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Clutter Is Natural

By Stephanie Roberts

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by: **Stephanie Roberts**

Nature loves clutter. Just think of all the stuff that drops from trees, washes in on the tide, or is blown by the wind into your backyard. Birds molt, animals shed, snakes slither out of their skin, and they all just leave it lying there to rot into the earth. Follow any two-year-old around for a day and you'll see that we're not much better.

Living in clutter does not mean that you are a slob or an undisciplined failure. It means that you are human, and your origins are showing. Way, way back in the farthest branches of your family tree, your ancient ancestors lived a somewhat more hand-to-mouth existence than we do. Stocking up was a smart thing to do when the antelope might not roam your way again for a while, and surviving a cold winter depended on how big a stash of firewood and dried berries you had in the back of the cave.

The urge to acquire is instinctive and completely normal. But the kinds of circumstances that could lead primitive man to use up the provisions he'd stashed away are no longer much of a threat to us. I am a big fan of Costco, eBay, and 24-hour convenience stores, but we don't really need them, and the effect on our closets and garages (not to mention our waistlines!) has been catastrophic.

There seems to be an agreement in our culture that life was "simpler" back whenever. Yearning for simplicity makes us believe that our clutter is against the way things should be. What was different in the past was they didn't have credit cards, mail order catalogs, and the Internet. Most people only bought what they needed and could afford. When was the last time any of us did that?

In the span of just a few generations the cost of goods has gone down dramatically due to mass production. Take a moment to think about how much a basic T-shirt would cost if it were knitted and stitched by hand. How many would you own then? What if you had to make it yourself? Would you be so ready to think you need another one in a slightly different color or cut, or maybe with a little Lycra in it?

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A common lament about contemporary social norms bemoans the scattering of the nuclear family, the lack of a sense of community, and the loss of spirituality in daily life. We feel disconnected, stressed, empty, and we have been trained by mass media since early childhood that having more things will make us feel better. At some point someone told us "you can't buy happiness," but we didn't listen, because everyone likes new toys and buying things makes us feel secure, which is almost as good as feeling happy.

So we shop and shop and buy more things for our homes (and our cars, and our cell phones) until we're drowning in stuff. And then we shop for things to help us manage the other things and get them organized and neatly stored. Usually all that results from this is an over-abundance of misused, unused, or wrong-sized containers that metastasize into their own variety of clutter.

Combine a new "pre-approved" credit card offer in the mailbox every week, buy-in-bulk warehouse stores, easy internet shopping, and cable shopping networks beaming bargains into your television set

24 hours a day with the hard-wired delusion that giving in to these temptations is a good idea, and our once life-preserving impulse to stock up goes into overdrive. The problem isn't that we are completely lacking in judgment or self-discipline. The problem is that the primal parts of our brains, where the compulsion to stock up while it's available resides, is not programmed for a world in which more than we could ever possibly need will still be there tomorrow. And the next day. And the day after that.

Once we recognize this, it becomes possible to acknowledge the instinctive urge to acquire and to use the more rational parts of our brains to remember that although we live in the midst of the greatest availability of consumer goods ever known in the history of mankind, lucky us: we don't need to buy it all today.

Conquering clutter happens in small increments on a day-by-day basis, not in one great to-the-death campaign. It starts with recognizing that clutter flows into our lives every day. Take a moment to think about everything that came to your home or office in the mail this past week. And the things you brought home from the store. And the library books, videos, and DVDs rented (and that will need to be returned in a few days or weeks, another task made more difficult by clutter).

If you have school-age children, you may feel like you need a bulldozer to deal with all the papers and projects that arrive home with them every day. Not to mention the happy meal toys. Then there are the take-out food flyers slid under your door, the lawn-service brochure stuck in your mailbox, the sale inserts from Safeway and Home Depot that sneak in with the newspaper.

The prospect of dealing with your existing clutter is exhausting enough. When you think about the fact that the incoming flow of clutter is not going to stop you may feel an overwhelming urge to just lie down on the floor and admit defeat -- assuming you can find a large-enough area of uncluttered carpet to occupy.

Don't give up before you start! That feeling of overwhelm can actually become the energy source that propels you to get out of this mess and stay out of it. When you feel overwhelmed, allow yourself to be with that feeling and explore it. Hidden beneath the fatigue and despair is a deep desire to be free, to

become the highest expression of your true self, to live your dreams and share your unique talents with the world. Tap into that desire, and you will have the energy you need to conquer your clutter.

The secret is to give up on the misguided notion that you can do it all at once in one massive effort. Accept that it took time for all this mess to accumulate, and it will take time to winnow it out. Instead of waiting until you have the time and energy to begin, start now. Begin slowly. Proceed gently. Tackle one small area at a time. The clutter will dwindle and your energy will grow. You will one day triumph over the mess. You will live in a tidy and organized space. You will fall back in love with your home, and incoming clutter will be powerless in the face of your conscious, caring attention to your physical environment.

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[excerpted from "Clutter-Free Forever!", Lotus Pond Press, 2003]

GOT CLUTTER?!? Stephanie Roberts' CLUTTER-FREE FOREVER! Home Coaching Program is a new approach to clutter clearing that reveals the hidden emotional and psychological reasons why coping with clutter is so hard to do. And it shows you, step-by-step, how you can reclaim control of your space and your life. Find out more at

2 Easy Steps To Stop Clutter

By Alison Perry

Don't Let The Clutter In!

2 Steps to Stop Clutter Collecting

How do we collect clutter in the first place? After all we came into the world possession free!

Its all in the Be Clutter Free Equation

Items In minus Items Out

If you are happily removing clutter but are adding things just as fast then you won't ever feel clutter free.

Step One

Identify where the clutter is coming from. Observe your life and you will find your clutter collection spots:

Junk Mail: Do you have a pile which contains things you will look at `one day'? When was the last time you looked at anything in the pile?

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Email: Do you get lot's of unwanted email? Or are you inundated with Newsletters (!!!???) that you thought would be a good idea?

Gifts: When you receive unwanted gifts do they lurk at the bottom of a cupboard?

Shopping: Are you always tempted to purchase things: books, clothes, storage solutions, etc and then find that you don't really use or enjoy them?

Undone Tasks: Is your mind cluttered with tasks `to be done' that never seem to get to the top of the list?

Ideas: Are you a creative person whose head is always so full of ideas that it drives you crazy?

Step Two

Stop and Create Systems that work for you! Here are some ideas:

- One in one out. If you buy a new item then another can go
- Purchase only consumables for a set amount of time
- When you are about to make a purchase ask yourself: `Do I really need this? Do I really want this? Will this add value to my life?'
- Unsubscribe to unread newsletters - cut the clutter in your inbox
- Get taken off the junk mailing contact lists
- Put all your ideas on paper, into a folder and off your mind
- Open your mail by the waste bin - dispose of junk mail straight away
- Talk to friends and family about gifting to charity on your behalf or be brave and let them know what you'd really like

for your birthday!

Rejoice!

Enjoy what you have and..... work towards a vision of your perfect environment.

Shed your physical and emotional clutter and find your true self and unlimited potential. Happiness starts with being the real, authentic you. I help clients access their, sometimes lost, authentic selves and realize their desires. To start your journey straightaway:

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