

GIVE YOURSELF SOME SPACE

By Susanne Phelps

Overstuffed closets? Unread magazines? Lost bills? Too much stuff everywhere? Clutter and disorder sneak into our lives through every crack.

Organizing requires time and perseverance, but the resulting order and reclaimed space repay the effort. Just one reorganized closet saves space and time. No more time wasted in searching each closet and drawer for the three-way light bulbs you know you bought at the grocery a few weeks ago. Another bonus of organizing a closet, a room (or a whole house!!) is finding things you thought you needed to purchase and noticing needed items for your next shopping trip.

Starting small may help overcome the disinclination to organize. A linen closet can be revamped in a few hours of uninterrupted time. (Though, I agree, it is more fun to take a walk or a long soak in a fragrant tub!) Keep the following principles in mind when deciding what to do with items no longer useful to you and your family: sell, donate, discard.

Take a few heavy department store bags (with handles, if available) or large plastic bags with you to the linen closet. Remove **every** item from the closet. Vacuum closet and damp wipe all

shelves. As you examine each sheet, towel and pillowcase, decide if it is still useful (do you still have twin beds?) and in good condition. If you came across odd items which should not be stored in a linen closet, find a better storage place. (That claw hammer should be with tools!!) Now, refold neatly and place all useful linens on shelves. (Closet will appear especially tidy if the closed fold side of each piece is facing out.)

If you have not used the sheet, towel or other linen item in a year (or perhaps even longer), determine whether to sell, donate or discard. In the case of linens, those discards could become pet bedding or rags. Perhaps you are planning a garage sale and hope to dispose of some things this way. Be sure, however, not to fill bags and boxes for an uncertain future yard/garage sale that might not happen.

Many consignment shops will take your linens, especially curtains, bedspreads and table linens. These can be taken almost anytime and then are out of your sight. The local phone books list consignment shops in most neighborhoods. One near your home or office could be a useful place to assist your continuing efforts to keep ahead of clutter. (Be sure to call before your first visit to determine hours and any special "rules".) Often a quicker solution is to donate

items to a local women's shelter, church rummage sale or any of the permanent charitable resale stores: Goodwill, St. Vincent's, etc.

You will feel encouraged as you get items you no longer use **completely** of sight as soon as possible. Do not second guess yourself -- once in the bag: NO PEEKING.

This method for uncluttering your life also works with large closets, rooms, garages, offices or entire houses. The effort spent in decluttering will repay you by creating an orderly and calming environment in your home and office. You will be more efficient (no more searching fruitlessly for tickets or important papers), and have more time for the fun things in life.