

# Clearing Clutter Opens the Mind

Jakob Barry | [the change blog](#)

I do a lot of writing about home improvement and environmental issues and one of the most important topics I find everyone can relate to is clutter.

Clutter can be a heavy burden that confines and suffocates. Like the interesting phenomenon of a pet taking on characteristics of its owner when they're out for a walk, we often take on elements of the mess around us without even knowing it.

Whether in the kitchen, basement, yard or 'all of the above' in some way everyone has clutter and when it begins to rule over a certain rhythm in our lives it affects personal relationships and slows our ability to move forward. In essence, it closes us up instead of opening our hearts and minds to our dreams.

I can tell you from my own past experience I've had mental blocks or turned down opportunities to do X or Y because of the clutter in my life.

- I can't host the party, too much clutter
- I can't expand my imagination, too much clutter
- I can't go out because I don't want to come back to so much clutter!

So the question is what to do about it?

For me the answer became a personal management issue, which I eventually solved on my own with a lot of effort. In retrospect I'd break it down into in the following four points:

## **Take the initiative**

Sometimes we get into work funks, writers block being a good example. We spend hours or even days trying to meet a deadline or finish a project and in the meantime everything around us falls to smithereens. It once took me two days to clean up the apartment after a week long assignment which included a few all-nighters.

I can't emphasize this enough but don't wait until it's too late and you're completely overwhelmed. Each day take a break for just 15 minutes, preferably in the morning, and clear the space so it doesn't end up closing you in more and more until the creative energy just won't flow.

## **Make clutter zones and stick to them**

If necessary, select clutter zones such as a box by the desk, bed, or near a closet where the disorder can have a temporary home. Adhere to those boundaries as much as possible and sort it out on the weekend.

Even if a mess develops in various places use that 15 minutes in the early part of the day to transfer it to its selected zone. Just don't forget to set a time for making the zone itself clutter free.

## **Talk to Yourself**

Really. I'm not kidding. When you run a race you have to keep telling yourself "I can do it, I can do it." In the same way I've found that when we speak things out it somehow registers differently. For example, as you're about to take charge tell yourself:

- I want to pick up all the cloths I see
- I want to organize the paper separating trash from important forms

- I want to bring dishes to the kitchen
- I want to dust and sweep the floor
- I want to get it all done in 15 minutes!

Say it and make it happen.

## **Consider your health**

Realize that part of staying healthy is being in a clean environment. Clutter exposes us to all kinds of new problems like dust allergies and even mold and mildew when moisture is involved. It affects our breathing, increases stress which in turn causes sickness, and robs us of the strength we need to achieve our goals.

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