

Message from Marcie

It smells like spring in the Washington, DC area. I love the muddy, leafy, grassy smell that comes into the house now that the windows are open again. Spring smells like new beginnings to me and makes me feel that anything is possible. Particularly after you experience a harsh winter, spring tempts you to break out of your old routines.

This year, consider spring-cleaning your habits along with your home or office. Toss routines that aren't adding value to your life. Start by looking at your calendar and evaluating whether you want to continue participating in activities that you are involved in. Can you eliminate one commitment and find some time to do something that you've always wanted to try? You don't have to make a long-term commitment; try one cooking class or choose something from your local community college's continuing-education department. Now that it's warming up outside, you might try a new sport or return to one you haven't played in a while.

Consider using some of your time to come up with new organizing habits, too. Changing your routine can lead you to become more productive and then you'll have even more time to have fun.

My big announcement this spring is that my book will be available for sale in late May. I was hoping to offer it sooner, but a pre-printing delay is putting off publication. In the meantime, I am working on a companion workbook that will be sold as an ebook, full of forms and checklists to help you let go of clutter. Look for news of the books' availability for sale in an upcoming email.

Marcie's Maxims:

If you are waiting to find the perfect system, your wait is over. The perfect system is the one that works for you. Remember that systems can change as your needs and circumstances change. Choose one, work with it and make it yours.

Where Will It Go?

Everything in your home or office needs to live somewhere, either in view or in storage. Spring cleaning can reveal objects that you want to keep but aren't sure where to put.

If you like something and you want to see it, find a place to hang it or display it so you can enjoy it. If you find something that is useful, but not particularly attractive, decide where to store it so you

can find it. Ask yourself how often you will use it to determine whether you put it in a place that you access regularly or in a more remote location.

Going forward, before you buy anything or bring something new into your space, ask yourself "Where am I going to put it?" If you don't have a place for it to go, you can let go of something you already own or decide not to let it in at all.

Binders v. Files

Once you decide to corral all your paperwork, you have to figure out how and where you are going to keep it. People ask me whether files or binders are better for storing their paper. The answer depends on your preferences, storage space and volume of paper.

I prefer to file paper. I like it out of my way, but close by, in my desk's file drawer. I go through my files regularly, so there isn't a lot of excess paper cluttering up the drawer.

I use three binders for reference materials, two at home and one at work, because the amount of paper is too unwieldy to keep



in a folder. The binders are kept on a shelf, within arm's reach of my desk.

I suggest keeping in binders the reference materials that you consult often. If you only have a few pieces of paper, however, you might prefer using a file.

It's important to distinguish between papers that you rarely refer to, or archives, and reference materials that you consult regularly. Keep only what you refer to regularly nearby; the rest can be stored in a remote location, either in files or binders.

What do we live for; if it is not to make life less difficult for each other?

– George Eliot

Create Your Vision

If you are having trouble deciding whether to keep something, consider Peter Walsh's advice. The author and organizer says,

Visualize the life you want, and then ask, 'Does this item enhance that vision or get in the way of it?'

What is the vision that you want for your life? Do you want to work less? Do you want to travel more? Do you want to entertain people in your home? Do you want to spend less time cleaning? Do you want to start a new hobby?

Be ruthless when considering if you will ever use an item again. If it isn't adding value to your life, let go of it and allow someone else to get some use from it.

Before you bring anything new into your home, no matter how attractive or useful it is, ask yourself if it meets the criteria you set for your vision.

Don't allow price to conflict with your vision, either. Something is a bargain only if adds to your life, not if it gets in the way of your enjoyment.

Success Story



Nancy called me last year to help her create more space in her small bedroom, which included a home office area.

Like many of my clients, she told me that she had let things pile up and she was “unable to beat it back.”

She works at home frequently, so the bedroom had to work as a comfortable place to relax and also as a functional office. Combining the two purposes would be a challenge.

During our first visit, Nancy let go of several bags of clothing, choosing to keep only the pieces that she enjoys wearing and that look good on her. Instead of referring to what we were doing as “purging,” she used the term “cleansing.” I told her that I was going to appropriate her phrase, which sounds so much nicer.

When we finished our cleansing, she said that she got rid of not only the physical

accumulation, but of the mental clutter, as well. In addition, there was the benefit of being able to find what she needed, when she needed it, quickly and easily. By sorting and grouping items, we created room for her to read or watch movies, while also allowing her an area to do her work.

Our next meeting focused on her kitchen. Nancy is an enthusiastic cook, who likes to have the right tools for each recipe. We sorted and grouped functions, allowing her to have a baking area, cooking area and dry goods storage. We created storage for all the pots, pans, knives and specialty gadgets within the constraints of her narrow kitchen. Even though the kitchen is small, it has an enviable amount of counter space, which she is now able to use for food prep.

Congratulations, Nancy, for your successful cleansing efforts and for building on the systems we created!

Challenge Yourself

There are several Web sites, blogs and books devoted to people who have issued themselves a public clutter challenge.

Naomi Seldin Ramirez writes about her quest to get rid of one thing a day for 100 days on her *Simpler Living* blog, <http://blog.timesunion.com/simplerliving>. She says that she started decluttering by getting rid of large amounts of stuff, but “I also believe in the power of incremental change.”

Gretchen Rubin writes on *The Happiness Project* blog, www.happiness-project.com, “Every time I’ve brought order to my rooms, I’ve brought calm to my mind.”

There is the *100 Thing Challenge* from Dave Bruno, <http://guynameddave.com/100->

[thing-challenge](#), who set out to reduce his possessions to 100 things. Since then, he has said that it’s not about the stuff. Instead, he says,

It’s about freeing up space in our lives. Getting rid of the stuff that overwhelms and distracts us. Then making use of that space to do good things in our families, communities, and beyond.

Challenge yourself to let go of one thing per day. You can throw it out, donate it or recycle it. Start with something easy and build up to the things you thought you could never live without. You might be surprised to learn that you can be happier living with less, too.

Product Highlight

Being the skeptic that I am, I didn't believe that 3M Command™ Hooks could be functional when I first saw them advertised. How could a temporary adhesive work as a hook? Since I thought their claim of sticking but coming off easily was incredible, I was surprised to see how well they worked at a client's house.


Since then, I have recommended them as a solution for both homes and offices. Now that the hooks are available in more designs and finishes, you can use them in spaces where the plain white ones aren't very attractive.

The photo at the right is a picture of my foyer. Although I don't particularly like things hanging in my entryway, I needed a place for the children to hang their own coats. I didn't want to hang a coat rack in the small space behind the door, but I needed something that they could reach. The Command™ hooks fit that area well and they can come down, without any damage to the wall, when we don't need them anymore.



I recently installed a set of hooks in my mother's front hall closet, at different heights, so she can hang tote bags and the children can hang their coats at her house, too, instead of throwing them on a chair. The hooks remove easily when you want to paint the walls or change the configuration. You can buy them online or at discount and drug stores.

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 I'm a new facebook user and I'm still learning about its potential. I use it to send organizing hints, activities to help you declutter and links to articles that

I think you will find interesting. You can find me and "like" my page at www.facebook.com/pages/Organized-by-Marcie/178096602216420.

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