

F / R / E / A / K / Y / N / E / A / T

where do we start?



starting to downsize

Downsizing is a challenging activity even for those practiced in organization. It is intimidating and can feel like opening Pandora's box. Admittedly, it took me a long time to practice what I preach. I had a friend over for the first time and I watched as he scanned my living space. Knowing full well that I had recently started my professional organizing business, he stated "You have a lot more stuff than I thought you would... considering what you do." I looked around the room, embarrassed. He was right. My apartment had become a dumping ground. It was slowly transitioning into the island of misfit antiques and street rescues. Every room a disaster, every shelf filled with "one day" projects. I knew that I needed to change my ways if I was going to ask others to change theirs.

**mine looked
something like this:**

1. KITCHEN
2. LIVING ROOM
3. FRONT ENTRY
4. BEDROOM
5. BATHROOM
6. SECOND BEDROOM/STORAGE AREA
(NOT USED OFTEN/(SHARED SPACE))



I highly recommend you form a “TO DO” list for each space you choose. It may seem silly writing down cleaning tasks, but I guarantee it will keep you on track. Who doesn’t love to cross something off of a list when it’s accomplished? My kitchen is small, but like everyone I had accumulated a variety of useless tools. I felt like “the little mermaid.” “You want thing-a-mabobs? I got 20!”

**let’s use my kitchen as an example.
(please see next page.)**

1. CLEAN OUT THE FRIDGE

throwing out all expired and unused items. Wash out all tupperware to ensure you're accounting for all of the items that you've accumulated.

2. TAKE EVERYTHING OUT

I know this step is terrifying. Trust me, I KNOW. I started emptying cupboards, my pantry, spices, dishware, lazy susan and brought everything to a large table outside of the kitchen. At this point you're going to think a bomb has gone off in whatever living space has been chosen to host these items. But it's hugely important that you see EVERYTHING you have had hidden from yourself over the years and will provide a perfect opportunity to properly CLEAN OUT all the nooks and crannies of your space.

3. POST-IT CHALLENGE...

The best way to change the setup of your kitchen is to take a step back and use your personal preferences to maximize the functionality of the space. Most of the time you instinctually have a floor map for your kitchen. It's out of habit and practice. I like to encourage each member of the family to take a Post-it note and place it where they think the items should live within the space. This is a great way to include the kids, or a partner to ensure everyone is happy with the new set up.

For example;

CUTLERY.... Each person takes their Post-it note and places it where they think the cutlery should be located.

4. FINDING NEW HOMES

Once a space has been agreed upon, you can begin placing the items in their new homes. I highly recommend using boxes to sort and organize the insides of your drawers. It makes everything neater and helps to keep the drawers tidy. I also suggest parting with any items that haven't been used in the last 5 months, and carefully ensuring that items are being paired with similar items in different areas.

For example: Tupperware area, kitchen gadget area, utensil area, pots and pans, baking equipment area, etc.

5. DONATION BOX

This is the perfect time to start putting all of the unwanted items into a donation box. If the item is still good and not being used, it can be donated to someone/an organization who may be in need of it. This step helps to avoid contributing to landfills, and will allow access to items for those less fortunate.

6. CROSS OFF YOUR FIRST TASK

and move your attention to the next area on your list. Personally I focused on the pantry and baking items next. Checking every single expiry date, You'll be amazed at the waste you'll find.

7. REEVALUATE YOUR STORAGE CONTAINERS

Take any of the items in packaging and transfer them into more practical storage containers. (use a label maker or masking tape with a sharpie to date and label items and their expiry dates.) I use mason jars for all of my food storage. It keeps items fresh and I am able to see what items are in need of replenishing. (Side note; My kitchen declutter was the beginning of promising myself I'd do everything in my power to live a more sustainable life. Like shopping at package free grocery stores and buying natural and organic items.) It shocked me that I could contribute so much waste from packaging alone.)

8. A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Item by item you will start to see the piles thin. With bulky packaging gone you'll be able to place far more into those previous areas. Parting with the unused items will become much easier when you have the practise of the first area under your belt. When one donation box is filled up, take it out of the space and get yourself a new box. Keep the decisions as quick as possible and if an item is challenging you put it aside to ask yourself, your partner or your child their opinion. Keeping in mind that usually when you have to take a moment you already know the answer.

9. KEEP ON GOING

By now you've got the hang of this. The pile is dissipating and your anxiety levels have decreased exponentially. The trick now is to keep the momentum going, and trust that you're slowly cultivating your IDEAL living space.

10. PRACTISE MAKES PERFECT

Keep the space as tidy as possible, and prioritize returning items to their homes once you've finished using them. It will keep you in the habit of using a space, and leaving it clean and ready for its next use!

The beautiful thing about creating order is that once you start, it's addicting. You see how easy and stress free it is to live in a decluttered environment, and it pulls you in. When you stop placing value in material possessions it allows for you to focus on what's important such as your experiences, relationships and quality of life. It shows you that a more minimalistic approach can decrease your cleaning times drastically and can even instill a sense of "calm" to a once overwhelming space. Every purchase becomes more intentional and you become far more aware of the environmental footprint you're leaving behind. There is something primal about stripping emotions from material things. Something beautiful and freeing. When I walk by a discarded gem on the street, wander into Home Sense, or find a one of a kind antique I have to have a place in mind for the item, or it's not coming home. As I got more comfortable with the concept it's adapted to more of a ONE IN ONE OUT methodology. This is the time to make your space as functional and livable as possible. Don't let the stress of the job deter you, because the results will far outway the process.

Good luck.

Let's take this hot mess to freaky neat.