

Take Control Module 1

Identify Your Stumbling Blocks



Objectives

You will understand what clutter is and define the clutter in your life.

- Evaluate where you are in your organizing journey
- Define Clutter
- See Your Space

*“The path to our destination is not always a straight one. We go down the wrong road, we get lost, we turn back. Maybe it doesn't matter which road we embark on. Maybe what matters is that we embark.”--**Barbara Hall**, “Northern Exposure”, Rosebud, 1993*

Instruction

Evaluate Where You Are

In order to understand where you would like to go with your project, we need to first understand where you are. We need to see what is working. First look for the positives. They are there, I know it. We need to recognize them and see what others we can add. As for the challenges, we need to identify where you are getting stuck. We also need to acknowledge your own unique life and its challenges. Although there is no 'one-size-fits-all system' of organization, there is a system we can apply to enable you to take control.

Initial Questionnaire

You may complete this questionnaire online by [clicking here](#). Your answers will automatically be submitted to your organizer.

What is going well? What about your home, family, and/or work life is working?

Whatever the positives are, list them here:

Do you have a weekly schedule?

How do you keep track? Calendar? Digital calendar? Planner? Notebook? Post-it notes? All of the above?

What is not working?

What has motivated you to make a change?

What do you think is causing the problems you mentioned above?

Visualize your ideal home, office or day. What does it look like? How does it feel?

Share something about your space:

Are you working on your home, your office or both?

Do you live in a house or an apartment?

Do you have a garage?

How many bedrooms are there?

Which rooms receive the most use?

Are there any rooms that you don't like to enter?

Is there anything else about this space that you feel is important and you would like to share?

Think about your family.

Are there family members with mismatched needs for order?

Does anyone in your family:

- Need order to be productive?
- Function well in a chaotic environment?

- Try to create systems?
- Argue with other family members about organization?
- Hide their belongings?
- Not care about their belongings?
- Resist inviting friends over?
- Always invites friends over?



What is Clutter?

It is important when you are trying to address any challenge that you know what that challenge is. So our next step is to define clutter and identify the clutter that is in our lives. What are your stumbling blocks?

You will discuss the answers with your organizer in your next meeting but use the space below to compile your thoughts

What is **Your Definition** of clutter?:

Oxford American Dictionary says...

- Collection of things laying about in an untidy mass
- Mess, jumble, litter, heap, tangle, muddle, hodgepodge
- Disorder, chaos, disarray, untidiness, confusion, rubbish, junk

How does clutter make you feel? Try listing as many words as you can.

The effects of clutter (check off the ones that you have experienced):

- Stress
- Feeling that what you have is not enough
- Inability to find what you are looking for
- Late for appointments
- Guilt over the state of your home or office
- Family Issues
- _____

See Your Space

Kathy Wadill, professional organizer and owner of [The Untangled Web](#)[™] asks her clients to see their space with “The Eyes of a Stranger”[™]. This means that you look at a space as if you are seeing it for the first time. Sometimes it helps to take a picture of the space. It is amazing how the camera can bring out things that our mind manages to ignore when we live in a space every day.

Your next task is to take ‘before’ photos of all the spaces you will be working on. Be sure to open cabinets and drawers.

Tips on Taking Useful Before Photos

- Use a digital camera with a good flash. If you have a smartphone, that can work.
- Take pictures in the middle of the day, with blinds open to let in as much light as possible.
- Stand in the doorway first and shoot the room as if you are walking into it. Pan the walls capturing at least 4 images. Then cross the room and shoot from the far corner.
- If you are shooting a smaller area, such as a desk, stand in front of the subject and shoot it straight on and then from each side.

- Don't touch or move anything before you take the first photo. You want to truly represent the beginning of the project.

Three Kinds of Clutter

Clutter is not just the physical stuff in your environment. It is also the time and mental stuff that tangles your day and your mind. Clutter may have value in a monetary sense. However, be careful! If an item does not bring YOU joy, or if you do not use it, then it is clutter. Not all clutter is broken or trash. We'll go over this further in future sections.

The chart below gives you space to list your clutter. You will see that it is divided into three sections:

Physical/Tangible Clutter is 'Stuff'. It is all the things, including digital things, that occupy your spaces. Anything and everything that enters your home outside of family, friends and pets, for example: mail, groceries, gifts, freebies, email, clothes, etc.

Time Clutter. This is where your time goes. Your commute to work, endless meetings, events you said 'yes' to when you really needed to say 'no', overcommitment items go here. Time clutter is a particularly difficult challenge these days, as we are pulled in more and more directions with the same or even more responsibilities at home. If you are not sure what to put down here, if you don't know if your activities are clutter, list them anyway and we will sort them out later.

Mental/Spiritual Clutter. These are the thoughts that clutter your mind. This kind of clutter includes stress, guilt, disagreements and more. What is your Mental/Spiritual clutter?

I have started the list below. Take time to strike out the items on the list that do not pertain to you and add the ones that do in the space below:

Clutter Identification Chart

Physical/Tangible	Time	Mental/Spiritual
clothes books emails paper magazines	commute meetings work community service house cleaning	stress guilt disagreements with family should have the feeling you NEED something.

A Note About Digital Clutter

It is enough of a challenge to keep our physical homes in order, but today we have another layer of stuff to add to the physical things that clutter up our space. The stuff that I am referring to is digital clutter. And while it is sometimes easier to ignore it, it can be just as big a problem as it piles up and slows us down.

Email, files, pictures, documents, and other electronic flotsam and jetsam, must be sorted, purged and organized frequently.

For most of us, email is a way of life. At work it is how we communicate and share information. In the marketplace, it is a way to find the best deals on items and services that we purchase. In our personal lives, it is a way to stay in touch and it is fast. So the birthday pictures that you took, can get to Aunt Jane the day of the party! However, email needs constant attention, or it can be an albatross. The things that we need to attend to can be lost in the shuffle.

Tasks

- Complete the Initial Questionnaire - [Online Link](#)
- Complete the Clutter Identification Chart on page 8
- Take photos of all the spaces you will be working on. Be sure to open drawers & cabinets! Email these to your organizer.
- Complete the Module 1 Review - [Online Link](#)