



Neat Freak News

Bimonthly organizational tips for home, work and life.

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NEAT FREAK NEWS: February 2008

By the third week of January, many people have abandoned their new years resolutions, if they bothered to make them in the first place. Getting organized, kind of like eating well and exercising, is a lifestyle change—there's no real quick fix. The thought of throwing a match on all your clutter and watching it burn may have crossed your mind, but I don't recommend it!

Good, long term results come about by changing habits. Based on my own totally unscientific study with my two children (3 year old son is my Neat Freak Jr.; 6 year old daughter is my adorable slob), I've hypothesized that some people have an organizational "gene." But fear not...everyone can learn and practice sound organizational skills. If 2008 is your year to shovel out from under the clutter in your life, then keep up the good work, don't sweat it if you're backsliding...just keep your goal of a simpler, less stressful, more organized life in mind and I believe you'll get there.

This year in Neat Freak News, I'm going to share with you my step by step, room by room approach to organizing your home. You can buy books that will tell you how to do this, but hey...why not read it here for free! Check out my newsletter every other month, follow my advice (as much as you can stand!), and by the end of 2008, I guarantee you'll be living with less and have more room to breathe. Enjoy.

THE MASTER BEDROOM

In the spirit of love and romance (it is almost Valentine's Day, you know), I'm going to start with your master bedroom. Whether you live in a studio apartment or a mansion, we all need a place to rest our heads at night. Take a look around. Is your bedroom a relaxing, romantic retreat? Does it welcome restful slumber and relationship building? Or does it more closely resemble the local thrift store? If you spot clothes that don't fit, exercise equipment that is unused, or reading material that predates the Bush administration, get ready to roll up your sleeves, reclaim your space and bring a little peace, warmth and love into your bedroom (cue the Barry White music...).

1. Not to sound like your mother, but make up your bed already! This one simple task can turn your bedroom from disaster area into not-half-bad in less than three minutes.
2. Get down on your hands and knees and see what's hiding down below. Unless you live in a NYC studio apartment with no room to spare, the space under your

bed should house nothing more than the occasional dust bunny. Feng Shui practitioners will tell you that it's bad for your Chi...I'll just tell you that storing stuff under your bed invites dust mites and if you really use the stuff that's under your bed, what's it doing down there in the first place? Clean it out!

3. Hmmmm....what are those dirty socks doing on the floor? Purchase an attractive hamper (two if you want to separate darks and whites) and toss the dirty stuff in it. Anything else should be folded or hung up after you take it off.

Good grief, I do sound like your mother! Keep reading...

4. Assess the other activities that go on in your bedroom. Do you watch TV in this room? I dare you to remove the TV for a week or two and see if anything changes in your life. TV's have a way of attracting other "things" (e.g. DVDs, VCR tapes, cords and cables, not to mention the stress that comes from falling asleep to or waking up to CNN on a daily basis). Try doing without...you might just like it!
5. Count the number of books on your nightstand table. If there are books there that you've already finished, or books you don't plan to read for another week or two, or books you just like to keep next to your bed to make you feel smart (I swear this is the year I'm going to pick up Mandelbaum's translation of The Aeneid!), move them to a bookshelf. Also, consider NOT buying books for the next six months. Check books out from your library instead. Knowing that they're due in a month might speed along the reading process and keep you from accumulating more things in your home.
6. Clothes. Shoes. Purses...oh my. It really is true that most of us wear 20% of our clothes 80% of the time. If it doesn't fit you right now, let it go. If you lose 20 lbs., I promise you you'll want to go shopping. If it has been stained for more than six months and you haven't cleaned it, let it go. If you purchased it in the late 80's and you're waiting to see if it comes back in style, let it go. If you've been meaning to hem it or mend it for more than six months, let it go. Can't quite part with it? Fold it up, put it in a box and write the date July 30, 2008 on it. If you haven't gone looking for it by that date, take the entire box to a local charity of your choice and say "bye, bye." And finally, commit to a one in, one out philosophy this year. If you purchase something new, something old has to go.
7. Once you've followed this advice, look around and see what's left. Mail, work papers, bills, children's toys, broken things and solo socks do not belong in your bedroom. Once all of this is gone, you can safely light a candle, relax and enjoy your chaos-free sanctuary. And hey, if I managed to inspire you to spice up your love life along the way, I'll gratefully accept chocolate as a thank you gift!