

Ask an Expert – The Mental Health Benefits of Decluttering

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“Clutter isn’t just the stuff on the floor. It’s anything that gets between you and the life you want to be living.” - Peter Walsh

Clutter has a sneaky way of crowding not just your space, but also your mind. According to a study by Princeton University, researchers discovered that the environment can positively or negatively impact your ability to complete tasks and your overall mental health. If the physical space around you feels scattered, it’s likely your mental space will feel the same. A study by the University of Connecticut found that by removing or controlling clutter, you can directly reduce the stress that stems from the mess. This can help you feel happier, less anxious, and more confident. Decluttering also offers the following mental health benefits:

- **Boosts your mood and helps improve your physical health.** The ability to complete physical activity while organizing can enhance creativity by allowing the mind to wander. Letting the mind go when organizing clutter can help you relax mentally while your body is active. The combination of the two can boost your mood because you feel less stressed about what was once clutter, and more accomplished as you see progress.
- **Sharpens your focus.** Clutter is chaotic, so it is no wonder that focusing can be a challenge. When your space is de-cluttered, it is much easier to focus because your space is organized and your belongings are easy to find. That sense of organization can help your mind stay on track to complete other tasks.
- **Energizes you to become productive.** While you are decluttering, you are problem-solving and getting things done. You gain energy from the visual accomplishments of de-cluttering. This gained

energy can also help tackle other items on your to-do list.

- **Relieves anxiety.** When things are not organized or clean, it can bring on anxiety. You may feel constantly stressed, worried, or afraid of accumulating more clutter. To allow your mind to find peace, decluttering can lift that anxiety and help you think more clearly and feel calmer.

Consider these tips to remove the clutter in your life.

- **Start small.** You do not need to declutter and clean everything at once. Think of one small area that you can go through each day. For example, today go through the bottom half of the closet, and tomorrow go through one of the junk drawers. In a matter of weeks, you will notice a major difference in how organized you feel. It is important to start small so you aren’t overwhelmed. Consider making a list of all the areas in your home that need to be decluttered, and tackle one small space every day or two.
- **Ask a friend or family member to help.** If it is difficult to start on your own, invite someone to help or just be there to keep you company. Specifically, if you have a major project, the more help you have, the more you will feel that the project is accomplishable. Sometimes outside support is needed.
- **Begin cleaning with a positive mind.** There is no right way to declutter because we all have different needs. Let your mind freely wander as you straighten up and organize. Shift your focus from perfectionism to simply doing. Practice a positive mind with deep breathing and positive thoughts toward yourself, what you’re about to do, and what you can accomplish.

To see the full article with references, click [The Mental Benefits of Decluttering](#).

An additional resource is the [ACT Guide for Decluttering](#), an online mental health program designed by psychologists at Utah State University.

Contact

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