and you have no routine or schedule for, like, when they're going to happen.

You're just seeing those and you're thinking to yourself, who's going to do the dishes? I guess I'm going to do the dishes, but when am I going to do the dishes? I don't want to spend an hour doing the dishes. Like, all of those thoughts. But if, you know, okay, my routine is every night after dinner, I do all the dishes from the day.

MAKING IT ROUTINE

Or every morning when I get up, I do the dishes from the previous day, load the dishwasher and run it for the day. Like, if you know it's coming, it's much less. It's not an open loop. Like, you see the dishes and you think, oh, okay, I do those every morning after breakfast. That's when those are going to be taken care of.

It's not a, what if. Are we just going to live with the dishes like this for the next week? Do I even have a coffee mug for the morning type situation?

PROCRASTINATION AND CLUTTER

Katy: It's such a procrastination is much less likely to creep in. Right. Because when those dishes are piling up or those piles on your counter, that tends to be one of the first things that starts to, like you said, like, oh, maybe I'll just wait till later.

I don't have time right now. The pile's too big. Right. We think all or nothing. If I can't do it all right now, what's the point? And studies show that the more we struggle with procrastination, the more clutter we accumulate. And then the more we accumulate, the more procrastination kicks in. And that makes sense.

KEEPING IT MANAGEABLE

We've all experienced this when it comes to clutter and. Or mess. So you're right. Absolutely. Having that plan A. Plan A for me is only handle it once. You know, dovetailing off what we just talked about as a habit for keeping my home a little bit tidier. Plan B is a reset at the end of the day or whenever it makes sense in that particular space.

And it just keeps that procrastination at bay. It makes it more manageable. And, it's just a lot easier. It's so much easier.

MAKING ROOM FOR OFF DAYS

Tasha: Yeah. And it makes a lot more room for off days, for the day that you wake up and you're sick, your spouse is sick, your kids are sick, you have unexpected errands.

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And maybe that day you don't get your closet picked up or you don't get the dishes washed or whatever it is. And even if you go Two or three days and you never touch your system but you know exactly what you're coming back to and you're still limited to, okay, we've had two days that just totally got thrown off base with all because like that is going to happen to everyone in every schedule.

DAMAGE CONTROL

But it really, it kind of does damage control before there's any damage to control because you've been keeping up with it this whole time. But if there had been no system and you'd already had a week's worth of clothes in the closet or dishes in the sink and then something happened, well, now you've got your whole week of regular dishes, plus however long you were in crisis mode for.

And so it really just makes it to where even when things don't go to plan at all, it's still way more manageable.

SMALL ACTIONS MATTER

Katy: So much more manageable. And I think too when you feel and experience that it, it's like that what we started talking about earlier on, it's like it tells our brain it's okay to do small actions, that small actions matter, that testing systems and habits matter.

Because again, what was wasn't clutter six months ago might not be or might might be clutter now, but what system or habits worked for your system six months ago might not work now because they're in school or maybe we have long term illness or something happening.

ADAPTING SYSTEMS

And so being able to objectively kind of zoom out and tackle the situation with more objectivity and, and these things we've talked about is so, so fruitful for both, like our mental clutter and our physical clutter.

And at the end of the, at the end of the day, our homes don't need to look or be perfect or beautiful or look like an ad out of, you know, Good Housekeeping in order to support and bless me and my family.

DECLUTTER THE STANDARD

And I will say that's for anybody. The end goal for me is not to have a perfectly tidy home. 24 7. I decluttered that belief a long, long time ago and that also helped me on my journey. Because when, when that's the when that's like the goal post and mess continues to happen because it does in every home.

It's just defeating. So sometimes we need to declutter the standard. Sometimes we need to have conversations with our family, sometimes we need to design the environment for success and sometimes it's as simple as, like, what simple habit can I do that's going to help move the needle forward when it comes to both progress and maintenance.

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

And that's what I love about these conversations is it's. And that's what can be equally hard for people. Right? It's new, it's layered, it's nuanced, for a lot of us. But at the same time, the solutions tend to be really simple, which is, I hope we can all take a breath. Like a deep breath. Like, oh, okay, okay, this is easier. Like, this is easier than we think it is.

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FOCUS ON WHAT STRESSES YOU MOST

Tasha: For sure. And looking for those places that are making you feel the most stressed first, not for the places that you heard everyone give an example of first. So, like, if your bed not being made is not something that causes you stress whenever you see it, don't start with the habit of making your bed. Like, don't put the energy into something that's not going to bless you.

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Katy: Right. I 100% believe that. It's so funny. I saw that for years, you know, from a lot of people in our space. Like, five healthy habits to start your day off on the right foot.

And I was like, I don't do any of these. Oh, I should make my bed. I see. And it's funny because it's funny and it's so helpful to be able to, like you said, see someone else. Like, that works for them. It's important to them. And listen, if I do make my bed, I do feel like, oh, I feel it is like I get a little quick dopamine hit or whatever that is.

