

It's Fun to UnClutter & CHUCK![™]

by CHUCK

Let's start with two bits of wisdom & advice: "We don't need to increase our goods nearly as much as we need to scale down our wants" (Donald Horban)and "People rarely succeed unless they have **FUN** in what they are doing." (Dale Carnegie)

Uncluttering, decluttering, downsizing.....regardless of label, in short IT'S NOT FUN!

Let's face it, there's a lot of stuff out there about how to unclutter! And, the thought of living a more simplified, uncluttered life with less stuff sounds very attractive. But, finding that simplified life is not always fun or simple!

While many of us see the benefits of owning fewer possessions (less to clean, less debt, less to organize, less stress while enjoying more money and energy for our passions), we quickly get tripped up by the question of... "**Where in the world do I begin**"?

To avoid feeling overwhelmed, anxious, and depressed about the idea of uncluttering, UnClutter & CHUCK![™] offers you this guide which contains some pretty fun, creative ways to get you started, OK?

Fun Ways to UnClutter & CHUCK![™]

1. Give away ONE item each day. For a year, give away one item each day. It feels good to simplify your life one day at a time.

Begin by creating a "Daily Mini-Goal" by spending **ten minutes a day to unclutter**. To make it fun and easy, each Monday set seven Unclutter Mini-Goals, one for each day of the week. It will help you achieve easy, "fun", and quick uncluttering goals.

Also, it's fun to theme each week. For example, imagine a week where your Daily Mini-Goal theme is about change. You are ever changing. And in order to not end up with a house full of clutter you should let go of the things that are no longer useful or meaningful to you. So take a week to get rid of some stuff that you have "grown" out of. For example:

Monday – Declutter something from an old pastime, sport or hobby.

Tuesday – Declutter a piece of clothing that no longer fits into your current self image.

Wednesday – Declutter something from a past relationship that's no longer meaningful to you.

Thursday – Declutter a book that you won't read again now that your beliefs have changed.

Friday – Declutter a gift that once pleased you but now has lost its pleasure.

Saturday – Declutter something that was useful when you lived elsewhere but isn't in your current location.

Sunday – Declutter something that is difficult for you to part with. This day is reserved for items that carry sentimental, unpleasant, or family reasons. That last category may involve another person's approval before discarding it.

2. Fill ONE Trash Bag. Early in your journey towards simplicity, simply grab a large trash bag and see how quickly you could fill it with stuff. While much of the bagged stuff might be trash, it could also be separated and donated to charity.

3. The Hanger Experiment. To identify wardrobe pieces to clear out, hang all your clothes with the hangers in the reverse direction. After you wear an item, return it to the closet with the hanger facing the correct direction. After six months, you'll have a clear picture of which clothes you can

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easily discard. This experiment could also be applied to a number of clutter areas in your home (cleaners, toys, linens, tools, hobbies and craft items).

When a closet is overflowing with clothes, many of which look the same "If you don't hang similar things together, you end up buying the same stuff over and over." Believe me, if you sort through all your "look alike" clothes and separate them into "keep" and "donate" piles you'll most likely end up with several bags of clothes for donation!

- 4. The Quicker-by-the-Dozen Challenge.** A simple task of locating 12 items to throw away, 12 items to donate, and 12 items to be returned to their proper home can be a really fun project to quickly organize 36 things in your home or office. This challenge can become a fun competition the whole family or office staff can enjoy.
- 5. Give Yourself 5 Minutes.** Each day pick one of the following **5-minute uncluttering tips** that appeals to your sense of adventure. Or increase your fun by picking a random number between 1-18, read the specific tip, and commit 5 minutes to complete it.

18 5-Minute UnCluttering Tips to Start Controlling Your Stuff!

When your home or workplace is filled with clutter, trying to tackle the mountain of stuff can be quite overwhelming.

