HOW CLUTTER AFFECTS OUR LIVES

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You've seen the social media memes that suggest clutter is good because it's a sign of creativity. For a few minutes, the memes make you smile and let you know that you aren't the only person with a clutter problem. However, the truth is that clutter is not a sign of creativity or of productivity. It's a sign of disorganization, procrastination, lack of control, and sometimes a lack of value or respect. Clutter can even cause problems you may not even be aware of.

Maybe you think it's just not that bad, it's just a little clutter, and a little messy but it's not hurting anything. The fact is that clutter can wreak havoc with your physical, mental, and financial health.

Increases Mental Problems

The clutter and disorganization around you are ruining your focus. It becomes hard to concentrate due to having to deal with the mess and thoughts that are continually popping up interrupting your flow. The exciting thing is that science is discovering that in some cases the clutter came before the mental illness. This means that there may be a cure.

Anxiety Inducing

The clutter causes anxiety too because you may be worried about someone coming over, or wondering how you'll get everything done, or concerned that you cannot find an important document. You may have many other things going through your mind that can be classified as mind clutter. Worry, anxiety, circular thoughts are all increased when surrounded by clutter.

Obsessions with The Past

The other thing is that clutter is closely tied to an inability to let go of the past. If you're finding that you're obsessive about the past, it manifests in the inability to get rid of things. You may not even be storing the thing right that you want to keep. If you look t the past as the "best of times," this may explain your inability to get rid of clutter.

Risk of Becoming a Hoarder

While not all people who have clutter become hoarders, it can happen. If you have clutter but it's not blocking your walkway, and you still have some clean surfaces, and you can take a bath without removing the garbage you may be safe from being a hoarder. However, if you are starting to cross the line, you may want to get some help.

Chicken or Egg

People with lots of clutter physically also have lots of clutter mentally that makes life, in general, feel messy and out of control. Usually when the clutter is cleared their outlook improves, and their mind becomes clearer. That kind of blows the idea that mental illness causes clutter – it's really the other way around in a lot of cases. The fact is that mold is a common culprit in many mental illness diagnoses involving clutter. Some people are more vulnerable to effects from mold than others.

When you have too much clutter, you may not even notice that you have mold or that you had water damage because it's all hidden behind the clutter. You may not see the dust mites, the vermin, or anything else unless you start to clean it up. The only way you can know that something is wrong is to be honest with yourself about how you feel mentally and physically in your current living situation.

Ruins Your Diet

When the house is dirty, the car is a wreck, and you're running on fumes, it's not shocking that you're not making good food choices. It seems too hard to plan grocery shopping, cooking time, and so forth when it's all so cluttered that you cannot find your kitchen table and your oven is full of books.

Junk & Fast Food Seems Easy to Grab

Eating in a disorganized environment will make it more likely you grab the easiest things without a lot of thought. There is even a book about it called "[Lose the Clutter, Lose the Weight: The Six-Week Total-Life Slim Down](#)" by Peter Walsh. It's a useful book with scientific fact to back it up.

Stress Hormones Make You Hungry

When you have more stress, hormones released into your blood you end up being fatter, especially around the tummy even without eating more. However, you will eat more. You'll eat more due to the rise in cortisol levels. The cortisol levels rise with stress, which also causes you to be hungrier and have more cravings due to your imbalanced sugar levels. If you're eating fast food more than once a week and grabbing food from your kitchen without planning, you may need to reevaluate this.

Guilt Makes You Do Unhealthy Things

The other problem with stress and clutter is that sometimes to make up for your guilty feelings for not doing a good enough job taking care of your home and office clutter can cause you to stuff your feelings with eating. However, not only that, you may feed your family unhealthy junk to make them happy too and to numb the feelings associated with being surrounded by stuff.

If you want to be healthy, it's essential to be able to cook healthy home cooked meals. It's hard to do that if you have no counter space and nothing is clean enough to throw together a meal quickly. If you only get one room under control and you're overweight, consider getting your kitchen organized.