PRIORITIZING WHAT MATTERS

But it's to me, like, the ROI isn't there. Like, I could care less if I get into a messy bed at the. Like, it doesn't matter. Yes. So you're right. It's so important to say, like, is this worth the habit? Is this going to move the needle enough that it's, it's work. It's worth it to me to even invest my time in. Because we don't all need to. We don't all need to do the same things.

FLEXIBLE PRIORITIES

Tasha: Definitely. And also realizing that just because you're saying, you know, like, in this

season, no, it's not worth it to me to make my bed. I mean, there's all sorts of reasons.

Maybe you and your spouse get up at completely different times. And so it'd be super great to make the bed right when you get out of bed. But they're on a different work schedule and they sleep two hours later. Okay, so now it's like 10 o'clock in the morning and I'm going to go back and make my bed.

Katy: No, you just make your half of the bed. Come on.

Tasha: You leave the other half.

Katy: No, no, make. Make the bed with them still in it. And, like,

Tasha: There you go. They have to, like, crawl out of it. Like, don't mess it. Don't mess up the throw pillows when you're going to start. Yeah.

SAYING "NOT RIGHT NOW"

But, realizing that saying not right now doesn't mean never. It doesn't mean it's not ever going to be a priority or something that could be something that you could try.

It just means, hey, there's a lot of other things on my plate right now. I can let making the bed go or whatever it is for you. Maybe it's not making the bed. You know, I have found when I make my bed, I do a better job at keeping up with the laundry because my bed is where I sort my laundry. So if I have.

FINDING YOUR FLOW

Katy: There you go.

Tasha: But that connection, like, knowing that,

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I am most likely to make my bed right before I go get laundry out of the dryer so that I have a place to go sort the laundry. And so if that is the flow, that's working great.

But in every home, that's going to be different. And like you said, so frustrating. Like, sometimes we just want the checklist, right, that says, like, here you go do these things. You won't feel stressed anymore.

GROWING YOUR "MUSCLE"

Katy: Yeah. Yeah. Well, how. I think it's so. And this just goes to show how your, like, home management CEO muscle has grown.

Right? You can be like, oh, I'm. If I make the bed, then I have a place to sort the things. So. And that's different in your home than maybe someone else does it. I just sort the laundry on the floor and then. You know, now my kids do their own laundry, so our seasons change when it. So we have a whole, whole system down. And that way it's changed a lot.

ADAPTING THROUGH SEASONS

So I think it's really. It's really inspiring to hear that you've learned so much through, you know, your programs that you're able to do that. And, you know, a year from now, when your life looks a little bit different, you might have a completely different laundry flow, and that's okay, too.

If I quit sorting the laundry on my bed, my bed would get made less often, you know, like. But it's just finding out, it's really the step before whatever your problem area is. Right? So, like, if the laundry's not getting sorted, what would help you get it sorted? I've noticed the same thing with the dishes.

SUPPORTING THE REAL ISSUE

If my dishwasher is not unloaded of the clean dishes, then all the dishes are going in the sink. But if I have a place to put dirty dishes, I'm a lot more likely to just load them in the dishwasher. And so sometimes, it's not even the action we think it is. It's not sorting the laundry, it's actually making the bed that helps sort the laundry.

It's not loading the dishwasher, it's actually unloading the dishwasher that helped to load the dishwasher and sometimes backing up and getting that bigger picture. Kind of going back to the systems you were talking about. Don't. I guess I just say don't get so laser focused on, there's shoes on the floor, there's dishes in the sink, there's laundry that's not sorted.

LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE

Like, what could you do to support that? And it might actually kind of seemingly have nothing to do with the problem you're trying to fix.

Katy: Yes, that's so true. I think that's such a great way of putting it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Tasha: Yeah, for sure. So as we kind of wrap up this conversation, are there any last things you want, tips you want to leave us with, summarizations of what we've been talking about?

Anything you didn't get to touch on, that you just think is really important for people to take away?

Katy Joy Wells

A MINDSET SHIFT

Katy: Yeah, two things. One super actionable and one is a mindset. So I think a lot of the mindset just because of how we're wired, right?

The all or nothing thinking, or perfectionistic type thinking. And I struggled with this and I know a lot of my clients have, like, if I can't do it right, if I can't do it how this expert tells me, if I can't completely declutter and organize my closet today or this weekend, I'm—what's the point?

GETTING PAST PERFECTIONISM

And part of that is procrastination. Part of it is self-sabotage. Part of it—I mean, it really depends, right? It's layered and nuanced like we talked about.

But if we can't get past that belief system or whatever little thoughts come up when we see those piles, or we open that door and we feel overwhelmed by the stuff, then we're never going to be able to take action with the habit I'm about to say. And this is like so integral.