- **"Where Do I Begin"** is often the question that paralyzes the process! So, here's some advice: **start with just five minutes.** Starting a journey begins with the first small step; it's the step that's most important. While that first five minute step gains little distance in your journey, it's a start. It's something to celebrate!
 - Then, take another five minute step tomorrow. And another the next day. Before you know it, you'll have cleared a whole closet or a room and then half your house and then, before you know it, your house or office will be even more uncluttered than you ever dreamed!
 - Get underwhelmed by your clutter using some fun, painless ways to get started, **five minutes at a time.**
- 1. Designate a spot for incoming papers.** Papers often account for a lot of our clutter. This is because we put them in different spots — on the counter, on the table, on our desk, in a drawer, on top of our dresser, in our car. No wonder we can't find anything! Designate an in-box tray or spot in your home (or at your office, for that matter) and don't put down papers anywhere but that spot. Got mail? Put it in the inbox. Got school papers? Put it in the inbox. Receipts, warranties, manuals, notices, flyers? In the inbox! This one little change can really transform your paperwork.
 - 2. Start clearing a starting zone.** What you want to do is clear one area. This is your no-clutter zone. It can be a counter, or your kitchen table, or the three-foot perimeter around your couch. Wherever you start, make a rule: nothing can be placed there that's not actually in use. Everything must be put away. Once you have that clutter-free zone, keep it that way! Now, each day, slowly expand your no-clutter zone until it envelopes the whole house or office! Unfortunately, neighbors and co-workers don't seem to like it when you try to expand your no-clutter zone to their areas, and start hauling away their unused exercise equipment or old files when they're absent. Suggest you stay in your zone, OK?
 - 3. Clear off a counter.** You want to get the flat spaces clear of clutter. Maybe they have a toaster on them, maybe a series of business awards, but not a lot of clutter. So start with one counter. Clear off everything possible, except maybe one or two essential things. Have a blender you haven't used since jazzercise was all the rage? Put it in the cupboard! Pack up some of those business awards. And, while you're at it, clear off all papers and all the other junk you've been tossing on the counter too.

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4. **Pick a shelf.** Now that you've done a counter, try a shelf. It doesn't matter what shelf. Could be a shelf in a closet, or on a bookshelf. Don't tackle the whole bookshelf — just one shelf. Clear all non-essential things and leave it looking neat and clutter-free.
5. **Schedule a decluttering weekend.** Maybe you don't feel like doing a huge decluttering session right now. But if you take the time to schedule it for later this month, you can clear your schedule, and if you have a family, get them involved too. The more hands pitching in, the better. Get boxes and trash bags ready, and plan a trip to a charity to drop off donated items. You might not get the entire house decluttered during the weekend, but you'll probably make great progress. A weekend at the office uncluttering? No phones or interruptions.....think about it, OK?
6. **Pick up 5 things, and find places for them.** These should be things that you actually use, but that you just seem to put anywhere, because they don't have good places. If you don't know exactly where things belong, you have to designate a good spot. Take a minute to think it through — where would be a good spot? Then always put those things in those spots when you're done using them. Do this for everything in your home or office, a few things at a time.
7. **Spend a few minutes visualizing the room.** Take a moment to take a look at a room, and think about how you want it to look.....uncluttered. What are the most essential pieces of furniture? What doesn't belong in the room but has just gravitated there? What is on the floor (hint: only furniture and rugs belong there) and what is on the flat surfaces? Once you've visualized how the room will look uncluttered, and figured out what is essential, get rid of the rest.
8. **Create a "maybe" box.** Sometimes when you're going through a pile of stuff, you know exactly what to keep (the stuff you love and want) and what to trash or donate. But then there's the stuff you don't use, but think you might want it or need it someday. You can't bear to get rid of that stuff! So create a "maybe" box, and put this stuff there. Then store the box somewhere hidden, out of the way. Put a note on your calendar six months from now to look in the box. Then pull it out, six months later, and see if it's anything you really needed. Usually, you can just dump the whole box, because you never needed that stuff.
9. **Put a load in your car for charity.** If you've decluttered a bunch of stuff, you might have a "to donate" pile that's just taking up space in a corner of your room. Take a few minutes to box it up and put it in your trunk. Then tomorrow, drop it off.
10. **Create a 30-day list.** The problem with decluttering is that we can declutter our heads off but it just comes back because we buy more stuff. So fight that tendency by nipping it in the bud: don't buy the stuff in the first place. Take a minute to create a 30-day list, and every time you want to buy something that's not absolutely necessary, put it on the list with the date it was added to the list. Make a rule never to buy anything (except necessities) unless they've been on the list for 30 days. Often you'll lose the urge to buy the stuff and you'll save yourself a lot of money and clutter. (To avoid the immediate buying urge, ask yourself...."Do I Need it? or Do I Want It? Then, walk away for 5 minutes before making your final decision. If you "Want It", don't buy it!)
11. **Teach your kids where things belong.** As a parent, if you teach your kids where things go, and start teaching them the habit of putting them there, you'll go a long way to keeping your house uncluttered. Better yet, set the example for them and get into the habit yourself.
12. **Set up some simple folders.** Sometimes our papers pile up high because we don't have good places to put them. Create some simple folders with labels for your major bills and similar paperwork. Put them in one spot. Your system doesn't have to be complete, but keep some extra folders and labels in case you need to quickly create a new file.
13. **Learn to file quickly.** Once you've created your simple filing system, you just need to learn to use it regularly. Take a handful of papers from your pile, or your inbox, and go through them one at a time, starting from the top paper and working down. Make quick decisions: trash them, file them immediately, or make a note of the action required and put them in an "action" file. Don't put anything back on the pile, and don't put them anywhere but in a folder (and no cheating "to be filed" folders!) or in the trash/recycling bin.
14. **Pull out some clothes you don't wear.** As you're getting ready for work, and going through your closet for something to wear, spend a few minutes pulling out ones you haven't worn in a few months. If they're seasonal clothes, store them in a box. Get rid of the rest. Do this a little at a time until your closet (and then your drawers) only contains stuff you actually wear.