Causes Respiratory Issues

Whether you care at all about clutter, dust mites should help you understand that clutter carries a grave danger to the health of most individuals. Dust mites cause allergies and illness. Some people end up feeling as if they have the flu or chronic fatigue syndrome and all they really needed to do was organize and declutter their home.

Dust Mites

One of the health dangers of having clutter is the problem with dust mites. Dust mites are microscopic bugs that eat dead skin. If you have too many dust mites in your home, you can end up being diagnosed with asthma and other health problems.

Other Vermin

Disorganized papers and junk attract dust and vermin. Together, these things provide good hiding places and snacks for invaders. The pages in books, the documents in folders, as well as old newspapers and magazines attract many types of insects. If you don't want critters infesting your home, declutter it regularly.

You may not notice how much dust, dander, and dirt you have until you start cleaning. If it's been a few months (or years) since you've cleaned your home or office thoroughly, you probably should wear a protective mask. Allergies, asthma, and other illnesses like this are prevalent in homes full of clutter.

Is Not Safe

One of the saddest and most preventable injuries among the elderly and those who live alone is falling. Most falling can be prevented if you keep the paths clear and clutter free. The other danger that is prevalent when there is a lot of clutter is fire. Fire is also usually preventable, and one way to do that is to get rid of clutter regularly.

Falling Risk

One problem with having things in your path is the risk of falling. Even a few papers in the wrong spot can cause a person to slip and fall. If you're alone, you may be found dead on the floor among all your stuff. That would not be a good way to go. Not only could you fall, but anyone who visits you is in danger too.

Fire Hazzard

Collections of papers stored in rooms, attics, and crawl spaces create severe fire hazards. It doesn't take much to start a fire when you have a cluttered environment. Newspapers, magazines, and old bills dry out as they age, which makes them even more combustible. Not only that, if there is a fire, burning materials break away and may make escaping a fire difficult or impossible.

Pest Invasion

When you have too much clutter that keeps you from dealing with messes for years, you risk a serious invasion of pests. Cockroaches, silverfish, termites, and ants are particularly attracted to wood-based items and paper. Mice and rats love a cluttered environment with plenty of nesting materials to use. Once you have insects coming in, you also run the risk of having larger animals visiting to feast on the banquet of insects available.

Mold Growth

You won't always see mold if you aren't regularly cleaning the areas it could develop. Where your AC lives, where your water heater lives, under the kitchen sink, bathroom skins, toilets, tubs, showers, near your water dispenser – anywhere there is water is at risk for mold growth without regular cleaning sessions. Some types of mold is a serious and dangerous health threat for some individuals because it can cause mental and physical health issues.

Having a massive amount of paper items like books, newspapers magazines, old bills, and so forth, constitutes a serious fire hazard. You may not even realize that the papers are ready to combust at any moment. Professional organizers often find paper items that look like they almost burned when the owners had no knowledge of any impending fire at all.

Weakens Relationships

If you don't feel good or seem to have a constant cold, it's hard to develop good relationships. The clutter, whether it's mental clutter or physical clutter can get in the way of experiencing true downtime and relaxation with the people in your life.

Less Intimacy with Your Spouse

If it takes all your energy to clear off the bed of junk just to go to sleep, you probably won't feel much like doing anything else. This can be bad on a marriage. In addition, sleeping in a bedroom with tons of stuff all around will not be conducive to rest. Your bedroom should be a retreat for sleep and love.

Your Relationship with Your Children Will Suffer

As to the rest of your family since most days people won't be able to find their stuff and are tripping over stuff, and generally living in chaos the mood level in the home will not be positive. The negativity will cause every relationship to suffer.

If you haven't ever lived in an organized environment, you might notice if you're not used to the uncluttered alternative way to live. If it's been some time since your environment was not cluttered, you may not have noticed the downward spiral of the mood and relationships in your household. Is it time for a family meeting?

