

Tips given on how to de-clutter your home

<http://www.remindernews.com/article/2012/01/20/tips-given-on-how-to-de-clutter-your-home>

February 20, 2012

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Glastonbury - posted Fri., Jan. 20, 2012



Professional organizer Faith Manierre give advice on getting rid of clutter. Photo by Steve Smith.

According to professional organizer Faith Manierre, stuff is equal to time, and being more organized can give a person more time to do the things they like to do, and make their lives less stressful. "It takes time to deal with all the stuff that we have," Manierre said, at a lecture at the Riverfront Community Center on Jan. 18 which offered tips on how to eliminate clutter and be more organized.

"Stuff is also equal to money," she said, explaining that people often wind up going out and buying an item simply because they

can't find the one they already own in their homes.

Manierre said there is a distinction between collectors and hoarders. Collectors, she said, take pride in their collections, organize their collections and enjoy showing them off. Hoarders may be embarrassed by their collections, are not organized, and avoid letting people see their homes and collections.

Manierre said there are many psychological factors, as well as many mis-perceptions, that lead people to become disorganized. "Organizing is a skill that can be learned," she said. "If you didn't learn it earlier on, it's still something that you can pick up. Some people think that if you are not organized, that it's a character flaw, and that's not true."

Manierre said that the average household has about 60 reams of paper, or 30,000 sheets of loose paper, lying around. Organizing all that paper takes time. "If one sheet of paper equals a decision," she said, "it takes a long time. The important part with paper is that we have to have a good system. If you don't have a place for that paper, it can get out of hand quickly."

People make excuses for why items are kept around, including that they may want or need them in the future, Manierre said. Also, many people feel like they need to keep gifts they were given, even if they have no use for them, but it really is the thought that counts.

"It's really important to remember that when someone gives you a gift, they gave it with good intentions, and they were trying to please you," she said, "but if it doesn't fit you, or fit your lifestyle, it's not that you must keep it, because that can become a burden to us."

Sometimes people keep every letter or card they've ever received, Manierre said. Changing the mindset that leads one to become disorganized and gather items they don't really need is what Manierre said is the only "cure."

"Sometimes it's not the thing, but the memory that's important," she said. "If you keep a catalog of your holiday things [for example], that can really be effective. People have done that with their children's things."

Many in attendance asked what to do with the volumes of paperwork and mail that they receive. Manierre offered the acronym 'Ohio,' which stands for 'only handle it once,' as well as suggesting a certain time – per day or per week – in which to sort mail.

“You get that pile of mail every day and it takes about 10 minutes to go through that pile every day,” she said. “We need to go through that. We need to make decisions as it comes in. If you decide not to do it on a daily basis, and you do it once a week, then you need an hour to do it.”