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15. **Clear out your medicine cabinet.** If you don't have one spot for medicines, create one now. Go through everything for the outdated medicines, the stuff you'll never use again, the old pills, the creams, the ointments, etc. Simplify to the essential.
16. **Pull everything out of a drawer.** Just take the dresser or desk drawer out and empty it on a table. Then sort the drawer into three piles: 1) stuff that really should go in the drawer; 2) stuff that belongs elsewhere; 3) stuff to get rid of. Clean the drawer out nice, then put the stuff in the first pile back neatly and orderly. Deal with the other piles immediately!
17. **Learn to love the uncluttered look.** Once you've gotten an area uncluttered, you should take the time to enjoy that look. It's a lovely look. Make that your standard! Learn to dislike clutter! Then catch clutter and eliminate it wherever it crops up.
18. **Have a conversation with your spouse, SO, roommate or co-worker.** Sometimes the problem isn't just with us, it's with the person or people we live and work with. An uncluttered home and office is the result of a shared philosophy of simplicity of all the people living and working together. If you take a few minutes to explain that you really want to have an uncluttered environment, and that you could use their help, you can go a long way to getting to that point. Try to be persuasive and encouraging rather than nagging and negative.

6. Make a List

Create a list of places/areas in your home to unclutter beginning with the easiest. **When you're done with one place or area, STOP!** This list could be made as easy or difficult as you desire based upon what areas of your home make up the list (drawers/closets/rooms).

Some Tips on How to Minimize Belongings in a Place/Area

1. **First, start by uncluttering one small area at a time.**
2. **Second, follow these suggestions for a healthy approach to the process:**
 - a. **Start with a plan before you minimize belongings.** List which rooms you need to tackle and list them by easiest, most important, or most difficult.
 - b. **Choose the first room from your list to focus on, then narrow it down to one location in this room.** For example, if your closet feels out of sorts, you could weed out the torn, wrong size, and unnecessary items from one area of the closet. Alternatively, you might choose to attack the drawer of makeup in your master bathroom.
 - c. **When you're done with one area, STOP!!** Your goal is to start small and celebrate the victories. My experience over the years has been one of gaining as much pleasure from minimizing belongings in a bedside table drawer as when we've finished minimizing everything in an entire room.
 - d. **Take 30 minutes to an hour the next day (or next weekend) and move to a second problem area on your list.** This approach will keep you from being overwhelmed while you minimize belongings.

Note: After a few days, if you're really making progress, consider taking on more than one small area. However, beware of frustration caused by pushing ahead too fast. Take a break to periodically rest and reflect on your progress.