Decreases Productivity

If you have to do an hour of reorganizing just to get something done the clutter will contribute to procrastination because of the time you have to waste to get to the thing you wanted to do. The time that is lost trying to "get ready" or prepare for anything is frustrating and causes your productivity level to dwindle to nothing.

More Procrastination

When you don't feel that you can succeed, it's easy to procrastinate. If you know that your work won't be the best, your mind will force you to put things off. It's the classic case of the fear of failure. If you think you'll fail, you don't want to do anything.

Inability to Meet Deadlines

If you cannot find things, your work is unorganized, you didn't name files right, you didn't file things right, and you misplaced important paperwork and so forth it can be hard to meet your deadlines. If you cannot meet deadlines, it can adversely affect your career.

Lack of Motivation

Even just walking in a room and seeing the clutter can be demotivating. You see all the stuff even if you don't realize it. All the things bombard your mind and cause confusion. The papers, the dirt, the things stacked on top of other stuff are not conducive to success.

Serious Distraction

Every time you blow your nose due to the dust, and every time you have to toss things from one spot to another so you can do something, you're going to end up distracted and not working at your best.

Can't Find Stuff

One of the most significant factors in reduced productivity is just not being able to find stuff. If you cannot find your assignment, important research documents, your frying pan – whatever it is that you needed to complete a task it causes costly delays and reduces your productivity.

Everyone has the same hours in a day, but it's easy to get overwhelmed when you've allowed your home and or office or anyplace you must get things done to get so cluttered. Clutter can really drag you down and make you feel like giving up.

Encourages Bad Money Management

Clutter can cause so much destruction if you're not careful. You can even end up with bad credit. You will end up spending more money on replacing "lost" items or buying something you already own because you forgot that you own it since you cannot find it. In addition, you may end up paying a lot of late fees.

Surprise Bills

In most cases, a surprise bill will be something like an unexpected expense because something broke down, or because you got sick not because you simply forgot to pay the water bill. If you're always forgetting that certain bills are due, it can be very costly to you.

Not Balancing Your Bank Account

If you're so cluttered in your mind and space that you cannot keep track of time, it's likely that you're also not balancing your bank account regularly. It's not as hard now with online banking, but you should not trust yourself to remember or for the bank to deduct your expenditures in order.

Paying Late Fees & Higher Interest

When you pay a bill late, it's going to carry a late fee. These can really add up. Another bad thing about paying late fees on one bill is that the interest rate you pay may go up on all your other bills too. In addition, it'll be harder to establish credit for renting a place to live or getting a small business loan.

Rebuying Things You Already Own

This is something a lot of people who have a lot of clutter end up doing. They either forget they own something and buy another one because they like it, or they go out and buy another one because they cannot find the one that they know they own.

As you can see, being cluttered can impact your financial health in a big way. Being cluttered can cause you to be poor at money management. You may not have any idea how much money you have or use in any given week or month if you aren't organized enough.

Clutter is Bad for The Environment

One of the main culprits of clutter is overconsumption. People have garages so full of stuff that they don't use that they cannot put their cars inside. This type of clutter is not only making you sick it's making the earth sick. Everything we make, especially the things found in a cluttered home such as unworn clothing, magazines, and furniture pollute the environment when they are created.

Cutting down on clutter not only helps you improve every aspect of your life, but it enables you to improve the environment. Once you clean up, make a commitment not to add to the clutter anymore. Choose to bring only essential things into your home and only keep things that you use. If you aren't using something on a semi-regular time schedule, consider selling or giving it to someone who will get more use out of the item.

As you can see, clutter in your environment has adverse effects on every aspect of your life. It affects your mental health and your physical safety when it decreases productivity, stresses relationships, and has a negative impact on your financial future. It even affects the physical environment due to poor or inaccurate decision-making and overconsumption.

