

Getting your clutter under control

A place for everything and everything in its place.

Doesn't sound like you? It could be. And what better inspiration than National Organizing Week, May 1 to 7. The Professional Organizers in Canada (www.organizersincanada.com), if nothing else a well-organized organization, is promoting its annual organization-fest in which it urges Canadians to get the clutter out of their homes and offices.

For their own part, POC members will be partnering with Ronald McDonald House Charities to go in and help re-organize some of the rooms used by families staying there while their children under treatment at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, says Cherri Hurst, of Hurst Class Organization in Toronto and an executive member of the POC.

She offers 10 steps to getting organized at home:

■ Pick an area to start. It doesn't have to be a complete room. It can be a closet, a cupboard or a desk. Keep it small so the task is not daunting.

■ Go through each item, deciding if you should keep it. Why are you keeping it? When will you use it? Have you ever used it? Have the garbage can, recycling box and a donation bag handy so you can throw out the broken stuff, recycle the paper items and prepare the unwanted goods for donating as you go. Remember, many things like cosmetics have a shelf life.

■ Sort what is left. Treasures from the past can be put away in a memorabilia box, displayed somewhere or donated to a museum.

■ Assess what you have to determine where items

should go and what organizing supplies you will need. Baskets, tins and boxes (to name a few) can help you get organized, but make sure they do work. Don't be afraid to use storage items in ways for which they were not originally intended.

■ Store and organize items according to how you use them. Keep the items you use the most often, the handiest. Others should be removed to a less-used area. Store like with like so you find everything in one spot.

■ Use all the space. Shelving, CD holders and wall pockets utilize vertical space. Couches, toy furniture and desks can be placed away from a wall to use floor space better. Cupboard doors, behind doors and other nooks and crannies can also be put to good use.

■ Set up systems to deal with mail and shoes and boots at the front door.

■ Set up a portable action file to keep ongoing work and information you are dealing with right now. It can be in a binder or a desktop file holder, but use it. As soon as something comes in needing your attention, make a file for it and put it in the action file.

■ Stop leaving things out to remind you to do them. Use a Day-Timer, To Do List and your Action File to keep track of what you have to do and when.

■ Stop and take a look at what you have done. Notice how good it feels to have accomplished this task. Remember this feeling the next time you are tempted to just drop something somewhere. Then start again at Step 1 until you have finished your entire home.

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