The fact is, your stuff has been collecting over time...probably years. In the same way, taking time to process what's necessary to keep should also take some time. So, relax and avoid unclutter burn-out!

Finally, remember that your purpose isn't to organize. Using boxes and baskets to hold or hide items doesn't make them disappear. Owning less does.

7. The 5-Area (Box) Method. Finally, when launching your journey to unclutter and downsize your home or office, consider using the 5-Area (Box) Method.

As you set out to unclutter an area or room, designate & mark five areas as follows:

- Trash
- Donate
- Relocate
- Keep
- Not Mine!

Then, ask yourself the following questions about each item:

- Do I **NEED** it? YES _____ NO _____
- Do I **USE** it? YES _____ NO _____
- Do I **FIT** it? YES _____ NO _____
- Do I **WANT** it? YES _____ NO _____
 - (the emotional stuff.....things that are personal, spiritual, family, memories)
- Does it **BELONG TO SOMEONE ELSE?** YES _____ NO _____

The 5-BOX RULES.....

1. No item can be passed over
2. Consider each item individually
3. Place each item in the room/area into one of the five designated areas
4. Box each area into individually marked boxes.....and
5. Dispose of the boxed clutter!

Some projects may take an hour... others may take days or weeks. But the technique and principles remained the same.

Some Additional Uncluttering questions to ask yourself when you are deciding what stays and what

- **How long since I last used this:** If you are keeping an item just because **maybe** you **might** need it someday then it is probably clutter.
- **Is it still useful to me:** Do I still use this item or even participate in the activity that this item is used for if not then its clutter.
- **Is it in working condition:** if an item is broken and you do not have the expertise to repair it or you are not prepared to pay the price to have it fixed then it is clutter.
- **How many do I have and how many do I need:** If you have multiples of a certain item but only ever need one then it is most likely clutter.
- **Do I need this item for the information it contains:** So much information is right at your fingertips these days on your computer and it is constantly updated do you really need to keep a library of books whose information may or may not stand the test of time.
- **Do I like it:** If you are keeping something that was given to you even though you do not like it, it is definitely clutter.
- **Do I really need this item in order to remember good times or lost loves:** If it is an item that has purely sentimental value yet you never get it out and look at it then there is a good chance you don't need it to remind you of the good times you had and the wonderful people you have known. If it means so much to you put it out where you can see it if not let it go.

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- ***Am I keeping this item out of guilt:*** I paid a lot of money for this so I hope one day I will get my money's worth out of it (old hobbies, sporting equipment, expensive clothing all fall into this category). These are the items you need to cash in on now and sell while they are still useful to someone else.
- ***Do I want to clean it:*** Any item out on display that requires dusting at least once a week.
- ***Do I want to store it:*** Do you have the space to store this item or is it just taking up precious space you can't afford to give up?
- ***Do I want to move it out of the way when looking for something else:*** The more items you have taking up space in your home the more likely they are going to get in the way of each other forcing you to have to shuffle things around when you do have cause to use them.
- ***Does it have a real purpose other than looking pretty:*** This one speaks for itself. Although I like to have some nice objects to enjoy just for their appearance there is a limit to how many if any I can accommodate or justify.
- ***Will I be tired of it in six months:*** A very good question to ask before even acquiring an item in the first place.
- ***Do I want to pack and unpack this item when we move in a couple years:*** This is a critical question for anyone who tends to move location on a reasonably regular basis due to work commitments for example.
- ***If this item had been taken from you and sold to a pawn shop (by a junkie friend or an evil in-law, whatever) would you buy it back? :*** I bet there will be a lot of items that you wouldn't waste your money on, however low the cost. These are the things that need to go! The same could be said for an item were it to break would you replace it or be secretly relieved that is gone and you didn't have to make the decision to declutter it.
- ***“What the heck are you and what on earth is your purpose?:*** If you find you need to ask this question of an object then it could very well be clutter but I suggest checking with every member of the family first because it could very well be an important part to something. Chances are though, it is rubbish.

