

Chaos to Simplicity

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“Pooh,” said Christopher Robin, “where did you find that pole?”

Pooh looked at the pole in his hands.

“I just found it,” he said.

“I thought it ought to be useful, so I just picked it up.”

– Pooh Book of Quotations

Organizationally challenged clients find things that they believe might be useful someday. Professional Organizers who struggle with the process of moving these clients beyond the *someday* mentality, could use a brief story to get them to understand how they are sabotaging their own progress. Teaching is a huge part of helping clients move from chaos to simplicity. Veteran organizers have learned that the easiest way to teach is to tell a memorable story of your own experience or use situations or a favorite childhood character to augment the learning process.

I, too, have had trouble with things I have found or acquired, and I share with many clients the following examples and solutions. You, too, can find your own way of creating enthusiasm for your client’s particular needs.

- Nothing in my drawers or closets got there by accident. Everything, at least on the day I brought it home, was supposed to be useful. No doubt, the acquisition was connected to an emotion, an expectation or a hope that something miraculous would happen.

Rx: I must pause to consider a compelling reason to own something before acquiring it. Will it bring joy and beauty into my life, or is it something that will require cleaning, storing, insuring, maintaining and eventually become a burden?

- In the process of cleaning out kitchen drawers, I discovered four vegetable peelers. I really like vegetables, but do I need four peelers especially when I most often use a small paring knife?

Rx: Specialization may be just fine in medicine, but too many single purpose gadgets take up precious space.

- My desire for a good deal can cloud my judgment, and I end up making too many purchases. When I see a markdown, I immediately decide I need it.

Rx: Shopping is free, but buying takes time and costs money. Items brought home require space for storage and energy to maintain. A bargain is not a real

bargain if the item ends up in the back of a closet or drawer. I must learn to consider the cost per wear or per use before buying an item.

- Through the family's growing years, I gathered 'stuff' to feather the nest. Now I am taking time to scrutinize it all. Overabundance is a waster: a time-waster because I search too long for the item I want; a money-waster because I spend on items that have a long shelf life but add little to the quality of life; and an energy waster as I need to clean, store, insure, maintain...

Rx: Excess buries the treasures that bring delight. It is easier to organize a few treasures than organize a whole closet full of unused stuff. Simplify first, then organize.

- Furniture is generally not a problem in simplifying my life. These are big items and I have limited space for big objects. The difficulty is with all those innocent little things that have entered the household for emotional reasons. These are the hardest to dispose. They are the knick-knacks given to me by loving friends and relatives. They are the souvenirs from my travels. They are my children's artwork or the childhood toys. The clue that these treasures are out of control is when they bring me more grief than joy or when I need to expend too much energy to maintain them.

Rx: Clear the clutter—those broken, unused or unloved items that do not add pleasure to life. If it is just taking up space, consider it a candidate for recycling.

- More than three of anything constitutes a collection, and collections come with strings attached. They grow and they are hard to part with.

Rx: Vow to stop saving more than you can manage.

The goal for most of our clients is a simpler life with fewer things that drain time, money and energy. Help them to become aware of areas that may seem minor but weigh heavily upon their shoulders. Teach through stories or examples and you, too, will experience growth in your organizing business.