DECLUTTERING AS A LIFESTYLE

This goes back to what I talked about—integrating decluttering into your daily life, making it a part of your lifestyle. And those are clutter audits. These are really ultra-micro declutter—I say session loosely because they take seconds to do.

Tasha, so we talked about donation stations earlier. Having a dedicated home for clutter in your house, right? And that goes to show the power of having a home for things. Which I used to roll my eyes at when all the organizing experts said, "Have a home for everything."

CREATING HOMES FOR CLUTTER

And I was like, "Eh." And then along the line I'm like, oh no, I can actually see the importance of it. Right. But why not? So applying that same philosophy for clutter—have a dedicated home for it. It makes it easier to let go of.

Right? So clutter audits when you are sorting your laundry—and my kids, like, on occasion I do get something in the laundry that is of theirs and I pull it out and it's like 2 inches too small, their pants—immediately put it into the donation station.

QUICK DECLUTTER HABITS

We have a little one in our laundry room. So if you are in a season where even if you don't have kiddos but you're doing laundry, that's a good time to be like, "You know, I don't like this top or it doesn't fit me right." Immediately put it in there.

You don't have to think about it. You don't have to go, "I don't have time to declutter right now." Or "I don't even know what to do with this," or "I'm just going to put it back in the dresser drawer." Which I used to do constantly. It just bypasses so many things.

DONATION STATIONS IN EVERY ROOM

I have donation stations in my kids' closets. I've taught them how to use them, and in my garage. And so as we're going throughout our daily lifestyle, doing the dishes, pull out a couple coffee mugs from the back of the cabinet that have a quarter inch of dust on them. Say goodbye.

Like these are really quick. It's not like you need the mantras or to sit down and ponder

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and journal about the stuff. I'm talking about letting go during a clutter audit. This is like low-hanging fruit.

TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS

And I used to track—I started tracking not long ago, maybe a year or two ago—as I just go through my day at home, how many things I add to a donation bin. Some days it would be like none, but most days it would be at least one to two.

Now times that by 365 days of the year. Right? Yeah. And there I still had a couple handful of 20–30 minute purges as the opportunity came up in different locations, especially kid-related stuff. But it made it so much easier.

THE COMPOUND EFFECT OF SMALL HABITS

So I combined a really powerful habit. I didn't have to carve out my calendar. I didn't have to hire a babysitter. I didn't have to get overwhelmed by the process. And with designing your environment for success—and when we do those two things, really beautiful things happen.

We continue to move the needle. But if we go, “Katy, you don't get it. My house is so cluttered. It's such a mess. It's not going to make a dent,” because that's what I used to think. “What's one thing a day going to do? Oh, so I'm not going to do it. Forget it.” But just try it.

JUST START SOMEWHERE

Leave it out. Put that bag out in maybe a location you know you want to work on slowly over time. And it will help, I promise. It will help.

Tasha: Definitely. And having, like you said, having a home for where it goes, because there's nothing more frustrating than being like, I don't need this, but I don't know where to put it.

HAVING A SYSTEM THAT WORKS

So where are you going to put it? Exactly—the cabinet, back in the drawer. I mean, you're going to throw it on the floor? That's not going to help anything. So having that area, I think it really is a game changer.

CONNECT WITH KATY

So, where can people go to hear more from you, about this? I'm like, you probably have more acronyms you haven't shared, right?

Katy: I try not to do too many acronyms because after a while it's kind of like, okay, I'm going to mix it up between too much.

Tasha: What was the Ohio one? And what was the dash? But no.

Katy: Only handle it once. Yeah, yeah. So, come hang out on the podcast Maximize Minimalist.

And then my favorite social media platform of choice is Instagram. I'm on there pretty often, so come check out my reels or stories. Come hang out there and yeah, get a lot of tips and tricks that way, too.

WRAPPING UP

Tasha: Absolutely. Yeah. We'll link to both those in the show notes here so people can go check that out, hear more from you.

Really appreciate you coming and just sharing

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this and sitting down. And I am hopeful that people listening can take this and take some mindset or habit or action from it and start applying it this week and just seeing how that makes a difference in taking the stress level down.

Even if it's just one step at a time. It may not be, you know, that big transformation before and after we're going to come film a TV show of it, but implementing those small things so that consistently over time, even this time next year, you can still be experiencing less stress and more peace.

Katy: That's right. Amen to that.

Tasha: Absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Katy.

Katy: Thank you.

THANK YOU

Tasha: Well, thanks so much for tuning in to today's episode of the Get Organized HQ podcast. Be sure to go and check out Katy's podcast, the Maximized Minimalist Podcast, to hear more from her.

She has years of experience, not just of decluttering for herself, but also helping other people to get decluttered and set up systems in their lives and homes. Thanks so much for being here today and we'll see you next time.