8. Let UnClutter & CHUCK!™ improve your “World View of Clutter!”

Many times we are blind to clutter that is commonplace to our everyday living! To see it, we have to depend upon a number of tricks that can help us notice clutter we may have missed. Some include: taking photos of our house, inviting over a toddler, or asking the boss to meet in our office. In all instances, the hope is to cause you to see your home or office in a new cluttered light.

Tricks for Seeing More Clutter

When entrenched in your daily routines and activities, your home and workplace can become generic scenery. This might be a good thing if it means you're focused on your responsibilities and priorities. However, if you're no longer seeing spaces because you're numb to their presence, it might be time to pause and take a look at these nooks and crannies of your life.

Even though you might not focus on the unnoticed stuff in your home and office, they still might be affecting you. So, consider clearing all the clutter from the room, organize the things that remain, and then gauge how you feel in the clutter-free room. Do you feel calmer, less stressed, more comfortable, and happier when you're in this newly uncluttered space?

It can be difficult to “see” the clutter in our living and working spaces. We sense clutter, but as we move through our regular lives we lose sight of it as it has become commonplace. The following are ideas for how you can see the clutter in your spaces:

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- Invite friends over for a party. Knowing that people will be coming into your home helps you to imagine your place the way they see it.
- Invite your boss into your office for a meeting. It's like a party in your home, but at work (and, sadly, likely less fun).
- Snap photographs or take video to create an experience to "see" the clutter in your home. For example:
 - Videotape rooms in your house for insurance purposes and then watch the video before taking it to the safety deposit box.
 - Pay particular attention to the amount of clutter and stuff on surfaces throughout the house. The camera's eye picks up clutter your eyes simply moving past! You'll be totally surprised how much it helps to see your rooms through the video.
 - Everyone: get out your video camera and give it a shot. You'll be amazed at the new world view of clutter you'll have of your home or office.
 - Then, unclutter!
- Hire a home stager to come in and explain how he/she would clear your space if you were to put it up on the market for sale. You might not follow all of the advice, but it will help you to see what others see.
- Have a friend with a toddler visit. Let the child roam through your home. True to toddler form, he'll find every piece of clutter, touching it, picking it up, or trying to eat it. (Yuck!)
- Similar to the previous suggestion, have a friend with a curious dog spend some time in your space.

9. Play THE Numbers!

- Project333.com challenges people to wear only 33 articles of clothing for 3 months. If 33 articles of clothing seems too little, adjust the rules by picking a new, but realistic number. The important thing is to challenge yourself to live with less.
- Also, try on the 5 essential pieces in your psychic wardrobe! If you are looking for the perfect fit in your wardrobe, you'll hit the jackpot with the 5 Essentials of:
 - **Peace:** Feeling stressed out first thing in the morning because you don't know what to wear? Thinking, "I have nothing to wear" while staring at a stuffed closet is stressful, and even if you aren't aware of it, you carry that stress into your day. Start your day with peace by creating a calm atmosphere in your closet.
Fewer choices = less chaos = peace.
 - **Ease:** Why complicate the day by sorting through a stuffed closet that is constantly reminding you how much you spent on clothing you don't wear? Keep it simple and only hang things in your closet that make you smile all day.
 - **Love:** Purchasing something just because it was on sale, or because you saw it on the cover of a magazine isn't love. Worrying about what other people think about you and your wardrobe isn't love. Trying to squeeze into clothes that don't fit is not love. The best way to wear your favorite things every day is to own only favorite things. That's love.
 - **Clarity:** Too many choices make it difficult to know what you really want and like in your life. Limit your daily choices starting in your closet and you will eliminate decision fatigue and feel more confident with your choices.
 - **Space:** When you dress with less, you naturally have more space in your closet. That space is a daily visual sign that you are making room for your life to unfold.

If you want these 5 essentials in your closet ...

- **Start a shopping ban!** Instead of adding more things, you can create more space to figure out what you really want.