How to Know if You Have Too Much Clutter

It's clear that you want to avoid having clutter around if you can help it. Do you wonder whether you have too much clutter? Answer these questions honestly. It may help if you look at things from the perspective of highly respected people, such as your in-laws or landlord. They should help you decide if you have become "clutter" blind and need to take action.

- **Do I Have Any Clear Counter Space or Table Space?** – If you must clear surfaces before you can do anything that adds a lot of extra work to your task. You should have clear surfaces that are designated for doing specific tasks each day.

- **How Long Does It Take to Find Things I Need?** – If you spend a lot of time, more than five minutes, searching for items that you need such as your shoes, wallet, keys, hairbrush and so forth you may have too much stuff piled or cluttered together.

- **Have I Ever Bought a Replacement Then Found the Item Later?** – If you've done this, it's likely due to poor organizational skills and an excess of clutter. This is such a waste of money and can cause a significant amount of anxiety, stress, guilt, and more.

- **Do I Know Where Things Should Be?** – You've heard the phrase, "A place for everything and everything in it's place." Everything in your house should have a "home" of it's own, whether it's a specific drawer or in a particular room. You should be able to tell someone where most items can be found in your home. If you can't picture where the item should be, you probably need to make some changes to your setup or methods.

- **Does Your Family Know Where Things Should Be Kept?** – You're not the only one who should know where things are. If you have things the entire family uses, everyone should know where those things live. In addition, a firm rule should apply regarding returning items to their proper place immediately after the task or project is finished.

- **Do I Own a Storage Unit?** – This is not necessarily a sign of clutter on its own; but, combined with other things it can be a huge hint. In addition, how well you've organized the storage unit is an important consideration too. Whether this unit is on commercial property or just in your backyard, the same rules apply to clutter and organization, just as within your home.

- **Do I Have and Use my Garage for My Car?** – If you have a garage but you cannot fit your car in there because you keep large tools or out of season items in there, such as lawn and garden tools or the Christmas tree, you may need to reduce your clutter or organize your items differently.

- **Do I Feel Embarrassed to Invite Company Over?** – If your house is so messy and cluttered that you don't have company over, due to the vast amount of work needed to get things ready and presentable, you definitely need to make decluttering and organizing plans. However, you need to make both plans part of your daily routine to achieve and maintain your success.

- **Do I Make Excuses About How My House Looks?** – If you find yourself making excuses about how your home looks, you may have an issue. Has the thought crossed your mind about how embarrassed you'd be if rescue or first responders saw your house in this state? Would they even be able to get the gurney or stretcher to you? If this is even remotely a concern, you need to get busy to reduce your anxiety and make things easier for emergency personnel, should they ever need to come in, unexpectedly. It could literally be the difference between life and death.

- **Is my Family Embarrassed by the Home?** – Has your family expressed feeling embarrassed about their home? Is there an "understanding" among you that guests should be kept away from certain rooms or areas because of the clutter? Does your family play "hide the junk" by hiding things in closets, drawers, or unused rooms rather than putting things in their correct spot on a daily basis? This is a sure sign that the whole family need to make changes, which will probably include mindsets and habits.

- **Is My Stuff Stored Carefully, Safely and in a Loving Way?** – Many people with clutter will claim that they can't get rid of the stuff because of its emotional importance. When things are important, you take care of them. The problem is that some people confuse valuing items with avoidance to change, so things are often just stacked together haphazardly, rather than carefully protected and stored.

- **Do I Feel Uncomfortable in My Home?** – When you're all alone in your home how do you feel about it? Are you able to get comfortable? Do you feel safe, cozy, and comfortable? Do you feel stressed out about all that needs to be done?

These signs of too much clutter may not be cause for concern if you only have one or two of these issues. However, if you have three or more, you probably should do something about confronting the clutter in your home or place of business, as soon as possible. You'll improve your own life and possibly even people around you, without even realizing it.