

Tidy Is As Tidy Does by Pat Nemec

That's a phrase I heard as a child and I'm not exactly sure now what it means. My interpretation is that the point of tidying up is how it makes you feel. In this issue, we are exploring the personal wellness benefits of decluttering.

First things first—I certainly do not live in an immaculate environment and my home office is small and might look a bit disorganized, given how much I have packed into it. On the whole though, I value having things picked up and put away.

For me, clutter outside leads to a feeling of clutter inside. When I feel like life is spiraling out of control (for example, let's say there's a world-wide pandemic going on), cleaning up helps me feel more on top of things. While an empty and sterile environment is not appealing to me, having my spaces organized makes me feel less anxious, less distracted, and more able to relax. Making my bed in the morning and cleaning up at the end of the day gives me a sense of accomplishment.

Decluttering and organizing have practical as well as emotional results. It's easier to find what I am looking for. I have space to do the activities I value. I can display and see the things that are important to me.

Some research on this topic validates my experience. It's natural for people to surround themselves with things that reflect their lives and their identity. Our personal belongings provide comfort. However, too much stuff feels chaotic and can get in the way of doing the daily activities.

Taken to the extreme, clutter can make a person feel less "at home"—less rooted, more out-of-control, and less restored by spending time at home.

A series of studies suggested a link between disorder and self-control. When in a disorganized space, the participants were more likely to buy on impulse, were less able concentrate on cognitive tasks, and were less likely to persist at challenges.

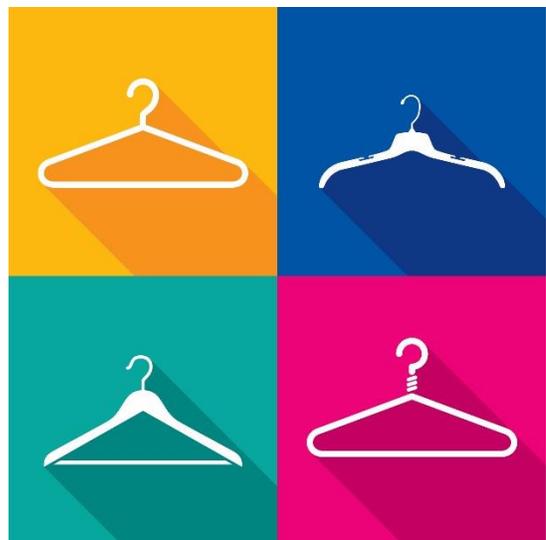
Even *pictures* of disorganization can have an effect! Although participants in this study varied in their preference for orderliness, overall EEG measures of brain activity showed that people felt less pleasant when presented disorganized pictures.

Tidying up does have value but may be difficult. One study of a decluttering intervention included this summary, which is worth remembering:

"Decluttering is a process that takes time to accomplish. The clutter did not accumulate in 1 day, and it will not be conquered in 1 day.

Fifteen minutes a day may be enough time to manage clutter and prevent its reappearance.

Setting aside 15 minutes a day for dealing with clutter can help prevent future clutter accumulation."



Decluttering in Eight Wellness

Dimensions *by George Brice, Jr.*

Since my father passed in 2017, I became the homeowner of our family home. Beyond settling the estate and its related stressful legalities, I had full-time caregiver responsibilities of a sibling living with disabilities, worked part-time, and was managing my own mental illness. A peer supporter helped me recognize the overarching negative impact of clutter in my life and my need to declutter. Clutter has impacted me in all areas of the Eight Wellness Dimensions.

After 3 years since my father's passing, I continue to feel overwhelmed by clutter, though I am making progress. Knowing that I am making progress is important and motivating to me. Hopefully, through this article, others will be inspired to declutter or move from *contemplating* to *taking steps* toward decluttering by identifying supporters or even through self-help and research on helpful hints.

Decluttering is a process in getting rid of things and has many benefits. I got *physical* exercise from bundling left-over roofing tiles that were at least 25 years old and stacked in the shed. After putting a few bundles out weekly curbside for trash pick, eventually several hundred of them were gone.

Initially, I felt *spiritually* depleted and a sense of hopelessness in getting rid of stuff. However, with encouragement and helpful planning strategies I began over time to see positive results.

For periods of time, I have been able to maintain one or two common areas where I like to *socialize* and relax. Clutter, for me, makes it hard *intellectually* to think clearly.

For me, the *emotional and mental* burden from clutter caused negative physiological effects, such as irritation, moodiness, and anger. Others may have experienced similar feelings.

During this journey of decluttering I am learning that, when stuff piles up, it is a challenging job (*occupational*) to lessen oneself from too much stuff. I look forward to having reasonable clutter-free environmental living, learning, socializing, and working space.

Aside from the physical activity and effort to develop peace of mind, decluttering has been *financially* rewarding from finding loose change and bills. Plus, I can spend less costly time in locating things.