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- **Let Go!** Eliminate anything you haven't worn recently and don't plan on wearing in the near future.
- **Box up!** Box up anything you aren't sure about and revisit in 3 months. Remove the pressure of deciding what to keep by simply hiding it for a while.
- **Connect!** Connect with other people who have found joy in dressing with less. Shift your focus away from clothing and fashion by committing to 21 days of joy!
 - **For 21 Days, take a "daily vacation" and think about people in your life that give you cheer!**
 - **For 21 Days, Call a timeout every day to focus on things that ...**
 - make you smile
 - give you space to breathe
 - create mindfulness
 - encourage gratitude
 - help you cultivate joy
 - **For the next 21 Days, Invest a little time each day enjoying ...**
 - spending time outdoors
 - listening to music
 - getting creative in the kitchen
 - hearing a private audio message from me
 - being playful

If you landed here looking for the perfect pair of jeans, or a little black dress that you don't want to live without, do a quick review of your wardrobe history. How many pairs of jeans have you owned in your lifetime? How many little black dresses? How many stylish bags? (Guys....How many golf shirts? Or, t-shirts? Or, neckties?)How is that working for you?

The truth is, there will never be an item of clothing that changes your life, or convinces people you are someone you are not. Shopping won't fix the past or secure the future. More is not the answer.

Try less and enjoy life more!

10. Use your Imagination.

Psychology Today recommends using your imagination to help declutter objects that may seem difficult to remove. Try asking yourself unique questions like, "If I was just buying this now, how much would I pay?" These creative techniques may prove to be very helpful for some with difficulties removing unneeded clutter.

Jim Davies, Ph.D., Dir. of the Science Imagination Laboratory at Carleton University, says:

Some people naturally are able to remove clutter from their lives. Others, like me, naturally collect things and have a hard time letting go of them.

Shortly after I moved into my house, I realized that I was absolutely overflowing with books. I started having parties in which I would give books away. I called them "book swap parties," and encouraged people to bring books they didn't want.

(Side Note: Although these parties always have a good turnout, some people didn't come because they didn't have a book to swap. So then I called the parties "book give away parties," figuring that it was the

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"swap" word that was making it sound like a transaction. Then some people didn't come because they did not have a book to "give away.")

*Still, parting with things is hard, because we are afraid that if we get rid of something, we'll miss it. Part of this is because of something called **the Endowment Effect: when we own something, we value it more than we would have been willing to pay for it when we didn't have it.***

*I had this problem at work, too. I have lots of phone-book-sized conference proceedings from the 1980s and '90s taking up space on my shelves. Turns out that my workplace offers a service in which they will saw off the binding and scan it into a PDF. I did this with one, but I think the total cost was over \$20. It was not worth it to me. In fact, I realized that I would not have paid \$20 for the conference proceedings if I did not own it. **That is the trick.***

Let's say you have a camera that you are thinking of getting rid of. You can go onto eBay and find out how much similar cameras have sold for. This gives you a good idea of what you could get for yours if you sold it. Now, ask yourself: "If I didn't already own this camera, would I pay that much for it?" If the answer is no, then sell it immediately. Indeed, if you have remorse you can always buy another one, probably for a cheaper price.

If you do this exercise with things in your house or office, you'll realize how little you actually value some of your things you can't part with.

*Why does it work? **Because you are using your imagination to overcome the endowment effect. By imagining that you don't own it, you get a better idea of its value to you.***

Here's another tip. Some things you feel you can't part with because they are nostalgic, and of absolutely no value to anyone else. I have lots of toys from my childhood that I can't bear to get rid of and lots of crappy sculptures I made in high school art class filling boxes in my basement. One way I have managed to get rid of some of this stuff is by photographing it.

I take a picture, and save it in a folder called "nostalgia." Once I have this picture, I feel better about giving or throwing away the object, because part of why I wanted to save it was because I didn't want to forget. Now I save much fewer of these little things.

Once in a while I browse the nostalgia folder, and it feels and I no longer have to open boxes in my basement for a nostalgia trip.

In Conclusion:

I encourage you to put these tips, tricks, and ideas to good use and action! And, NO, they're not all mine and I don't own them. Like most ideas, they are born of my personal experiences and research I've done about uncluttering and downsizing.

Remember, regardless of the approach you choose to launch your uncluttering process, the goal is to take your first step with positive enthusiasm.

I know there is a form of freedom and future hiding behind all that clutter. And, once you find it, you'll enjoy and be thankful for it.....take it from one who's UnCluttered, OK?

God Speed, and remember to Renew Your World Each Day by Living Fun & Doing Good!!