

## Organize your Clothes and Closet October, 2008

Why should you organize and de-clutter your closet?

New season, new opportunities!

Save yourself frustration, when you can't find what you're looking for.

Save on cleaning costs, when items stay clean and unwrinkled between wearings.

Find more space for the important stuff.

Save money by fully knowing and using what you have.

Improve your image by looking put together and cared for, just like your clothes!

How to Start:

Assemble your tools: 2 or 3 laundry baskets, extra hangers, large black garbage bags, white kitchen size garbage bags,

Post-its, black sharpie marker

With your post-its, label the baskets "wash", "dry cleaners / tailors", "donate"

Black and White Bags:

White bags are for items to go to someone else, like maternity clothes to a friend, kid's clothes to a younger cousin, etc. You can see through the white bags, to help you remember the contents and their destinations.

Black bags are a black hole, nothing comes back out of the black bags!

Look closely at your closet, drawers and bedroom, and pay attention to those things that do and don't work:

If you tend to hang stuff on hooks, install some more!

If you like to see your clothes hung up, hang up as much as possible

If you don't have enough drawers, invest in some baskets for your closet shelves

Get a clear image of your image. How do you want to be perceived? What are the most important things to you?

Looking put together? Looking fun and creative?

Expensive clothes? Lots of variety to choose from?

Sometimes I ask myself, "If I ran into fill in the blank here (well-dressed friend, ex-boyfriend, potential client) at the post office, would I be comfortable with how I look?" This gives me a tangible cut-off, for questionable outfits or items.

Things to keep you motivated:

A little time spent now can save you hours later!

Taking care of your clothes now means they will last longer, look nicer and require less care. Saves time & \$\$!

Assigning a destination before you purge makes it easier to let things go. Garage sale? Charitable Donations? EBay?

If money is your motivator, pick a destination that generates \$\$, like a sale or consignment shop.

Rules of Thumb:

Being organized means finding what you need when you need it.

Filing is for retrieval, not for storage. Set up your closet to facilitate getting dressed in the morning!

There are 2 types of everything – Active and Archive.

This season's clothes, stuff you wear all the time, should be front and center in your closet.

Off-season, very formal or sentimental items that you can't part with but do not wear regularly belong in a different closet, or in storage containers elsewhere in your home, not in your way everyday!

80/20 rule: 80% of what you need in 20% of your stuff. (For example, even in you have 10 pairs of pants, you always wear the same 2 or 3.)

What to Do:

We'll use the system introduced in Julie Morgenstern's *Organizing from the Outside In* (most organizers and books on the subject use a similar process, it may just be called something else). SPACE – Sort, Purge, Assign a Home, Containerize and Equalize. Start where you are, and start today. Don't wait. You can get started, no matter what. Even if it is just 20 minutes with your sock drawer or your shoes!

### 1.Sort

Make sure all the laundry is clean, and in your room, so you are sure to include everything in the process.

Make your bed.

Take all the clothes out of your closet, and lay them on the bed.

Start sorting! With clothes, it usually helps to sort by type: Shirts, sweaters, pants, skirts, suits, etc.

After you break things down by type, color or size is often the next step.

Remember the basket for the items to go for cleaning or repair.

Once you have sorted all your clothes, you may start to notice a few things. Unmatched socks, jeans you have not worn since the 1990s (and should never wear again), fat jeans, skinny jeans, formal items mixed in with the regular every day stuff, swimming suits and winter coats coexisting. All of these things lead us to the next step, which is purging.

## **2. Purge: Clear that Clutter! Clutter...**

Is anything you don't need, use or love and doesn't love you back.

Clutters what we really do need, use and value and makes us feel overwhelmed and out of control.

By clearing the clutter, we get to what is real and necessary and we are left with a more realistic and manageable amount to organize.

What else do you have hanging around your closet? Clothes that ...

Are not used, or are broken or unfixable;

Were given to you that you don't like or need;

Were bought when you were learning something that no longer interests you;

Remind you of unpleasant events or time, or given to you by someone who caused you pain;

That make you feel bad about yourself.

Look at each item and ask Do I need it, use it, love it and does it love me back?

Purge Criteria – very objective (from Organized A to Z)

Duplicates: How many black t-shirts do I really need? Do they all fit, and are they all in good shape?

Would I wear them out of the house? Why do I have 4 pair of navy blue tights, when I can't stand wearing them? Ok, that's probably just me....

Usefulness: How does each piece of clothing make me feel? Do I wear all of them? Do they make me feel happy, confident, healthy, in control?

Exceptions: seasonal stuff, long or delicate formal things, suits, etc.

Shelf Life:

Things will not come back into style, and maybe you should not wear them even if they do;

Items that are 1 or 2 sizes too big or too small. Ditch the "fat jeans"!

A few words about MAYBE, or JUST IN CASE:

If you are ambivalent about an item, you can keep it, but store it elsewhere, with an expiration date for 6 months from now.

Turn all your hangers and hang over the back of your closet rod. When you wear an item, turn the hanger around. Then you'll really know what you didn't wear this season.

Opportunity Costs from Just in case: Any time we choose to buy/keep something, it eliminates the opportunity for something else. If we spend \$100 on one thing, we can't spend that same \$100 on something else. And someone else is not benefiting from the stuff that is weighing us down.

Remove and deliver your black and white bags immediately to their destinations.

Take the stuff to get fixed immediately, too.

## **3. Assign a Home: Where and how to store these items?**

Re-assembling, consider how you get dressed in the morning – each type together?

Ensembles together? By color? By style?

Some things are better off in drawers – small items that don't stack well, like socks and undergarments, pajamas, etc.

Pick a spot and stick with it. Commit, commit, commit.

Store stuff you need every day as close as possible, move out and up and down from there.

Use vertical space:

Canvas shoe holders on the backs of all our doors, for shoes, hats, mittens, etc.

An added top shelf to every closet, for off-season clothing and sport good storage.

## **4. Containerize:**

We do not do this until the 4<sup>th</sup> step! Do not shop for containers until you know what and how much is staying, and where!

Containerize to fit the items you are storing, the space you are using, and the person using it.

Double hang closets, double stack shelves.

Items must be visible, accessible, pared down.

Use unlikely space, like under beds, the backs of doors or empty luggage;

Baskets, drawer dividers, whatever it takes.

You can never have too many shelves. Ever.

Kindergarten model of organizing: open shelves, clearly labeled clear plastic bins, like with like and projects with projects, zones, etc.

## **5. Equalize:**

Equalize means maintenance:

Review changes in a few weeks or a month, and make sure things are still working for you.

Get into a daily routine for putting things away, and also a routine for getting rid of clutter.

Add a laundry basket near your closet for dirty laundry, and one for stuff to go to the cleaners, then add that errand to your to-do list.

Add a box in your laundry room for clothes to donate to charity or to make into rags.

Plan a regular purge, like at change of season, or maybe around your birthday.

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