I am encouraged by helpful tips that I have found about decluttering, including the validation that it is not necessarily easy to let go of seemingly the simplest things. I, too, get caught up in the functionality of things whether it is clothes, pens, pencils, dishes, blankets, towels, books, CD's and more. However, when I haven't used it (especially in years) it does need to go.

There are opportunities to donate and recycle (*environmental* wellness). Where I live people usually come around weekly collecting metal.

I inherited metal work benches, filing cabinets, ladders, table saw, extra old cooking pots, and more that I've placed curbside. Others benefit from selling metal, so I am able to declutter large and small items for free.



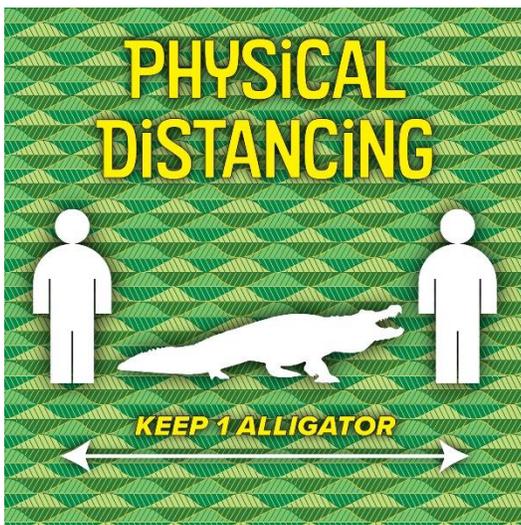
I am grateful that I have an outstanding peer supporter who has thoughtfully nudged me to declutter for my own well-being.

Be well!

Following the wellness guidelines will help keep each of us *and all of us* well.

Keep your distance

When you are out and about, remember the 6-foot distance rule. Many stores have marks on the floor to give you an idea about how far apart to stay. For adults, the distance from your nose to your fingertip is about 3 feet, so keep about 2 arms of space between you and others. In Leon County, Florida, they use a different measure.



Wear a mask

Remember that wearing a mask helps keep everyone safe and sends an important message to those around us.



Be sure to wear your mask properly, so it fully covers your nose, mouth, and chin.

Wash your hands

Plenty of soap and water will kill the coronavirus if you scrub for 20 seconds or longer. You may be tired of singing Happy Birthday or reciting your ABCs. Create your own hand-washing poster with your favorite song lyrics!

Hand-washing technique with soap and water

1 Look for the good in everything

2 Look for the people who will set your soul free

3 It always seems impossible until it's done

4 Look for the good in everyone

5 Hmm, hmm-hmm

6 Hmm-hmm, hmm-hmm

7 Hmm-hmm, hmm-hmm

8 Hmm-hmm

9 Hmm, hmm-hmm

10 Look for the good in everything

11 Look for the people who will set your soul free

12 It always seems impossible until it's done

13 Look for the good in everyone

Create your own
<https://washyourlyrics.com>

Adapted from National Health Service, who adapted from the World Health Organization Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care. Created under the Open Government License. See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/> for details

Look For The Good
Jason Mraz

Stay connected

A quick text is good, but it's great to call two or three people every day, just to say hello.

Many people love getting a personalized letter or card! Buy a book of stamps and write a hand-written notecard. You can order a wide variety of stamps online from the US Post Office, including gardens, fruits, vegetables, frogs, butterflies, and even a dinosaur.



Get your flu shot!

Experts recommend getting the flu shot early in the season, such as during September.

- This year, flu prevention is extra important because of the ongoing pandemic. Help spread the word!
- The flu shot helps protect you, which will reduce the chance of passing the flu on to others. Babies and young children, older people, and people with ongoing health conditions are more vulnerable to serious flu illnesses.
- We don't yet know enough about the effects of getting both COVID-19 and the flu at the same time.
- In addition, since flu symptoms are like the symptoms of COVID-19, avoiding the flu will mean reducing the need for testing.



References and Resources

The research on clutter referred to in this issue includes

- Roster, C. A., Ferrari, J. R., & Jurkat, M. P. (2016). The dark side of home: Assessing possession 'clutter' on subjective well-being. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 46, 32-41.
- Chae, B., & Zhu, R. (2014). Environmental disorder leads to self-regulatory failure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(6) 1203-1218.
- Langeslag, S. J. E. (2018). Effects of organization and disorganization on pleasantness, calmness, and the frontal negativity in the event-related potential. *PLOS One*, 13(8), e0202726.
- The quote on decluttering on page 1 is from page 121 of Kalina, J. T. (2014). Clutter management for individuals with multiple sclerosis. *International Journal of MS Care*, 16, 117-122.

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- <https://cms.leoncountyfl.gov/covid-19/Community/Social-Media-Graphics/emodule/25137/egallery/221>
- Create your own hand-washing poster at www.washyourlyrics.com
- The "Innovation in Biomedicine" stamp is a first-class forever stamp from www.usps.com

The "Flu Fighter" graphic on this page is from <https://www.sphosp.org/homepage/get-flu-shot/>

You can find more "flu fighter" resources at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/toolkit/index.htm>

